

# O. Henry Stories

VI.—Phoebe

By O. HENRY

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YOU are a man of many adventures and varied enterprises," I said to Captain Maloné. "Do you believe that the possible element of good luck or bad luck—if there is such a thing as luck—has influenced your career or persisted for or against you to such an extent that you were forced to attribute results to the operation of the aforesaid good luck or bad luck?"

This question (of almost the dull insolence of legal phraseology) was put while we sat in Rousselin's little red tiled café near Congo square, in New Orleans.

Brown faced, white haired, finger ringed captains of adventure came often to Rousselin's for the cognac. They came from sea and land and were chary of relating the things they had seen—not because they were more wonderful than the fantasies of the Annals of print, but because they were so different. And I was a perpetual wedding guest, always striving to cast my buttonhole over the finger of one of these mariners of fortune. This Captain Maloné was a Hibernalian creole who had gone to and fro in the earth and walked up and down in it. He looked like any other well dressed man of thirty-five whom you might meet except that he was hopelessly weather tanned and wore on his chain an ancient ivory and gold Peruvian charm against evil, which has nothing at all to do with his story.

"My answer to your question," said the captain, smiling, "will be to tell you the story of Bad Luck Kearny. That is, if you don't mind hearing it."

My reply was to pound on the table for Rousselin.

"Strolling along Tchoupitoulas street one night," began Captain Maloné, "I noticed, without especially taxing my interest, a small man walking rapidly toward me. He stepped upon a wooden cellar door, crashed through it and disappeared. I rescued him from a heap of soft coal below. He dusted himself briskly, swearing fluently in a mechanical tone, as an underpaid actor recites the gypsy's curse. Gratitude and the dust in his throat seemed to call for fluids to clear them away. His desire for liquidation was expressed so heartily that I went with him to a café down the street, where we had some vile vermouth and biters.

"Looking across that little table I had my first clear sight of Francis Kearny. He was about five feet seven, but as tough as a cypress knee. His hair was darkest red, his mouth such a mere slit that you wondered how the flood of his words came rushing from it. His eyes were the brightest and lightest blue and the hopefulness that I ever saw. He gave the double impression that he was at bay and that you had better not crowd him further.

"Just in from a gold hunting expedition on the coast of Costa Rica," he explained. "Second mate of a banana steamer told me the natives were panning out enough from the beach sands to buy all the rum, red calico and parlor melodions in the world. The day I got there a syndicate named Incorporated Jones gets a government concession to all minerals from a given point. For a next choice I take coast fever and count green and blue lizards for six weeks in a grass hut. I had to be notified when I was well, for the reptiles were actually there.

"Then I shipped back as third cook on a Norwegian tramp that blew up her boiler two miles below quarantine. I was due to bust through that cellar door here tonight, so I hurried the rest of the way up the river, roustabouting on a lower coast packet that made a landing for every fisherman that wanted a plug of tobacco. And now I'm here for what comes next. And it'll be along, it'll be along," said this queer Mr. Kearny; "it'll be along on the beams of my bright but not very particular star."

"From the first the personality of Kearny charmed me. I saw in him the bold heart, the restless nature and the valiant front against the buffets of fate that make his countrymen such valuable comrades in risk and adventure. And just then I was wanting such men. Moored at a fruit company's pier I had a 500 ton steamer ready to sail the next day with a cargo of sugar, lumber and corrugated iron for a port in—well, let us call the country Esperando—it has not been long ago, and the name of Patricio Maloné is still spoken there when its unsettled politics are discussed. Beneath the sugar and iron were packed a thousand repeating rifles. In Aguas Frias, the capital, Don Rafael Valdevia, minister of war, Esperando's greatest hearted and most able patriot, awaited my coming. No doubt you have heard, with a smile, of the insignificant wars and uprisings in

those little tropic republics. They make but a faint clamor against the din of great nations' battles. But down there, under all the ridiculous uniforms and petty diplomacy and senseless countermarching and intrigue, are to be found statesmen and patriots. Don Rafael Valdevia was one. His great ambition was to raise Esperando into peace and honest prosperity and the respect of the serious nations. So he waited for my rifles in Aguas Frias. But one would think I am trying to win a recruit in your No; it was Francis Kearny I wanted. And so I told him, speaking long over our execrable vermouth, breathing the stifling odor from garlic and tarpaulins, which, as you know, is the distinctive flavor of cafés in the lower slant of our city.

"I spoke of the tyrant President Cruz and the burdens that his greed and insolent cruelty laid upon the people. And at that Kearny's tears flowed. And then I dried them with a picture of the fat rewards that would be ours when the oppressor should be overthrown and the wise and generous Valdevia in his seat. Then Kearny leaped to his feet and wrung my hand with the strength of a roustabout. He was mine, he said, till the last minion of the hated despot was hurled from the highest peaks of the Cordilleras into the sea.

"I paid the score and we went out. Near the door Kearny's elbow overturned an upright glass showcase, smashing it into little bits. I paid the storekeeper the price he asked.

"Come to my hotel for the night," I said to Kearny. "We sail tomorrow at noon."

"He agreed, but on the sidewalk he fell to cursing again in the dull, monotonous, glib way that he had done when I pulled him out of the coal cellar.

"Captain," said he, "before we go any further it's no more than fair to tell you that I'm known from Baffin's bay to Tierra del Fuego as 'Bad Luck' Kearny. And I'm it. Everything I get into goes up in the air except a balloon. Every bet I ever made I lost except when I copped it. Every boat I ever sailed on sank except the submarines. Everything I was ever interested in went to pieces except a patent bombshell that I invented. Everything I ever took hold of and tried to run I ran into the ground except when I tried to blow. And that's why they call me 'Bad Luck' Kearny. I thought I'd tell you."

"Bad luck," said I, "or what goes by the name, may now and then tangle the affairs of any man. But if it persists beyond the estimate of what we may call the 'averages' there must be a cause for it."

"There is," said Kearny emphatically, "and when we walk another square I will show it to you."

"Surprised, I kept by his side until we came to Canal street and out into the middle of its great width.

"Kearny seized me by an arm and pointed a tragic forefinger at a rather brilliant star that shone steadily about thirty degrees above the horizon.

"That's Saturn," said he, "the star that presides over bad luck and evil and disappointment and nothing doing and trouble. I was born under that star. Every move I make up bobs Saturn and blocks it. He's the hoodoo planet of the heavens. They say he's 73,000 miles in diameter and no soldier of body than split pea soup, and he's got as many disreputable and malignant rings as a big city. Now, what kind of a star is that to be born under?"

"I asked Kearny where he had obtained all this astonishing knowledge.

"From Azrath, the great astrologer, of Cleveland, O.," said he. "That man looked at a glass ball and told me my name before I'd taken a chair. He prophesied the date of my birth and death before I'd said a word. And then he cast my horoscope, and the sidereal system he made in the solar plexus. It was bad luck for Francis Kearny from A to Zard and for his friends that were implicated with him. For that I gave up \$10. This Azrath was sorry, but he respected his profession too much to read the heavens wrong for any man. It was night time, and he took me out on a balcony and gave me a free view of the sky. And he showed me which Saturn was and how to find it in different balconies and longitudes.

"But Saturn wasn't all. He was only the man higher up. He furnishes so much bad luck that they allow him a gang of deputy sparklers to help hand it out. They're circulating and revolving and hanging around the main supply all the time, each one throwing the hoodoo on his particular district.

"You see that ugly little red star about eight inches above and to the right of Saturn? Kearny asked me. 'Well, that's her. That's Phoebe. She's got me in charge. "By the day of your birth," says Azrath to me, "your life is subjected to the influence of Saturn. By the hour and minute of it you must dwell under the sway and direct authority of Phoebe, the ninth satellite." So said this Azrath.' Kearny shook his fist viciously skyward. 'Curse her, she's done her work well,' said he. 'Ever since I was astrologized bad luck has followed me like my shadow, as I told you. And for many years before. Now, captain, I've told you my handicap as a man should. If you're afraid this evil star of mine might cripple your scheme leave me out of it.'

"I reassured Kearny as well as I could. I told him that for the time we would banish both astrology and astronomy from our heads. The manifest valor and enthusiasm of the man drew me. "Let us see what a little courage and diligence will do against 'bad luck,' I said. 'We will sail tomorrow for Esperando.'

"Fifty miles down the Mississippi our steamer broke her rudder. We sent for a tug to tow us back and lost three days. When we struck the blue waters

of the gulf all the storm clouds of the Atlantic seemed to have concentrated above us. We thought surely to sweep us those leaping waves with our sugar and to stack our arms and lumber on the floor of the Mexican gulf.

"Kearny did not seek to cast off one iota of the burden of our danger from the shoulders of his fatal horoscope. He weathered every storm on deck, smoking a black pipe, to keep which slight rain and sea water seemed but as oil. And he shook his fist at the black clouds behind which his baleful star winked its unseen eye. When the skies cleared one evening he reviled his malignant guardian with grim humor.

"On watch, aren't you, you red headed vixen? Out making it hot for little Francis Kearny and his friends, according to Hoyle. Twinkle, twinkle, little devil! You're a lady, aren't you—dogging a man with bad luck just because he happened to be born while your boss was doorknocker. Get busy and sink the ship, you one eyed banshee! Phoebe! H'm! Sounds as mild as a milkmaid. You can't judge a woman by her name. Why couldn't I have had a man star? I can't make the remarks to Phoebe, you be—banshee!"

"For eight days gales and squalls and waterspouts beat us from our course. Five days only should have landed us in Esperando. Our Jonah swallowed the bad credit of it with appealing frankness, but that scarcely lessened the hardships our cause was made to suffer.

"At last one afternoon we steamed into the calm estuary of the little Rio Escondido. Three miles up this we crept, feeling for the shallow channel between the low banks that were crowded to the edge with gigantic trees and riotous vegetation. Then our whistle gave a little toot, and in five minutes we heard a shout, and Carlos—my brave Carlos Quintana—crashed through the tangled vines waving his cap madly for joy.

"A hundred yards away was his camp, where 300 chosen patriots of Esperando were awaiting our coming. For a month Carlos had been drilling them there in the tactics of war and filling them with the spirit of revolution and liberty.

"My captain—compadre mio! shouted Carlos, while yet my boat was being lowered. 'You should see them in the drill by companies—in the column wheel—in the march by four—they are superb! Also in the manual of arms—bust, aim, performed only with sticks of bamboo. The guns, captain—say that you have brought the guns!'

"A thousand good rifles, Carlos,' I called to him. 'And two Gatlings.' "Valgame Dios! he cried, throwing his cap in the air. 'We shall sweep the world!'

"At that moment Kearny tumbled from the steamer's side into the river. He could not swim, so the crew threw him a rope and drew him back aboard. I caught his eye and his look of pathetic but still bright and undaunted consciousness of his guilty luck. I told myself that, although he might be a man to shun, he was also one to be admired.

"I gave orders to the sailing master that the arms, ammunition and provisions were to be landed at once. That was easy in the steamer's boats, except for the two Gatling guns. For their transportation ashore we carried a stout flatboat.

"In the meantime I walked with Carlos to the camp and made the soldiers a little speech in Spanish, which they received with enthusiasm, and then I had some wine and a cigarette in Carlos' tent.

"The small arms and provisions were already ashore, and the petty officers had squads of men conveying them to camp. One Gatling had been safely landed. The other was just being hoisted over the side of the vessel as we arrived. I noticed Kearny darting about on board, seeming to have the ambition of ten men and to be doing the work of five. I think his zeal bubbled over when he saw Carlos and me. A rope's end was swinging loose from some part of the tackle. Kearny leaped impetuously and caught it. There was a crackle and a hiss and a smoke of scorching hemp, and the Gatling dropped straight as a plummet through the bottom of the flatboat and buried itself in twenty feet of water and five feet of river mud.

"I turned my back on the scene. I heard Carlos' loud cries as if from some extreme grief too poignant for words. I heard the complaining murmur of the crew and the maledictions of Torres, the sailing master. I could not bear to look.

"By night some degree of order had been restored in camp. Military rules were not drawn strictly, and the men were grouped about the fires of their several messes, playing games of chance, singing their native songs or discussing with voluble animation the contingencies of our march upon the capital.

"To my tent, which had been pitched for me close to that of my chief lieutenant, came Kearny, indomitable, smiling, bright eyed, bearing no traces of the buffets of his evil star. Rather was his aspect that of a heroic martyr whose tribulations were so high sourced and glorious that he even took a splendor and a prestige from them.

"Well, captain," said he, "I guess friend and compadre en la causa de la libertad.

"On the morning of the 14th we began our march toward the sea following range of mountains, over the sixty mile trail to the capital. Our small arms and provisions were laden on pack mules. Twenty men harnessed to each Gatling gun rolled them smoothly along the flat, alluvial lowlands. Our troops, well shod and well fed, moved with alacrity and heartiness. I and my three lieutenants were mounted on the tough mountain ponies of the country.

"A mile out of camp one of the pack mules, becoming stubborn, broke away from the train and plunged from the path into the thicket. The alert Kearny spurred quickly after it and intercepted its flight. Raising in his stirrups, he released one foot and bestowed upon the mutinous animal a hearty kick.

"The mule tottered and fell with a crash broadside upon the ground. As we gathered around it it wailed its great eyes almost humanly toward Kearny and expired. That was bad, but worse to our minds was the concomitant disaster. Part of the mule's burden had been 100 pounds of the finest coffee to be had in the tropics. The bag burst and spilled the priceless brown mass of the ground berries among the dense vines and weeds of the swampy land. Mala suerte! When you take away from an Esperando his coffee you abstract his patriotism and 50 per cent of his value as a soldier. The men began to rake up the precious stuff, but I beckoned Kearny back along the trail where they would not hear. The limit had been reached.

"I took from my pocket a wallet of money and drew out some bills.

"Mr. Kearny," said I, "there are some funds belonging to Don Rafael Valdevia, which I am expending in his cause. I know of no better service it can buy for him than this. Here is \$100. Luck or no luck, we part company here. Star or no star, calamity seems to travel by your side. You will return to the steamer. She touches at Amotapa to discharge her lumber and iron and then puts back to New Orleans. Hand this note to the sailing master, who will give you passage. I wrote on a leaf torn from my book and placed it and the money in Kearny's hand.

"Goodby," I said, extending my own. 'It is not that I am displeased with you, but there is no place in this expedition for—let us say, the Senorita Phoebe.' I said this with a smile, trying to smooth the thing for him. 'May you have better luck, compadre.'

"Kearny took the money and the paper.

"It was just a little touch," said he. 'Just a little lift with the toe of my boot. But what's the odds? That blamed mule would have died if I had only dusted his ribs with a powder puff. It was my luck. Well, captain, I would have liked to be in that little fight with you over in Aguas Frias. Success to the cause. Adios!'

"He turned around and set off down the trail without looking back. The unfortunate mule's pack saddle was transferred to Kearny's pony, and we again took up the march.

"Four days we journeyed over the foothills and mountains, fording icy torrents, winding around the crumbling brows of ragged peaks, creeping along rocky flanges that overlooked awful precipices, crawling breathlessly over tottering bridges that crossed bottomless chasms.

"On the evening of the 17th we camped by a little stream on the bare hills five miles from Aguas Frias. At daybreak we were to take up march again. At midnight I was standing outside my tent inhaling the fresh cold air. The stars were shining bright in the cloudless sky, giving the heavens their proper aspect of illimitable depth and distance when viewed from the vague darkness of the blotted earth. Almost at its zenith was the planet Saturn, and with a half smile I observed the sinister red sparkle of his malignant attendant—the demon star of Kearny's ill luck. And then my thoughts strayed across the hills to the scene of our coming triumph, where the heroic and noble Don Rafael awaited our coming to set a new and shining star in the firmament of nations.

"I heard a slight rustling in the deep grass to my right. I turned and saw Kearny coming toward me. He was ragged and dew drenched and limping. His hat and one boot were gone. About one foot he had tied some makeshift of cloth and grass. But his manner as he approached was that of a man who knows his own virtues well enough to be superior to rebuffs.

"Well, sir," I said, staring at him coldly, "if there is anything in persistence I see no reason why you should not succeed in wrecking and ruining us yet."

"I kept half a day's journey behind," said Kearny, flinging out a stone from the covering of his lame foot, "so the bad luck wouldn't touch you. I couldn't help it, captain. I wanted to be in on this game. It was a pretty tough trip, especially in the department of the commissary. In the low grounds there were always bananas and oranges. Higher up it was worse, but your men left a good deal of goat meat hanging on the bushes in the camps. Here's your \$100. I'm nearly there now, captain. Let me in on the scrapping tomorrow."

"Not for a hundred times a hundred would I have the tiniest thing go wrong with my plans now," I said, "whether caused by evil planets or the blunders of mere man. But yonder is Aguas Frias, five miles away and a clear road. I am of the mind to defy Saturn and all his satellites to spoil our success now. At any rate, I will not turn away tonight as weary a traveler and as good a soldier as you are.

Lieutenant Kearny. Manuel Orta-tent is there by the brightest fire. Rout him out and tell him to supply you with food and blankets and clothes. We march again at daybreak."

"Kearny thanked me briefly, but feelingly, and moved away. "He had gone scarcely a dozen steps when a sudden flash of bright light illumined the surrounding hills. A sinister, growling, hissing sound like escaping steam filled my ears. Then followed a roar as of distant thunder, which grew louder every instant. This terrifying noise culminated in a tremendous explosion which seemed to rock the hills as an earthquake would. The illumination waxed to a glare so fierce that I clapped my hands to my eyes to save them. I thought the end of the world had come. I could think of no natural phenomenon that would explain it. My wife were staggering.

"The deafening explosion trailed off into the heavy roar that had preceded it, and through this I heard the frightened shouts of my troops as they stumbled from their resting places and rushed wildly about; also I heard the harsh tones of Kearny's voice crying, 'They'll blame it on me, of course, and what the devil it is, it's not Francis Kearny that can give you an answer!'

(Continued Next Week)

J. H. Brankamp of Portland has secured patents thru his attorneys, D. Swift and Co., Washington, for a new runabout.

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**R. Heyting**

## At The Churches

**Arleta Baptist Church**  
9:45 a. m. Bible School.  
11 a. m. Preaching service.  
8:00 p. m. Evening services.  
7:00 p. m. B. Y. P. U. meeting.  
8:00 Thursday Prayer meeting.  
Everybody welcome to any and all of these services.  
W. T. S. Spriggs, pastor.

**Millard Avenue Presbyterian Church**  
10 a. m. Sabbath School.  
11 a. m. Morning worship.  
7:30 p. m. Y. P. S. C. E.  
7:45 p. m. Evening worship.  
7:30 p. m. Thursday, midweek service.  
8 p. m. Thursday, choir practice.  
Rev. Wm. H. Amos, Pastor.

**St. Peter's Catholic Church**  
Sundays:  
8 a. m. Low Mass.  
10:30 a. m. High Mass.  
8:30 a. m. Sunday School.  
12 M. Choir rehearsal.  
Week days: Mass at 8 a. m.

**Seventh Day Adventist Church**  
10 a. m. Saturday Sabbath School.  
11 a. m. Saturday preaching.  
7:30 p. m. Wednesday, Prayer meeting.  
7:45 p. m. Sunday preaching.

**Kern Park Christian Church**  
Corner 69th St. and 46th Ave. S. E.  
10 a. m. Bible School.  
11 a. m. and 7:30 p. m. preaching service.  
6:30 p. m. Christian Endeavor.  
7:30 p. m. Thursday, mid-week prayer meeting.  
A cordial welcome to all.  
Rev. G. K. Berry, Pastor.

**St. Pauls Episcopal Church**  
One block south of Woodmere station.  
Holy Communion the first Sunday of each month at 8 p. m. No other services that day.  
Every other Sunday the regular services will be as usual.  
Evening Prayer and sermon at 4 p. m.  
Sunday School meets at 3 p. m. B. Boatwright, Supt., L. Maffett, Sec.  
Rev. O. W. Taylor Rector.

**Lents Evangelical Church**  
Sermon by the Pastor, 11 a. m. and 7:15 p. m.  
Sunday School 9:45 a. m., Albert Fankhauser, Superintendent.  
Y. P. S. C. E. 6:45 p. m. Paul Bradford, President.  
Prayer meeting Thursday 8 p. m.  
A cordial welcome to all.  
T. R. Hornsach, Pastor.

**Lents Friend's Church**  
9:45 a. m. Bible School, Mrs. Maud Keach, Superintendent.  
11:00 a. m. Preaching services.  
6:25 p. m. Christian Endeavor.  
7:30 p. m. Preaching Services.  
8:00 p. m. Thursday, mid-week prayer meeting.  
A cordial welcome to all these services.  
John Riley, Pastor.

**Lents Baptist Church**  
Lord's Day, Bible School 9:45 a. m. Morning worship, 11 a. m. Elmo Heights Sunday School, 2:30 p. m.  
B. Y. P. U., 6:30 p. m.  
Evening worship, 7:30 p. m.  
A cordial welcome to these services.  
J. M. Nelson, Pastor.

**Fifth Church of Christ**  
Fifth Church of Christ, Scientist of Portland, Ore. Myrtle Park Hall, Myrtle Park.  
Services Sunday 11 a. m.  
Sunday School 9:30 and 11 a. m.  
Wednesday evening testimonial meeting 8 p. m.

**Lents M. E. Church**  
Sunday School 9:45 a. m.  
Preaching 11:00 a. m.  
Services at Bennett Chapel at 3 p. m.  
Epworth League 6:30 p. m.  
Preaching 7:30 p. m.  
Prayer meeting Thursday evening at 7:30.  
W. R. F. Browne, pastor.  
Residence 5703 83rd St.

**Laurelwood M. E. Church**  
9:45 a. m. Sunday school.  
11:00 a. m. preaching.  
12:30 a. m. class meeting.  
6:30 p. m. Epworth League.  
7:30 p. m. preaching.  
The pastor is assisted by a chorus choir and the Amphion Male Quartette.  
8:00 p. m. Thursday evening, prayer service.  
Dr. C. R. Carlos, pastor.

**German Evangelical Reformed Church**  
Corner Woodstock Ave., and 87th St.  
Rev. W. G. Lienkaemper, pastor.  
Sunday School 10 a. m.  
Morning Worship, 11 a. m.  
Y. P. S. C. E. at 7:30 p. m.  
German School and Catechetical Class Saturday 10 a. m.

**Third United Brethren Church**  
10 a. m. Sunday School.  
11 a. m. Preaching.  
3 p. m. Junior Christian Endeavor.  
6:30 p. m. Senior Christian Endeavor.  
7:30 p. m. Preaching.

**Brentwood M. E. Church**  
10 a. m. Sunday School.  
11 a. m. Preaching service.  
Rev. W. L. Wilson, Pastor.

**LODGE DIRECTORY**  
Magnolia Camp No. 4026, Royal Neighbors, meets regular Second and Fourth Wednesday of each month at I. O. O. F. Hall. Second Wednesdays social meeting. Neighbors bring your families and friends. Fourth Wednesday, business. All Neighbors request By order of the Camp.