

# The Oregon Spirit

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NUMBER I.

## Thin Climax

"The world's greatest deeds of heroism are done in a blaspheming, tobacco chewing way."—Dr. George Rebec.

The tide was ebbing as though the very ocean's floor had opened and the waters of the world were pouring through. Full eight miles wide, the river ran a torrent to the sea. Over the broad flood a thousand lights of red and white gleamed like fire flies on a summer night in Ohio. Boats—fish boats—two men in each; in one two men were talking; talking and eating together.

"I'm not preaching. I'm not trying to tell you what's what. You're older than I, and I'm not trying to call you a sinner, nor myself a saint. But, Peter, you shouldn't swear so much. It don't help you."

"Does it hurt?"

"Yes. You don't think what you are saying, but when you do think it breaks down your respect for yourself, as it does the regard others hold for you."

"Rot. It keeps my mind off my troubles, and on my work. When a fellow's swearing at things, he don't think of them enough to get afraid. Same way when a guy's chewing. He don't think about being hungry. He don't bother about worrying," and he opened a tin box. The label said, "Climax"—Thin Climax.

They were Peter, and Andrew his brother, and their net was drifting in the tide, for they were fishers. Off to the north of the boat a long line of floats bobbed and dipped through the waves—now gleaming black in the lantern-light, now hid from sight—supporting the net. Below them, in the black water swam the salmon.

As Peter opened his small tin box Andrew ripped off a foil wrapper. "Care for some chocolate?"

"Hugh, thanks, no. I prefer tobacco," and they commenced clearing up the litter of their midnight meal. Peter often spat overboard.

On they drifted, on to the bar—for they were that kind of fishermen, who, with shallow nets and deep courage, drift in the fringe of breakers that skirts the reefs and spits where the river strikes the sea. The night was chill and they, beneath their spray hood, did not see the light on Cape Disappointment grow plainer; did not see the middle lights or the range lights slipping past. They did not see their northerly swinging net as the tide on Republic spit caught it. They did not know that it was dragging them; that its buoy was not far from the place where the waves were breaking along Peacock spit.

Peter spat.

"I wish you wouldn't chew," his brother complained. "I don't like it. Neither does mother—and Selma hates it."

"Let's not talk of her, or rather—let's. She loves you?"

"I don't know. Neither does she, but she does love you," and Andrew bit into his chocolate.

"So she says. And you love her?"

"More, Pete, than all the world. It is a sinful thing."

"Not that, but it is a world-wide tale. Two brothers and one girl. She loves me, she says, and I her; but she is too good for such as I. Were I to die, she would be yours."

"Don't say that, Pete. She loves you and she belongs to you. The sadness is for me."

"Perhaps not all, for she would have to live with me, who am not worthy to speak with her. I who chew tobacco," and he rattled the little can in the darkness as he opened it.

An ominous swell was slipping beneath the boat. It was not the pulsating roller that rises and drops on an ebbing tide. It had a lurch and throw. Peter felt it and rose. The canvas flap fell behind his shoulder. Suddenly he began swearing, fervently, loudly. Then his voice was drowned in the roar of a breaking wave, a wall of water that plunged to foam but a short distance to leeward.

"We're on the spit. Come here and lend a hand. Start the motor while I cut loose the net. We're goners if another breaks."

Andrew, almost helpless from fear, was fumbling with switches and stop cocks.

All around the water heaved and sank. In cross current and swell their boat spun and plunged. Beyond them another breaker roared. Farther on, in a chaos of crashing water, the fury of the sea was plunging on the spit. The current had them, the suck of falling waves.

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## Even As You and I

Robert Case.

There are some people, poetically inclined, who think of woman as a divine creature to be set upon a pedestal and worshipped from afar. There are others who call her "a rag and a bone and a hank of hair." The poetically inclined say that love is a divine passion, mysterious, inexplicable, which seizes upon two frail human creatures like a bolt from the blue. It is a crime, says the poet, to keep two such people apart; he speaks of the "affinity of souls" and says that to keep them asunder is to render them completely and hopelessly miserable.

"Nothing of the kind," says the Cynic. "We must admit of love as a biological fact—as a provision of nature for the continuing of the race; to claim anything more for love is bosh, pure and simple. If a man only took the trouble to reason it out, he selects a woman for certain concrete reasons and not because of a 'divine passion' or 'affinity of the soul.'"

I am not prepared to decide this tremendous question, nor even to argue it; I can only cite the case of Hector and Cleone.

Hector was just an ordinary youth who went to college for the broadening influences to be derived therefrom. He was a likeable boy with a dual nature, half poetical, half cynical. He made friends quickly. His poetic nature made him sensitive of their regard, but his cynical nature compelled him to analyze their friendship and doubt their sincerity. His poetic self wished to accept his friends "on faith," but his cold, unemotional, cynical self would insist upon weighing them in the balance—and invariably found them wanting. Thus, superficially, he had many friends, but in reality his heart of hearts was a walled and buttressed fortress in whose high impregnable tower his cynical nature dwelt, looking down upon the world about him with a cold and sneering eye.

Cleone was an ordinary college girl, not cursed with too much brains. Her friends assured her that she was good-looking. A few boys had sworn that she was beautiful. She was quite well satisfied with herself.

They met, Hector and Cleone, and became friends immediately. It is not my purpose to chronicle the details of their growing friendship—it just grew, that was all—"like a beautiful flower to be cherished," said Hector the poet. "Like a weed in the garden to be watched with suspicion, lest it grow too strong to uproot," said Hector the Cynic. Nor it is my purpose to tell how Hector basked in the sunshine of her smile and wrote odes to the beauty of her hair, which was as yellow as corn tassels in the summer; or of how Hector the Cynic laughed in secret at the wiles she employed to ensnare him. It is their last night together that interests us—when the combined forces of Cleone the Flirt and Hector the Poet were defeated in a pitched battle by Hector the Cynic.

"It is the last night," thought Hector the Poet as they walked slowly

across the campus. It was moonlight. The undulating slopes of the campus lay before them, fair and green and beautiful. Just a breath of air was stirring through the ancient oaks and rustling in the ivy on the silent halls. The grass beneath their feet was soft as velvet. As they walked along slowly the moonlight glistened in Cleone's corn-silk hair until it shone like burnished gold—

"She is beautiful," thought Hector the Poet, looking down upon her bowed head with a thrill—for she WAS beautiful—"and this is the last night."

To his poetical soul the wind and the trees and the ivy seemed to be whispering in unison, "It is the last night" \* \* \* \*

"Don't make a fool of yourself," warned Hector, the Cynic coldly. "She looks naive and innocent, but, like Major Bagstock, she is 'deep—deep and devilish sly.' She knows well enough the effect of moonlight nights and parting sobs on callow youth. Beware."

They moved slowly across the campus where the moonlight cast a checkered pattern on the velvet grass. Through the long aisles between the trees in the cool distances could be seen other couples, arm in arm. Hector drew her arm through his. He thought she was trembling but was not sure—perhaps it was he who trembled. Far away on the hillside, faintly, they heard a dog barking. Nearer, down by the river, the frogs were croaking. It was the last night. \* \* \* \*

"Hector," said Cleone softly, "It doesn't seem possible that tomorrow we will be miles and miles apart, does it?"

They sat down on a seat that was conveniently placed under a tree. Hector placed his arm along the back of the bench. Cleone snuggled against

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### ECHOES OF LAST YEAR

Some of the boys were whooping it up, in the Y. M. C. A. hangout,  
The kid that writes the "we thank you notes," was having a  
checkers bout,

While Leslie Tooze, a dangerous cuss, in a wide sombrero hat,  
With Maxie Sommer, his bosom friend, was learning how to  
tat.

Out of the hall, which was quiet and dark, and into the din and  
glare,

There stumbled Dyott, a minister's son, his young cheeks lined  
with care.

He looked like a man with a foot in the mud, and scarcely the  
strength of a louse,

Yet he pitted forty-three cents on the boards, and called for  
"Gum for the house."

There were none of us there who could treat in return, being men  
without money to lose,

But we chewed his gum, and the last to chew, was dangerous  
Leslie Tooze.

(NOTE: This is not "Echo's of last year" either.—It is Ad's of  
last year.)