

Next to Reading Matter by O. Henry

He compelled my interest as he stepped from the ferry at Desbrosses Street. He had the air of being familiar with hemispheres and worlds, and of entering New York as the lord of a demesne who revisited it in after years of absence. But I thought that, with all his air, he had never before set foot on the slippery cobblestones of the City of Too Many Caliphs.

He wore loose clothes of a strange bluish drab colour, and a conservative, round Panama hat without the cock-a-loop indentations and cants with which Northern fanciers disfigure the tropic head-gear. Moreover, he was the homeliest man I have ever seen. His ugliness was less repellent than startling—arising from a sort of Lincolnian ruggedness and irregularity of feature that spellbound you with wonder and dismay. So may have looked afrites or the shapes metamorphosed from the vapour of the fisherman's vase. As he afterward told me, his name was Judson Tate; and he may as well be called so at once. He wore his green silk tie through a topaz ring; and he carried a cane made of the vertebræ of a shark.

Judson Tate accosted me with some large and casual inquiries about the city's streets and hotels, in the manner of one who had but for the moment forgotten the trifling details. I could think of no reason for disparaging my own quiet hotel in the downtown district; so the mid-morning of the night found us already victualed and drunked (at my expense), and ready to be chaired and tobaccoed in a quiet corner of the lobby.

There was something on Judson Tate's mind, and, such as it was, he tried to convey it to me. Already he had accepted me as his friend; and when I looked at his great, snuff-brown first-mate's hand, with which he brought emphasis to his periods, within six inches of my nose, I wondered if, by any chance, he was as sudden in conceiving enmity against strangers.

When this man began to talk I perceived in him a certain power. His voice was a persuasive instrument, upon which he played with a somewhat specious but effective art. He did not try to make you forget his ugliness; he flaunted it in your face and made it part of the charm of his speech. Shutting your eyes, you would have trailed after this rat-catcher's pipes at least to the walls of Hamelin. Beyond that you would have had to be more childish to follow. But let him play his own tune to the words set down, so that if all is too dull, the art of music may bear the blame.

"Women," said Judson Tate, "are mysterious creatures."

My spirits sank. I was not there to listen to such a world-old hypothesis—to such a time-worn, long-ago-refuted, bald, feeble, illogical, vicious, patent sophistry—to an ancient, baseless, wearisome, ragged, unfounded, insidious, falsehood originated by women themselves, and by them insinuated, foisted, thrust, spread, and ingeniously promulgated into the ears of mankind by underhanded, secret and deceptive methods, for the purpose of augmenting, furthering, and reinforcing their own charms and designs.

"Oh, I don't know!" said I, vernacularly.

"Have you ever heard of Oratama?" he asked.

"Possibly," I answered. "I seem to recall a toe dancer—or a suburban addition—or was it a perfume?—of some such name."

"It is a town," said Judson Tate, "on the coast of a foreign country of which you know nothing and could understand less. It is a country governed by a dictator and controlled by revolutions and insubordination. It was there that a great life-drama was played, with Judson Tate, the homeliest man in America, and Fergus McMahan, the handsomest adventurer in history or fiction, and Señorita Anabela Zamora, the beautiful daughter of the alcalde of Oratama, as chief actors. And,

another thing—nowhere else on the globe except in the department of Trienta y tres in Uruguay does the *chuchula* plant grow. The products of the country I speak of are valuable woods, dyestuffs, gold, rubber, ivory, and cocoa.”

“I was not aware,” said I, “that South America produced any ivory.”

“There you are twice mistaken,” said Judson Tate, distributing the words over at least an octave of his wonderful voice. “I did not say that the country I spoke of was in South America—I must be careful, my dear man; I have been in politics there, you know. But, even so—I have played chess against its president with a set carved from the nasal bones of the tapir—one of our native specimens of the order of *perissodactyle unguulates* inhabiting the Cordilleras—which was as pretty ivory as you would care to see.

“But it was of romance and adventure and the ways of women that was I going to tell you, and not of zoölogical animals.

“For fifteen years I was the ruling power behind old Sancho Benavides, the Royal High Thumbscrew of the republic. You’ve seen his picture in the papers—a mushy black man with whiskers like the notes on a Swiss music-box cylinder, and a scroll in his right hand like the ones they write births on in the family Bible. Well, that chocolate potentate used to be the biggest item of interest anywhere between the colour line and the parallels of latitude. It was three throws, horses, whether he was to wind up in the Hall of Fame or the Bureau of Combustibles. He’d have been sure called the Roosevelt of the Southern Continent if it hadn’t been that Grover Cleveland was President at the time. He’d hold office a couple of terms, then he’d sit out for a hand—always after appointing his own successor for the interims.

“But it was not Benavides, the Liberator, who was making all this fame for himself. Not him. It was Judson Tate. Benavides was only the chip over the bug. I gave him the tip when to declare war and increase import duties and wear his state trousers. But that wasn’t what I wanted to tell you. How did I get to be It? I’ll tell you. Because I’m the most gifted talker that ever made vocal sounds since Adam first opened his eyes, pushed aside the smelling-salts, and asked: ‘Where am I?’

“As you observe, I am about the ugliest man you ever saw outside the gallery of photographs of the New England early Christian Scientists. So, at an early age, I perceived that what I lacked in looks I must make up in eloquence. That I’ve done. I get what I go after. As the back-stop and still small voice of old Benavides I made all the great historical powers-behind-the-throne, such as Talleyrand, Mrs. de Pompadour, and Loeb, look as small as the minority report of a Duma. I could talk nations into or out of debt, harangue armies to sleep on the battlefield, reduce insurrections, inflammations, taxes, appropriations or surpluses with a few words, and call up the dogs of war or the dove of peace with the same bird-like whistle. Beauty and epaulettes and curly moustaches and Grecian profiles in other men were never in my way. When people first look at me they shudder. Unless they are in the last stages of *angina pectoris* they are mine in ten minutes after I begin to talk. Women and men—I win ‘em as they come. Now, you wouldn’t think women would fancy a man with a face like mine, would you?”

“Oh, yes, Mr. Tate,” said I. “History is bright and fiction dull with homely men who have charmed women. There seems—”

“Pardon me,” interrupted Judson Tate, “but you don’t quite understand. You have yet to hear my story.

“Fergus McMahan was a friend of mine in the capital. For a handsome man I’ll admit he was the

Next to Reading Matter by O. Henry

duty-free merchandise. He had blond curls and laughing blue eyes and was featured regular. They said he was a ringer for the statue they call Herr Mees, the god of speech and eloquence resting in some museum at Rome. Some German anarchist, I suppose. They are always resting and talking.

“But Fergus was no talker. He was brought up with the idea that to be beautiful was to make good. His conversation was about as edifying as listening to a leak dropping in a tin dish-pan at the head of the bed when you want to go to sleep. But he and me got to be friends—maybe because we was so opposite, don’t you think? Looking at the Hallowe’en mask that I call my face when I’m shaving seemed to give Fergus pleasure; and I’m sure that whenever I heard the feeble output of throat noises that he called conversation I felt contented to be a gargoye with a silver tongue.

“One time I found it necessary to go down to this coast town of Oratama to straighten out a lot of political unrest and chop off a few heads in the customs and military departments. Fergus, who owned the ice and sulphur-match concessions of the republic, says he’ll keep me company.

“So, in a jangle of mule-train bells, we gallops into Oratama, and the town belonged to us as much as Long Island Sound doesn’t belong to Japan when T. R. is at Oyster Bay. I say us; but I mean me. Everybody for four nations, two oceans, one bay and isthmus, and five archipelagoes around had heard of Judson Tate. Gentleman adventurer, they called me. I had been written up in five columns of the yellow journals, 40,000 words (with marginal decorations) in a monthly magazine, and a stickful on the twelfth page of the *New York Times*. If the beauty of Fergus McMahan gained any part of our reception in Oratama, I’ll eat the price-tag in my Panama. It was me that they hung out paper flowers and palm branches for. I am not a jealous man; I am stating facts. The people were Nebuchadnezzars; they bit the grass before me; there was no dust in the town for them to bite. They bowed down to Judson Tate. They knew that I was the power behind Sancho Benavides. A word from me was more to them than a whole deckle-edged library from East Aurora in sectional bookcases was from anybody else. And yet there are people who spend hours fixing their faces—rubbing in cold cream and massaging the muscles (always toward the eyes) and taking in the slack with tincture of benzoin and electrolyzing moles—to what end? Looking handsome. Oh, what a mistake! It’s the larynx that the beauty doctors ought to work on. It’s words more than warts, talk more than talcum, palaver more than powder, blarney more than bloom that counts—the phonograph instead of the photograph. But I was going to tell you.

“The local Astors put me and Fergus up at the Centipede Club, a frame building built on posts sunk in the surf. The tide’s only nine inches. The Little Big High Low Jack-in-the-game of the town came around and kowtowed. Oh, it wasn’t to Herr Mees. They had heard about Judson Tate.

“One afternoon me and Fergus McMahan was sitting on the seaward gallery of the Centipede, drinking iced rum and talking.

“‘Judson,’ says Fergus, ‘there’s an angel in Oratama.’

“‘So long,’ says I, ‘as it ain’t Gabriel, why talk as if you had heard a trump blow?’

“‘It’s the Señorita Anabela Zamora,’ says Fergus. ‘She’s—she’s—she’s as lovely as—as hell!’

“‘Bravo!’ says I, laughing heartily. ‘You have a true lover’s eloquence to paint the beauties of your inamorata. You remind me,’ says I, ‘of Faust’s wooing of Marguerite—that is, if he wooed her after he went down the trap-door of the stage.’

“‘Judson,’ says Fergus, ‘you know you are as beautiless as a rhinoceros. You can’t have any interest in women. I’m awfully gone in Miss Anabela. And that’s why I’m telling you.’

Next to Reading Matter by O. Henry

“‘Oh, *seguramente*,’ says I. ‘I know I have a front elevation like an Aztec god that guards a buried treasure that never did exist in Jefferson County, Yucatan. But there are compensations. For instance, I am It in this country as far as the eye can reach, and then a few perches and poles. And again,’ says I, ‘when I engage people in a set-to of oral, vocal, and laryngeal utterances, I do not usually confine my side of the argument to what may be likened to a cheap phonographic reproduction of the ravings of a jellyfish.’

“‘Oh, I know,’ says Fergus, amiable, ‘that I’m not handy at small talk. Or large, either. That’s why I’m telling you. I want you to help me.’

“‘How can I do it?’ I asked.

“‘I have subsidized,’ says Fergus, ‘the services of Señorita Anabela’s duenna, whose name is Francesca. You have a reputation in this country, Judson,’ says Fergus, ‘of being a great man and a hero.’

“‘I have,’ says I. ‘And I deserve it.’

“‘And I,’ says Fergus, ‘am the best-looking man between the arctic circle and antarctic ice pack.’

“‘With limitations,’ says I, ‘as to physiognomy and geography, I freely concede you to be.’

“‘Between the two of us,’ says Fergus, ‘we ought to land the Señorita Anabela Zamora. The lady, as you know, is of an old Spanish family, and further than looking at her driving in the family *carruaje* of afternoons around the plaza, or catching a glimpse of her through a barred window of evenings, she is as unapproachable as a star.’

“‘Land her for which one of us?’ says I.

“‘For me, of course,’ says Fergus. ‘You’ve never seen her. Now, I’ve had Francesca point me out to her as being you on several occasions. When she sees me on the plaza, she thinks she’s looking at Don Judson Tate, the greatest hero, statesman, and romantic figure in the country. With your reputation and my looks combined in one man, how can she resist him? She’s heard all about your thrilling history, of course. And she’s seen me. Can any woman want more?’ asks Fergus McMahan.

“‘Can she do with less?’ I ask. ‘How can we separate our mutual attractions, and how shall we apportion the proceeds?’

“Then Fergus tells me his scheme.

“The house of the alcalde, Don Luis Zamora, he says, has a *patio*, of course—a kind of inner courtyard opening from the street. In an angle of it is his daughter’s window—as dark a place as you could find. And what do you think he wants me to do? Why, knowing my freedom, charm, and skilfulness of tongue, he proposes that I go into the *patio* at midnight, when the hobgoblin face of me cannot be seen, and make love to her for him—for the pretty man that she has seen on the plaza, thinking him to be Don Judson Tate.

“Why shouldn’t I do it for him—for my friend, Fergus McMahan? For him to ask me was a compliment—an acknowledgment of his own shortcomings.

“‘You little, lily white, fine-haired, highly polished piece of dumb sculpture,’ says I, ‘I’ll help you. Make your arrangements and get me in the dark outside her window and my stream of conversation opened up with the moonlight tremolo stop turned on, and she’s yours.’

Next to Reading Matter by O. Henry

“Keep your face hid, Jud,’ says Fergus. ‘For heaven’s sake, keep your face hid. I’m a friend of yours in all kinds of sentiment, but this is a business deal. If I could talk I wouldn’t ask you. But seeing me and listening to you I don’t see why she can’t be landed.’

“‘By you?’ says I.

“‘By me,’ says Fergus.

“Well, Fergus and the duenna, Francesca, attended to the details. And one night they fetched me a long black cloak with a high collar, and led me to the house at midnight. I stood by the window in the *patio* until I heard a voice as soft and sweet as an angel’s whisper on the other side of the bars. I could see only a faint, white clad shape inside; and, true to Fergus, I pulled the collar of my cloak high up, for it was July in the wet seasons, and the nights were chilly. And, smothering a laugh as I thought of the tongue-tied Fergus, I began to talk.

“Well, sir, I talked an hour at the Señorita Anabela. I say ‘at’ because it was not ‘with.’ Now and then she would say: ‘Oh, Señor,’ or ‘Now, ain’t you foolin’?’ or ‘I know you don’t mean that,’ and such things as women will when they are being rightly courted. Both of us knew English and Spanish; so in two languages I tried to win the heart of the lady for my friend Fergus. But for the bars to the window I could have done it in one. At the end of the hour she dismissed me and gave me a big, red rose. I handed it over to Fergus when I got home.

“For three weeks every third or fourth night I impersonated my friend in the *patio* at the window of Señorita Anabela. At last she admitted that her heart was mine, and spoke of having seen me every afternoon when she drove in the plaza. It was Fergus she had seen, of course. But it was my talk that won her. Suppose Fergus had gone there, and tried to make a hit in the dark with his beauty all invisible, and not a word to say for himself!

“On the last night she promised to be mine—that is, Fergus’s. And she put her hand between the bars for me to kiss. I bestowed the kiss and took the news to Fergus.

“‘You might have left that for me to do,’ says he.

“‘That’ll be your job hereafter,’ says I. ‘Keep on doing that and don’t try to talk. Maybe after she thinks she’s in love she won’t notice the difference between real conversation and the inarticulate sort of droning that you give forth.’

“Now, I had never seen Señorita Anabela. So, the next day Fergus asks me to walk with him through the plaza and view the daily promenade and exhibition of Oratama society, a sight that had no interest for me. But I went; and children and dogs took to the banana groves and mangrove swamps as soon as they had a look at my face.

“‘Here she comes,’ said Fergus, twirling his moustache—‘the one in white, in the open carriage with the black horse.’

“I looked and felt the ground rock under my feet. For Señorita Anabela Zamora was the most beautiful woman in the world, and the only one from that moment on, so far as Judson Tate was concerned. I saw at a glance that I must be hers and she mine forever. I thought of my face and nearly fainted; and then I thought of my other talents and stood upright again. And I had been wooing her for three weeks for another man!

“As Señorita Anabela’s carriage rolled slowly past, she gave Fergus a long, soft glance from the corners of her night-black eyes, a glance that would have sent Judson Tate up into heaven in a

Next to Reading Matter by O. Henry

rubber-tired chariot. But she never looked at me. And that handsome man only ruffles his curls and smirks and prances like a lady-killer at my side.

“What do you think of her, Judson?” asks Fergus, with an air.

“This much,” says I. “She is to be Mrs. Judson Tate. I am no man to play tricks on a friend. So take your warning.”

“I thought Fergus would die laughing.

“Well, well, well,” said he, “you old doughface! Struck too, are you? That’s great! But you’re too late. Francesca tells me that Anabela talks of nothing but me, day and night. Of course, I’m awfully obliged to you for making that chin-music to her of evenings. But, do you know, I’ve an idea that I could have done it as well myself.”

“Mrs. Judson Tate,” says I. “Don’t forget the name. You’ve had the use of my tongue to go with your good looks, my boy. You can’t lend me your looks; but hereafter my tongue is my own. Keep your mind on the name that’s to be on the visiting cards two inches by three and a half—”Mrs. Judson Tate.” That’s all.”

“All right,” says Fergus, laughing again. “I’ve talked with her father, the alcalde, and he’s willing. He’s to give a *baile* to-morrow evening in his new warehouse. If you were a dancing man, Jud, I’d expect you around to meet the future Mrs. McMahan.”

“But on the next evening, when the music was playing loudest at the Alcade Zamora’s *baile*, into the room steps Judson Tate in new white linen clothes as if he were the biggest man in the whole nation, which he was.

“Some of the musicians jumped off the key when they saw my face, and one or two of the timidest señoritas let out a screech or two. But up prances the alcalde and almost wipes the dust off my shoes with his forehead. No mere good looks could have won me that sensational entrance.

“I hear much, Señor Zamora,” says I, “of the charm of your daughter. It would give me great pleasure to be presented to her.”

“There were about six dozen willow rocking-chairs, with pink tidies tied on to them, arranged against the walls. In one of them sat Señorita Anabela in white Swiss and red slippers, with pearls and fireflies in her hair. Fergus was at the other end of the room trying to break away from two maroons and a claybank girl.

“The alcalde leads me up to Anabela and presents me. When she took the first look at my face she dropped her fan and nearly turned her chair over from the shock. But I’m used to that.

“I sat down by her, and began to talk. When she heard me speak she jumped, and her eyes got as big as alligator pears. She couldn’t strike a balance between the tones of my voice and face I carried. But I kept on talking in the key of C, which is the ladies’ key; and presently she sat still in her chair and a dreamy look came into her eyes. She was coming my way. She knew of Judson Tate, and what a big man he was, and the big things he had done; and that was in my favour. But, of course, it was some shock to her to find out that I was not the pretty man that had been pointed out to her as the great Judson. And then I took the Spanish language, which is better than English for certain purposes, and played on it like a harp of a thousand strings. I ranged from the second G below the staff up to F-sharp above it. I set my voice to poetry, art, romance, flowers, and moonlight. I repeated some of the verses that I had murmured to her in the dark at her window; and I knew from

Next to Reading Matter by O. Henry

a sudden soft sparkle in her eye that she recognized in my voice the tones of her midnight mysterious wooer.

“Anyhow, I had Fergus McMahan going. Oh, the vocal is the true art—no doubt about that. Handsome is as handsome palavers. That’s the renovated proverb.

“I took Señorita Anabela for a walk in the lemon grove while Fergus, disfiguring himself with an ugly frown, was waltzing with the claybank girl. Before we returned I had permission to come to her window in the *patio* the next evening at midnight and talk some more.

“Oh, it was easy enough. In two weeks Anabela was engaged to me, and Fergus was out. He took it calm, for a handsome man, and told me he wasn’t going to give in.

“‘Talk may be all right in its place, Judson,’ he says to me, ‘although I’ve never thought it worth cultivating. But,’ says he, ‘to expect mere words to back up successfully a face like yours in a lady’s good graces is like expecting a man to make a square meal on the ringing of a dinner-bell.’

“But I haven’t begun on the story I was going to tell you yet.

“One day I took a long ride in the hot sunshine, and then took a bath in the cold waters of a lagoon on the edge of the town before I’d cooled off.

“That evening after dark I called at the *alcalde*’s to see Anabela. I was calling regular every evening then, and we were to be married in a month. She was looking like a bulbul, a gazelle, and a tea-rose, and her eyes were as soft and bright as two quarts of cream skimmed off from the Milky Way. She looked at my rugged features without any expression of fear or repugnance. Indeed, I fancied that I saw a look of deep admiration and affection, such as she had cast at Fergus on the plaza.

“I sat down, and opened my mouth to tell Anabela what she loved to hear—that she was a trust, monopolizing all the loveliness of earth. I opened my mouth, and instead of the usual vibrating words of love and compliment, there came forth a faint wheeze such as a baby with croup might emit. Not a word—not a syllable—not an intelligible sound. I had caught cold in my laryngeal regions when I took my injudicious bath.

“For two hours I sat trying to entertain Anabela. She talked a certain amount, but it was perfunctory and diluted. The nearest approach I made to speech was to formulate a sound like a clam trying to sing ‘A Life on the Ocean Wave’ at low tide. It seemed that Anabela’s eyes did not rest upon me as often as usual. I had nothing with which to charm her ears. We looked at pictures and she played the guitar occasionally, very badly. When I left, her parting manner seemed cool—or at least thoughtful.

“This happened for five evenings consecutively.

“On the sixth day she ran away with Fergus McMahan.

“It was known that they fled in a sailing yacht bound for Belize. I was only eight hours behind them in a small steam launch belonging to the Revenue Department.

“Before I sailed, I rushed into the *botica* of old Manuel Iquito, a half-breed Indian druggist. I could not speak, but I pointed to my throat and made a sound like escaping steam. He began to yawn. In an hour, according to the customs of the country, I would have been waited on. I reached across the counter, seized him by the throat, and pointed again to my own. He yawned once more, and thrust into my hand a small bottle containing a black liquid.

“Take one small spoonful every two hours,’ says he.

“I threw him a dollar and skinned for the steamer.

“I steamed into the harbour at Belize thirteen seconds behind the yacht that Anabela and Fergus were on. They started for the shore in a dory just as my skiff was lowered over the side. I tried to order my sailormen to row faster, but the sounds died in my larynx before they came to the light. Then I thought of old Iquito’s medicine, and I got out his bottle and took a swallow of it.

“The two boats landed at the same moment. I walked straight up to Anabela and Fergus. Her eyes rested upon me for an instant; then she turned them, full of feeling and confidence, upon Fergus. I knew I could not speak, but I was desperate. In speech lay my only hope. I could not stand beside Fergus and challenge comparison in the way of beauty. Purely involuntarily, my larynx and epiglottis attempted to reproduce the sounds that my mind was calling upon my vocal organs to send forth.

“To my intense surprise and delight the words rolled forth beautifully clear, resonant, exquisitely modulated, full of power, expression, and long-repressed emotion.

“‘Señorita Anabela,’ says I, ‘may I speak with you aside for a moment?’

“You don’t want details about that, do you? Thanks. The old eloquence had come back all right. I led her under a cocoanut palm and put my old verbal spell on her again.

“‘Judson,’ says she, ‘when you are talking to me I can hear nothing else—I can see nothing else—there is nothing and nobody else in the world for me.’

“Well, that’s about all of the story. Anabela went back to Oratama in the steamer with me. I never heard what became of Fergus. I never saw him any more. Anabela is now Mrs. Judson Tate. Has my story bored you much?”

“No,” said I. “I am always interested in psychological studies. A human heart—and especially a woman’s—is a wonderful thing to contemplate.”

“It is,” said Judson Tate. “And so are the trachea and bronchial tubes of man. And the larynx too. Did you ever make a study of the windpipe?”

“Never,” said I. “But I have taken much pleasure in your story. May I ask after Mrs. Tate, and inquire of her present health and whereabouts?”

“Oh, sure,” said Judson Tate. “We are living in Bergen Avenue, Jersey City. The climate down in Oratama didn’t suit Mrs. T. I don’t suppose you ever dissected the arytenoid cartilages of the epiglottis, did you?”

“Why, no,” said I, “I am no surgeon.”

“Pardon me,” said Judson Tate, “but every man should know enough of anatomy and therapeutics to safeguard his own health. A sudden cold may set up capillary bronchitis or inflammation of the pulmonary vesicles, which may result in a serious affection of the vocal organs.”

“Perhaps so,” said I, with some impatience; “but that is neither here nor there. Speaking of the strange manifestations of the affection of women, I—”

“Yes, yes,” interrupted Judson Tate; “they have peculiar ways. But, as I was going to tell you: when I

went back to Oratama I found out from Manuel Iquito what was in that mixture he gave me for my lost voice. I told you how quick it cured me. He made that stuff from the *chuchula* plant. Now, look here.”

Judson Tate drew an oblong, white pasteboard box from his pocket.

“For any cough,” he said, “or cold, or hoarseness, or bronchial affection whatsoever, I have here the greatest remedy in the world. You see the formula, printed on the box. Each tablet contains licorice, 2 grains; balsam tolu, 1/10 grain; oil of anise, 1/20 minim; oil of tar, 1/60 minim; oleo-resin of cubebs, 1/60 minim; fluid extract of *chuchula*, 1/10 minim.

“I am in New York,” went on Judson Tate, “for the purpose of organizing a company to market the greatest remedy for throat affections ever discovered. At present I am introducing the lozenges in a small way. I have here a box containing four dozen, which I am selling for the small sum of fifty cents. If you are suffering—”

I got up and went away without a word. I walked slowly up to the little park near my hotel, leaving Judson Tate alone with his conscience. My feelings were lacerated. He had poured gently upon me a story that I might have used. There was a little of the breath of life in it, and some of the synthetic atmosphere that passes, when cunningly tinkered, in the marts. And, at the last it had proven to be a commercial pill, deftly coated with the sugar of fiction. The worst of it was that I could not offer it for sale. Advertising departments and counting-rooms look down upon me. And it would never do for the literary. Therefore I sat upon a bench with other disappointed ones until my eyelids drooped.

I went to my room, and, as my custom is, read for an hour stories in my favourite magazines. This was to get my mind back to art again.

And as I read each story, I threw the magazines sadly and hopelessly, one by one, upon the floor. Each author, without one exception to bring balm to my heart, wrote lilingly and sprightly a story of some particular make of motor-car that seemed to control the sparking plug of his genius.

And when the last one was hurled from me I took heart.

“If readers can swallow so many proprietary automobiles,” I said to myself, “they ought not to strain at one of Tate’s Compound Magic Chuchula Bronchial Lozenges.”

And so if you see this story in print you will understand that business is business, and that if Art gets very far ahead of Commerce, she will have to get up and hustle.

I may as well add, to make a clean job of it, that you can’t buy the *chuchula* plant in the drug stores.