

The ORIOLE

by Booth Tarkington

Illustrations by Irwin Myers



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Mrs. Atwater murmured absently, but forbore to press her inquiry; and Florence was silent, in a brooding mood. The journalists upon the fence had disappeared from view, during the conversation with her mother; and presently she sighed and quietly left the room. She went to her own apartment, where, at a small and rather battered little white desk, after a period of earnest reverie, she took up a pen, set the point in purple ink, and without any great effort or any critical delays, produced a poem.

It was, in a sense, an original poem; though, like the greater number of all literary offerings, it was so strongly inspirational that the source of its inspiration might easily become manifest to a cold-blooded reader. Nevertheless, to the poetess herself, as she explained later in good faith, the words just seemed to come to her—doubtless with either genius or some form of miracle involved; for sources of inspiration are seldom recognized by inspired writers themselves. She had not long ago been party to a musical Sunday afternoon at her great-uncle Joseph Atwater's house where Mr. Chaidyche, that amiable and robust baritone, sang some of his songs over and over again, as long as the requests for them held out. Florence's poem may have begun to coagulate within her throat.

THE ORGANIST
By Florence Atwater

The organist was seated at his organ in a church,
In some beautiful woods of maple and birch.
He was very weary while he played upon the keys,
But he was a great organist and always played with ease.
When the soul is weary,
And the wind is dreary,
I would like to be an organist seated all day at the organ,
Whether my name might be Fairchild or Morgan,
I would play music like a vast amen,
The way it sounds in a church of men.

Florence read her poem over seven or eight times, the deepening pleasure of her expression being evidence that repetition failed to denature this work, but, on the contrary, enhanced an appreciative surprise at its singular merit. Finally she folded the sheet of paper with a delicate care, tucked it into her skirt pocket, then she went down stairs and out into the back yard. With thoughtful and determined eyes she obtained her gaze over the intervening fence to the ragged skyline formed by the two-story profile of her cousin Herbert's father's stable. Her next action was straightforward and anything but praiseworthy; she climbed the high board fence, one after the other, until she came to a pause at the top of that wherein the two journalists had barely made themselves so audaciously impressive.

Before her, if she had but taken note of them, were a lesson in history and the markers of a profound transition in human evolution. Beside the old frame stable was a little brick garage, obviously put to the daily use intended by its designer. Quite an obviously the stable was obsolete; anybody would have known from its outside that there was no horse within it. Here, visible, was the end of the pastoral age, it might be called, from the Heidelberg jawbone to Mar-coul. The new age begins with machines that do away with laboring animals and will proceed presently to machines doing away with laboring men, although it is true that cows may remain in vogue for some time. In spite of the fact that they are being milked by electricity, the milk itself must yet be constructed by the cow.

All this was lost upon Florence. She sat upon the fence, her gaze unfavorably, though wistfully, fixed upon a sign of no special esthetic merit above the stable door:

THE NORTH END DAILY ORIOLE.
ATWATER & ROOTER OWNERS AND PROPRIETORS.
SUBSCRIBE NOW 2 CENTS.

The inconsistency of the word "daily" did not trouble Florence; moreover she had found no fault with "Oriole" until the "Owners and Proprietors" had explained to her in the plainest terms known to their vocabularies that she was excluded from the enterprise. Then, indeed, she had been reciprocally explicit in regard, not only to them and certain personal characteristics of theirs which she pointed out as fundamental, but in regard to any newspaper which should deliberately call itself an "Oriole." The partners remained superior in manner, though unable to conceal a natural resentment; they had adopted "Oriole," not out of sentiment for the distant city of Baltimore, nor, indeed, on account of any ornithological interest of their own, but as a relic from an abandoned club, or secret society, which they had previously contemplated forming, its members to be called "The Orioles" for no reason whatever. The two friends had had of their plan at many meetings

throughout the summer, and when Herbert's great-uncle, Mr. Joseph Atwater, made his nephew the unexpected present of a printing press, and a newspaper consequently took the place of the club, Herbert and Henry still entertained an affection for their former scheme and decided to perpetuate the name. They were the more sensitive to attack upon it by an ignorant outsider and girl like Florence, and her chance of ingratiating herself with them, if that could be now her intention, was not promising.

It would be inaccurate to speak of her as hoping to placate them, however; her mood was inscrutable. She descended from the fence with pronounced inelegance, and, approaching the old double doors of the carriage-house, which were open, paused to listen. Sounds from above assured her that the editors were editing—or at least that they could be found at their place of business. Therefore, she ascended the cobwebby stairway to the loft, and made her appearance in the printing room of the North End Daily Oriole.

Herbert, frowning with the burden of composition, sat at a table beyond the official railing, and his partner was engaged at the press, painfully setting type. This latter person, whom Flo-



Here! Didn't I and Herbert tell you to keep out of here?

rence for several months had named not once otherwise than as "that nasty little Henry Rooter," was of strangely clean and smooth features, appearing, for his age, she looked him over.

His profile was of a spirituality he had not himself yet begun to appreciate; his dress was scrupulous and modest; and though he was short, nothing overcame about him explained the more sinister of Florence's two adjectives. Yet she had true occasion for it, because on the day before she began his long observance he had made her uneasy lest an orange seed she had swallowed should take root and grow up within her to a size inevitably fatal. Then, with her cousin Herbert's stern assistance, Florence had realized that her gallibity was not to be expected in anybody over seven years old, after which age such legends are supposed to be encountered with the derision of experienced people.

Her fastidiousness aroused, she decided that Henry Rooter had no business to be talking about what would happen to her insides, anyhow; and so informed him at their next meeting, adding an explanation which absolutely proved him to be no gentleman. And her opinion of him was still perfectly plain in her expression as she made her present intrusion upon his working hours. He seemed to re-eprocate.

"Here! Didn't I and Herbert tell you to keep out of here?" he demanded, even before Florence had developed the slightest form of greeting. "Look at her, Herbert! She's back again!"

"You get out of here, Florence," said Herbert, abandoning his task with a look of pain. "How often we had to tell you we don't want you around here when we're in our office like this?"

"For heaven's sake!" Henry Rooter thought it to add. "Can't you quit running up and down our office stairs once in a while, long enough for us to get our newspaper work done? Can't you give us a little peace?"

The pinkness of Florence's altered complexion was justified; she had not been near their old office for four days. She stated the fact with heat, adding: "And I only came then because I knew somebody ought to see that this stable isn't ruined. It's my own uncle and aunt's stable, and

as much right here as anybody."

"You have not!" Henry Rooter protested hotly. "This isn't either your aunt and uncle's stable."

"It isn't!"

"No, it is not! This isn't anybody's stable. It's my and Herbert's newspaper building, and I guess you haven't got the face to stand there and claim you got a right to go in a newspaper building and say you got a right there when everybody tells you to stay outside of it, I guess!"

"Oh, haven't I?"

"No, you haven't—I!" Mr. Rooter maintained bitterly. "You just walk downtown and go in one of the newspaper buildings down there and tell 'em you got a right to stay there all day long when they tell you to get out of there! Just try it! That's all I ask!"

Florence uttered a cry of derision. "And pray, whoever told you I was bound to do everything you ask me to, Mister Henry Rooter?" And she concluded by reverting to that hostile impulse, so ancient, which in despair of touching an antagonist effectively, reflects upon his ancestors. "If you got anything you want to ask, you go ask your grandmother!"

"Here!" Herbert sprang to his feet, outraged. "You try and behave like a lady!"

"Who'll make me?" she inquired.

"You got to behave like a lady as long as you're in our newspaper building, anyway," Herbert said ominously. "If you expect to come up here after you been told five dozen times to keep out—"

"For heaven's sake!" his partner interposed. "When we go in to get our newspaper work done? She's your cousin; I should think you could get her out."

"Well, I'm goin' to, ain't I?" Herbert protested plaintively. "I expect to get her out, don't I?"

"Oh, you do?" Miss Atwater inquired, with severe mockery. "Pray, how do you expect to accomplish it, pray?"

Herbert looked desperate, but was unable to form a reply consistent with some rules of etiquette and enliany which he had begun to observe during the past year or so. "Now, see here, Florence," he said. "You're old enough to know when people tell you to keep out of a place, why, it means they want you to stay away from there."

Florence remained cold to this reasoning. "Oh, pooh!" she said.

"Now, look here!" her cousin remonstrated, and went on with his argument. "We got our newspaper work to do, and you ought to have sense enough to know newspaper work like this newspaper work we got on our hands here isn't—well, it ain't any child's play."

His partner appeared to approve of the expression, for he nodded severely and then used it himself. "No, you bet it isn't any child's play!" he said.

"No, sir," Henry Rooter again agreed. "Newspaper work like this isn't any child's play at all."

"It isn't my child's play, Florence," said Herbert. "It ain't my child's play at all, Florence. If it was just child's play or something like that, why it wouldn't matter so much your always pokin' up here, and—"

"Well," the partner interrupted, judicially. "We wouldn't want her around, even if it was child's play."

"No, we wouldn't; that's so," Herbert agreed.

"We wouldn't want you around any more, Florence." Here his tone became more plaintive. "So, for heaven's sake, don't you go on home and give us a little rest? What you want, anyhow?"

"Well, I guess it's about time you was usin' me that," she said, not unreasonably. "If you'd asked me that in the first place, instead of airm' flay-you'd never been taught anything, and was only fit to associate with hoodlums, perhaps my time is of some value, myself!"

The lack of rhetorical cohesion was largely counteracted by the strong expressiveness of tone and manner; and at all events, Florence made perfectly clear her position as a person of worth, dealing with the lowest of all her inferiors. She went on, not pausing:

"I thought, being as I was related to you, and all the family and everybody else goin' to haf to read your ole newspaper, anyway it'd be a good thing if what was printed in it wasn't all a disgrace to the family, because the name of our family's got mixed up with this newspaper; so here!"

Thus speaking, she took the poem from her pocket and with dignity held it forth to her cousin.

"What's that?" Herbert inquired, not moving a hand. He was but an amateur, yet already enough of an editor to have his suspicions.

"It's a poem," Florence said. "I don't know whether I exactly ought to have it in your ole newspaper or not, but on account of the family's sake I guess I better. Here, take it."

Herbert at once withdrew a few steps, placing his hands behind him. "Listen, here," he said, "you think we got time to read a lot of writin' in your ole handwriting that nobody can read anyhow, and then go to work and toil and moil to print it on the printin' press? I guess we got work enough printin' what we wrote for our newspaper our own selves! My goodness, Florence, I told you this isn't any child's play!"

Florence appeared to be somewhat baffled. "Well," she said, "Well, you better put this poem in your ole newspaper if you want to have anyhow one thing in it that won't make everybody sick that reads it."

"I won't do it!" Herbert said, more firmly.

"What you take us for?" his partner added, condescendingly.

"All right, then," Florence responded, with apparent decisiveness. "I'll go back and tell Uncle Joseph and he'll take this printin' press back."

"He will not take it back. I already did tell him how you keep pokin' around tryin' to run everything, and we just worried our lives out tryin' to keep you away. He said he bet it was a hard job; that's what Uncle Joseph said. So go on, tell him anything you want to. You don't get your ole poem in our newspaper!"

"Not if she lived to be two hundred years old!" Henry Rooter added. Then he had an afterthought. "Not unless she pays for it."

"How do you mean?" Herbert asked, puzzled.

Henry's brow had become corrugated with no little professional impressiveness. "You know what we were talkin' about this mornin'," he said. "How the right way to run our newspaper, we ought to have some advertisements in it and everything. Well, we want money, don't we? We could put this poem in our newspaper like an advertisement; that is, if Florence has got any money, we could."

Herbert frowned. "If her ole poem isn't too long. I guess we could. Here, let's see it, Florence." And, taking the sheet of paper in his hand, he studied the dimensions of the poem, though without pausing himself to read it. "Well, I guess, maybe we can do it," he said. "How much ought we to charge her?"

This question plunged Henry Rooter into a state of calculation, while Florence observed him with veiled anxiety; but after a time he looked up, his brow showing continued strain. "Do you keep a bank, Florence—for nickels and dimes and maybe quarters, you know?" he inquired.

It was her cousin who impulsively replied for her. "No, she don't," he said.

"Not since I was about seven years old!" Florence added sharply, though with dignity. "Do you still make mud pies in your back yard, pray?"

"Now, see here!" Henry objected. "Try and be a lady anyway for a few minutes, can't you? I got to figure out how much we got to charge you for your ole poem, don't I?"

"Well, then," Florence returned, "you better ask me somepin' about that, hadn't you?"

"Well," said Henry Rooter, "have you got any money at home?"

"No, I haven't."

"Have you got any money with you?"

"Yes, I have."

"How much is it?"

"I won't tell you."

Henry frowned. "I guess we ought to make her pay about two dollars and a half," he said, turning to his partner.

Herbert felt deferential; it seemed to him that he had formed a business association with a cousin, and for a moment he was dignified; then he remembered Florence's financial capabilities, always well known to him, and he looked depressed. Florence, herself, looked indignant.

"Two dollars and a half?" she cried. "Why, I could buy this whole place for two dollars and a half, printing press, railing, and all—yes, and you thrown in, Mister Henry Rooter!"

"See here, Florence," Henry said earnestly. "Haven't you got two dollars and a half?"

"Of course she hasn't!" his partner assured him. "She never had two dollars and a half in her life."

"Well, then," said Henry gloomily, "what we goin' to do about it? How much you think we ought to charge her?"

Herbert's expression became non-committal. "Just let me think a minute," he said; and with his hand to his brow stepped behind the unsuspecting Florence.

"I got to think," he murmured; then with the straightforwardness of his age, he suddenly seized his dandied cousin from the rear and held her in a tight but far from affectionate embrace, pinching her arms. She shrieked, "Murder!" and "Let me go!" and "Help! Hay-yulp!"

"Look in her pocket," Herbert shouted. "She keeps her money in her skirt pocket when she's got any. It's on the left side of her. Don't let her kick you! Look out!"

"I got it!" said the dexterous Henry, retreating and exhibiting coins. "It's one dime and two nickels—twenty cents. Has she got any more pockets?"

"No, I haven't!" Florence fiercely informed him, as Herbert released her. "And I guess you better hand that money back if you don't want to be arrested for stealing!"

Henry was unmoved. "Twenty cents," he said calculatingly. "Well, all right; it isn't much, but you can have your poem in our newspaper for twenty cents, Florence. If you don't want to pay that much, why take your ole twenty cents and go on away!"

"Yes," said Herbert. "That's as cheap as we'll do it, Florence. Take it or leave it."

"Take it or leave it," Henry Rooter agreed. "That's the way to talk to her; take it, or leave it, Florence. If you don't take it you got to leave it."

Florence was indignant, but she decided to take it. "All right," she said coldly. "I wouldn't pay another cent if I died for it."

"Well, you haven't got another cent, so that's all right," Mr. Rooter remarked; and he honorably extended an open palm, supporting the coins, toward his partner. "Here, Herbert; you can have the dime, or the two nickels, whichever you rather have. It makes no difference to me; I'd as soon have one as the other."

Herbert took the two nickels, and turned to Florence. "See here, Florence," he said in a tone of strong complaint. "This business is all done

and paid for now. What you want to hang around here any more for?"

"Yes, Florence," his partner faithfully seconded him, at once. "We haven't got any more time to waste around here today, and so what you want to stand around in the way and everything for? You ought to know yourself we don't want you."

"I'm not in the way," said Florence hotly. "Whose way am I in?"

"Well, anyhow, if you don't go," Herbert informed her, "we'll carry you downstairs and lock you out."

"I'd just like to see you!" she returned, her eyes flashing. "Just you dare to lay a finger on me again!" And she added, "Anyway, if you did, these ole doors haven't got no lock on 'em. I'd come right straight in and walk right straight up the stairs again!"

Herbert advanced toward her. "Now you pay attention to me," he said. "You've paid for your ole poem, and we got to have some peace around here. I'm goin' straight over to your mother and ask her to come and get you."

Florence gave up. "What difference would that make, Mister Tadde-tale?" she inquired mockingly. "I wouldn't be here when she come, would I? I'll thank you to notice there's some value to my time, myself; and I'll just politely ask you to excuse me, pray?"

With a proud air, she crushingly departed; and returned to her own home far from dissatisfied with what she had accomplished. Moreover, she began to expand with the realization of a new importance; and she was gratified with the effect upon her parents, at dinner that evening, when she informed them that she had written a poem which was to be published in the prospective first number of the North End Daily Oriole.

"Written a poem?" said her father. "Well, I declare! Why, that's remarkable, Florence!"

"I'm glad the boys were nice about it," said her mother. "I should have feared they couldn't appreciate it, after being so cross to you about letting you have anything to do with the printin' press. They must have thought it was a very good poem."

"Where is the poem, Florence?" Mr. Atwater asked. "Let's read it and see what our little girl can do."

Unfortunately Florence had not a copy, and when she informed her father of this fact, he professed himself greatly disappointed as well as anxious for the first appearance of the Oriole, that he might felicitate her-

self upon the evidence of his daughter's heretofore unsuspected talent. Florence was herself anxious for the newspaper's debut, and she made her anxiety so clear to Atwater & Rooter, Owners & Proprietors, every afternoon after school, during the following week, that by Thursday further argument and repartee on their part were felt to be indeed futile, and in order to have a little peace around there they carried her downstairs. At least they defined their action as "carrying," and, having deposited her in the yard, they were obliged to stand guard at the doors, which they closed and contrived to hold against her until her strength was worn out for that day.

Florence consoled herself. During the week she dropped in on all the members of "the family"—her grandfather, uncles and aunts and cousins, her great-uncles—and in each instance, after no protracted formal preliminaries, libbly remarked that she wrote poetry now; her first to appear in the forthcoming Oriole. And when Great-Aunt Carrie said, "Why, Florence, you're wonderful! I couldn't write a poem to save my life. I never could see how they do it," Florence laughed, made a deprecatory little side motion with her head, and responded: "Why, Aunt Carrie, that's nothing! It just kind of comes to you."

This also served as her explanation when some of her school friends expressed their admiration, after being told the news in confidence; though to the teachers she said, smiling ruefully, as in remembrance of midnight oil, "It does take work, of course!"

When opportunity offered, upon the street, she joined people she knew—and even rather distant acquaintances—and walked with them a little way, and with unaffected directness led the conversation to the subject of poetry, including her own contribution to that art. Altogether, if Florence

was not in a fair way to become a poetic celebrity it was not her own fault but entirely that of the North End Daily Oriole, which was to make its appearance on Saturday, but failed to do so, on account of too much enthusiasm on the part of Atwater & Rooter in manipulating the printing press. It broke, had to be repaired; and Florence, her nerves upset by the accident, demanded her money back. This was impossible, and the postponement proved to be an episode; moreover it gave time to let more people know of the treat that was coming.

Among these was Noble Dill, Florence's ideal. Until the Friday following her disappointment she had found no opportunity to acquaint this being with the news; and but for an encounter, partly due to chance, he might not have heard of it. Mr. Dill was twenty-two, but that was his only perceptible distinction. He was kind, usually, and not unpleasant in appearance or attire; yet he had neither beauty nor that look of power which is said to juggle women from their natural poise. He was the most every-day young man in all the town; and Florence's selection of him to be her ideal still awaits a precise explanation. Nevertheless, it had happened; and a sentimental enrichment of color in her cheeks was the result of her catching sight of him, as she was on the point of opening and entering her own front door that Friday afternoon on her return from school. He was passing the house, walking somewhat dreamily.

(To Be Continued)

COMMENT & DISCOMMENT

Two or three weeks ago it was that the sub-sister who handles the affairs of the lovelorn for the Lincoln Star announced, quite firmly, that the last word had been said in the bobbed hair discussion. The subject had been treated by the highest paid editorial writer in the world, Mr. Arthur Brisbane. Arthur approved of bobbed hair, and said so in an editorial that treated the matter exhaustively and exhaustingly, and Minerva, for one, was content to accept the referee's verdict and end the battle.

However, Minerva, despite all her wisdom, was talking through her hat. In a subject that so deeply concerns women, it is impossible for anybody to say the last word. At any rate, no self-respecting woman would let a man have the last word—in this sort of discussion. We're surprised at Minerva! Her sex should frame up a fitting punishment for her.

The bobbed hair problem is now down to the last stages. The scientific men are taking it up. Whenever a discussion goes on about so long, some long-haired archeologist hears of it, and when he gets sufficiently worked up to write about it, the chances are that the excellent, assistant curator of the Mexican and South American anthropology at the Chicago Museum has discovered that a lot of new styles aren't new at all, and with becoming modesty has set forth his findings. They make interesting reading, although they probably won't have any marked influence in the great debate.

Bobbed hair, concealed ears, short skirts and all the other fads and follies associated with modern women's styles are as old as the pyramids, according to the wote story told by the mummies of both Egypt and Peru in the Field Museum at Chicago, writes Mr. Alden. Wrapped in pitched sheets and encased in sarcophagi covered with curious paintings and hieroglyphics in colors still bright after three thousand years and more, these mummies, all that was mortal of a human being of ages ago, today link the present to a civilization long since dead.

ANNOCI

A baby boy was born Friday, August 26 to Mr. and Mrs. Gannon. Roy Hoffland was an Alliance visitor Monday.

Dr. McClelland has moved his drug store stock into the building formerly occupied by the Antioch State bank.

Messrs Roy Hoffland, James Thomas, Sam O'Brien and Misses Alta Roberts, Mary Rosenfelt, Margaret Klingaman and Zelma Smith were entertained Wednesday evening at the home of Mrs. Hobbs.

J. O. Shigley has finished stacking hay on the Tom Priggs ranch.

Mr. and Mrs. Messer's visit accompanied by Miss Roberts spent Wednesday afternoon and evening in Alliance.

Miss Mary Rosenfelt left Sunday for Seneca, where she will teach during the coming year.

Miss Irma Graham arrived Sunday to begin her school duties for the year.

Lloyd Krikbaum and sisters, Rachel and Vashki, arrived Saturday.

Miss Anna Hoffland arrived Sunday night.

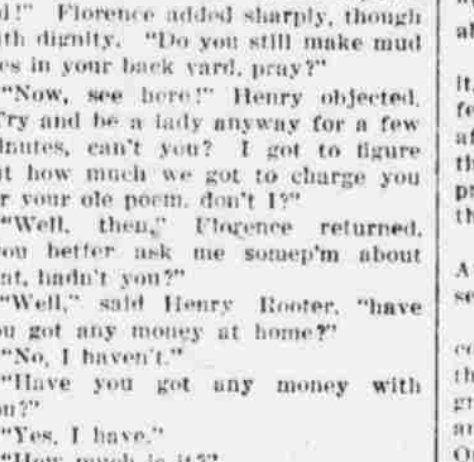
LEGAL NOTICE

To George Dryden and Percy Dryden:

You will take notice that on the 25th day of August, 1921, Charles Roselius caused an order of attachment to be issued out of the Justice Court of L. A. Berry, Justice of the Peace of Alliance, Box Butte County, Nebraska, against you for the sum of Forty Dollars (\$40.00). That under said order of attachment, garnishment has been served on the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad Company, which Company has answered that it is indebted to defendant, George Dryden, in the sum of Forty-five and 30-100 (\$45.30) Dollars and to Percy Dryden, in the sum of Sixty and 07-100 (\$60.07) Dollars. That the said action has been continued to October 18, 1921, 10 o'clock A. M., at which time you are required to appear and show cause, if any you have, why said funds should not be applied to the payment of plaintiff's claim.

Dated September 6th, 1921.

CHARLES ROSELIUS,
Plaintiff.



Look in Her Pocket, Herbert Shouted. "Don't Let Her Kick You!"

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