

The ORIOLE

By BOOTH TARKINGTON

Illustrations by Irwin Myers

SYNOPSIS.

PART ONE.

Fred possessed of a printing press, and equipment, the first Uncle Joseph to his nephew, Herbert Illingsworth Atwater, Jr., aged thirteen, the fortunate youth, with whom, Henry Rooter, about the same age, begins the publication of a full-fledged newspaper, the North End Daily Oriole. Herbert's great-grandfather, Florence Atwater, being barred from any kind of participation in the enterprise, on account of her intense and natural feminine desire to "boos," is frankly annoyed, and not at all backward in saying so. However, a poem she has written is accepted for insertion in the Oriole, on a strictly commercial basis—cash in advance. The poem suffers somewhat from the inexperience of the youthful publisher in the "art preservative." Her not altogether unreasonable demand for publication of the masterpiece, with its weak between, Miss Atwater and the publishers of the Oriole widens.

PART TWO.

On her visitors' departure, Florence learns through a conversation between her parents, that her aunt, Julia Atwater, the idol of the greater part of the male population of the place, but at present out of town on a visit, has apparently become engaged to a gentleman of the name of Crum, altogether unknown to the Atwater family. Desiring in speculation concerning the fortunate youth, Mr. and Mrs. Atwater concede that for all they know he may be a widower, or divorced, with any number of children, etc. Florence misses none of the remarks.

In her room that evening, Florence finds two brief notes used in the afternoon game of "Truth, and unfortunately lost by Miss Atwater. To that young lady's query as to whether they did not think they had pretty eyes, both Herbert and Henry admitted they did, and affixed their signatures to the statement. Realizing that neither of the young gentlemen would care to have it known that they had thus acknowledged the possession of "pretty eyes," Florence perceives what a powerful weapon has been placed in her hands, for among the youth of the town is a boy, Wallie Torbin, afflicted with a remarkable talent for mimicry and an altogether malignant disposition. The combination of these two makes him a threat to put Wallie Torbin in possession of the secret concerning the "pretty eyes" would bring Herbert and Henry groveling at her feet and probably lead her greatly desired participation in their journalistic enterprise.

Acquainting the two unfortunates with her knowledge of the "pretty eyes" secret, they make complete submission and Florence becomes the undisputed master mind of the Oriole.

In the next issue, with which the erstwhile proprietors of the sheet have little to do, editorially, among the "news items" is related the engagement of Miss Julia Atwater to Mr. Crum, the gentleman being referred to as a widower, also divorced, and with a "great many children."

Among the most ardent and hopeless admirers of the beautiful Julia is a youth of the name of Noble Dill, an altogether commonplace and unexciting individual, notable only among his fellow townsmen for his devoted attachment to the object of his affections. He is, however, Florence's ideal, and that young lady, desiring of breaking the news of Julia's engagement, "secretly" herself presents him with a copy of the Oriole containing the

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POEMS
My Soul by Florence Atwater
When my heart is dreary
Then my soul is weary
As a bird with a broken wing
Who never again will sing
Like the sound of a vast amen
That comes from a church of men.
When my soul is dreary
It could never be cheery
But I think of my ideal
And everything seems real
Like the sound of the bright church bells
peal.
Poems by Florence Atwater will be in the paper each and every Sat.
Advertisements 6c. each Up

NEWS OF THE CITY
"Miss Florence Atwater of this City received a mark of 94 in History Examination at the conclusion of the school Term last June.
"Blue hair ribbons are in style again.
"Miss Patty Fairchild of this City has not been doing as well in Declamation lately as formerly.
"MR. Noble Dill of this City is seldom seen on the streets of the City without smoking a cigarette.
"Miss Julia Atwater of this City is out of the City.
"The MR. Rayfort family of this City have been presented with the present of a new Cat by Geo. the man employed by Half & Co. This cat is perfectly beautiful.
"Miss Julia Atwater of this City is visiting friends in the South. The family have had many letters from her that are read by each and all in the family.
"Mr. Noble Dill of this City is in business with his Father.
"From letters to the family Miss Julia Atwater of this City is enjoying her visit in the south a great deal.
"Miss Patty Fairchild of the 7 A of this City, will probably not pass in Arithmetic—unless some improvement takes place before Examination.
"Miss Julia Atwater of this City wrote a letter to the family stating members of the Atwater family connection made futile efforts to secure all the copies of that week's edition of the North End Daily Oriole. It could not be done.
"It was a trying time for the family. Great-aunt Carrie said that she had the "worst afternoon of any 'em," because young Newland Saunders came to her house at two and did not leave until five; all the time counting over, one by one, the hours he'd spent with Julia since she was seventeen and turned out, unfortunately, to be a Beauty. Newland had not restrained himself, Aunt Carrie said, and long before he left she wished Julia had never been born—and as for Herbert Illingsworth Atwater, Junior, the only thing to do with him was to send him to some strict military school.
"Florence's father telephoned to her mother from downtown at three, and said that Mr. George Plum and the ardent vocalist, Clairdyce, two of the suitors, had just left his office. They had not called in company, however, but coincidentally; and each had a copy of the North End Daily Oriole, already somewhat worn with folding and unfolding. Mr. Clairdyce's condition was one of desperate calm. Florence's father said, but Mr. Plum's agitation left him rather unrepresentative for the street, though he had finally gone forth with his hair just as he had ruffled it, and with his hat in his hand. They wished the truth, they said: Was it true or was it not true? Mr. Atwater had told them that he feared Julia was indeed engaged, though he knew nothing of her fiancé's previous marriage or marriages, or of the number of his previous children. They had responded that they cared nothing about that. This man Crum's record was a matter of indifference to them. All they wanted to know was whether Julia was engaged or not—and she was!
"The odd thing to me," Mr. Atwater continued, to his wife, "is where on earth Herbert could have got his story about this Crum's being a widower, or divorced, and with all these children. Do you know if Julia's written any of the family about these things and they haven't told the rest of us?"
"No," said Mrs. Atwater. "I'm sure she hasn't. Every letter she's written to any of us has passed all through the family, and I know I've seen every one of 'em. She's never said anything about him at all, except that he was a lawyer. I'm sure I can't imagine where Herbert got his awful information; I never thought he was the kind of boy to just make up unpleasant things."
"Florence, sitting quietly in a chair nearby, with a copy of "Sesame and Lilies" in her lap, listened to her mother's side of this conversation with an expression of impersonal interest; and if she could have realized how completely her parents had forgotten (naturally enough) the details of their first rambling discussion of Julia's engagement, she might have felt as little alarm as she showed.
"Well," said Mr. Atwater, "I'm glad it isn't our branch of the family that's responsible. That's a comfort, anyhow, especially as people are reading copies of Herbert's manifesto all up and down the town, my clerk says. He tells me that over at the Cole company, where young Murdock Hawes is cashier, they only got hold of one copy while visiting in the South she has made an engagement to be married to MR. Crum of that City. The family do not know who this MR. CRUM is but it is said he is a widower though he has been divorced with a great many children.
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"Atwater & Co. Newspaper Building 25 Cents Per Year."

touches to the ditch at the Mr. Henry D. Vance backyard.
PART THREE
Throughout the afternoon adult
"Well," said Mr. Atwater, "I'm glad it isn't our branch of the family that's responsible."
but typewrote it and multigraphed it, and some of 'em have already learned it by heart to recite to poor young Hawes. He's the one who sent Julia the three five-pound boxes of chocolates all at the same time, you remember."
"Yes," Mrs. Atwater sighed. "Poor thing!"
"Florence is out among the family, I suppose?" he inquired.
"No," she's right here. She's just started to read Ruskin this afternoon. She says she's going to begin and read all of him straight through. That's very nice, don't you think?"
He seemed to muse before replying.
"I think that's very nice, at her age especially," Mrs. Atwater urged. "Don't you?"
"Yes—! Oh, yes! At least, I suppose so. Ah—you don't think—of course she hasn't had anything at all to do with this?"
"Well, I don't see how she could. You know Aunt Fanny told us how Herbert declared before them all, only last Sunday night, that Florence should never have one thing to do with his printing-press, and said they wouldn't even let her come near it."
"Yes, that's a fact. I'm glad Herbert made it so clear that she can't be implicated. I suppose the family are all pretty well down on Uncle Joseph?"
"Uncle Joseph is being greatly blamed," said Mrs. Atwater primly. "He really ought to have known better than to put such an instrument into the hands of a boy of that age. Of course it simply encouraged him to print all kinds of things. We none of us think Uncle Joseph ever dreamed that Herbert would publish anything like this, and of course Uncle Joseph says himself he never dreamed such a thing; he's said so time and time again, all afternoon. But of course he's greatly blamed."
"I suppose there've been quite a good many of 'em over there blaming him?" her husband inquired.
"Yes—until he telephoned to a garage and hired a car and went for a drive. He said he had plenty of money with him and didn't know when he'd be back."
"Serves him right," said Mr. Atwater. "Does anybody know where Herbert is?"
"Not yet."
"Well—and he returned to a former theme, "I am glad we aren't implicated. Florence is right there with you, is she?"
"Yes," she said. "She's right here, reading. You aren't worried about her, are you?" she added.
"Oh, no; I'm sure it's all right. I only thought—"
"Only thought what?"
"Well, it did strike me as curious," said Mr. Atwater; "especially after Aunt Fanny's telling us how Herbert declared Florence could never have a single thing to do with his paper again—"
"Well?"
"Well, here's her poem right at the top of it, and a very friendly item about her history mark of last June. It doesn't seem like Herbert to be so complimentary to Florence, all of a sudden. Just struck me as rather curious; that's all."
"Why, yes," said Mrs. Atwater, "it does seem a little odd—when you think of it."
"Have you asked Florence if she had anything to do with getting out this week's Oriole?"
"Why, no; it never occurred to me, especially after what Aunt Fanny told us," said Mrs. Atwater. "I'll ask her now."
But she was obliged to postpone the intended question. "Sesame and Lilies" lay sweetly in the chair that Florence had occupied, but Florence herself had gone somewhere else.
She had gone for a long, long ramble; and pedestrians who encountered her, and took note of her expression, were interested; and, as they went on their way, several of them interrupted the course of their meditations to say to themselves that she was the most thoughtful-looking young girl they had ever seen. There was a touch of wis-

dom about her, too; as of one whose benevolence must renounce all hope of comprehension and reward.
Florence, in fact, had about reached the conclusion that far from the likelihood of her receiving praise for her thoughtful circulation of the news concerning her aunt Julia, there was a strong probability that dire results, woful and otherwise, would ensue. Hence her extreme thoughtfulness.
Among those who observed her unusual expression was a gentleman of great dimensions disposed in a closed automobile that labored through mud-holes in an unimproved outskirt of the town. He rapped upon the glass in front of him, to get the driver's attention, and a moment later the car drew up beside Florence, as she stood in deep reverie at the intersection of two roads.
Uncle Joseph opened the door and took his cigar from his mouth. "Get in, Florence," he said. "I'll take you for a ride." She started violently; whereupon he restored the cigar to his mouth, puffed upon it, breathing heavily the while, as was his wont; and added: "I'm not going home. I'm out for a nice long ride. Get in."
"I was takin' a walk," she said dubiously. "I haf to take a whole lot of exercise, and I ought to walk and walk and walk. I guess I ought to keep on walkin'."
"Get in," he said. "I'm out riding. I don't know when I'll get home."
Florence got in. Uncle Joseph closed the door, and the car slowly bumped onward.
"You know where Herbert is?" Uncle Joseph inquired.
"No," said Florence, in a gentle voice.
"I do," he said. "Herbert and your friend Henry Rooter came to our house with one of the last copies of the Oriole they were distributing to subscribers; and after I read it I kind of foresaw that the fellow responsible for their owning a printing press was going to be in trouble. I had quite a talk with 'em and they hinted they hadn't had much to do with this number of the paper, except the mechanical end of it; but they wouldn't come out right full with what they meant. They seemed to have some good reason for protecting a third party, and said quite a good deal about their fathers and mothers being but mortal and so on; so Henry and Herbert thought they oughtn't to expose this third party—whoever she was. Well, I thought they better not stay too long, because I was compromised enough already, without being seen in their company, and I gave 'em something to help 'em out with the movies. You can stay at movies an awful long time, and if you've got money enough to go to several of 'em, why you're fixed for as long as you please. A body ought to be able to live a couple o' months at the movies."
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"You better not," he said, wisely. "Honest, you better not, Herbert!"
"Well, we got apple dumplings for dinner," Herbert said, his tone showing the strain of mental uncertainty. "Eliza told me this morning we were goin' to have 'em. I kind of hate to go, but I guess I better, Henry."
"You won't see any apple dumplings," Henry predicted.
"Well, I believe I better try it, Henry."
"You better come home with me. My father and mother'll be perfectly willing to have you."
"I know that," said Herbert. "But I guess I better go home and try it, anyhow, Henry. I didn't have anything to do with what's in the Oriole. It's every last word Uncle Joseph's doing. I haven't got any more right to be picked on for that than a child."
"Yes," Henry admitted. "But if you go and tell 'em so, I bet she'd get even with you some way that would probably get me in trouble, too, before we got through with the job. I wouldn't tell 'em if I was you, Herbert!"
"Well, I wasn't intending to," Herbert responded gloomily; and the thought of each, unknown to the other, was the same, consisting of a symbolic likeness of Wallie Torbin at his worst. "I ought to tell on Florence; by rights I ought," said Herbert; "but I've decided I won't. There's no tellin' what she wouldn't do. Not that she could do anything to me, particularly—"
"Nor me, either," his friend interposed hurriedly. "I don't worry about anything like that! Still, if I was you I wouldn't tell. She's only a girl, we got to remember."
"Yes," said Herbert. "That's the way I look at it, Henry; and the way I look at it is just simply this: long as she's a girl, why, simply let her go. You can't tell what she'd do, and so what's the use to go and tell on a girl?"
"That's the way I look at it," Henry agreed. "What's the use? If I was in your place, I'd act just the same way you do."
"Well," said Herbert, "I guess I better go on home, Henry. It's a good while after dark."
"You're makin' a big mistake!" Henry Rooter called after him. "You won't see any apple dumplings, I bet a hundred dollars! You better come on home with me."
And Herbert no more than half opened his front door before he perceived that his friend's advice had been excellent. So clearly Herbert perceived this, that he impulsively decided not to open the door any farther, but on the contrary to close it, and retire; and he would have done so, had not his mother reached forth and detained him. She was, in fact, just inside that door, in the hall with one of his great-aunts, one of his aunts, two aunts-by-marriage, and an elderly unmarried cousin, who were all just on the point of leaving. However, they changed their minds and decided to remain, now that Herbert was among them.
It really seemed that to many persons who were gathered there, apparently in important consultation, his appearance was distinctly welcome. His own feelings were in no wise mixed. They were distinctly apprehensive, and the volley of mingled questionings and reproaches which met him did not tend to remove them. Each member of the party seemed to feel in some manner particularly aggrieved.
(Continued on Page 4.)

out that he had more the air of an accomplice than of a detective. Nevertheless she was convinced that far, far the best course for her to pursue, during the next few days, would be one of steadfast reserve. And such a course was congenial to her mood, which was subdued, not to say apprehensive; though she was sure that her recent conduct, if viewed sympathetically, would be found Cælian. The trouble was that probably it would not be viewed sympathetically. No one would understand how carefully and tactfully she had prepared the items.
Like so many other young unearthened rehearsals, this one was never to be played for an audience. Adults are unpredictable. Thirteen attempts to exercise a great philanthropy, and every grown person in sight, with the possible exception of Great-uncle Joseph, goes into wholly unanticipated fits of horror. Cause and effect have no relation: Fate operates without reasonable sequence—like a monkey.
And while Florence, thus pensively disturbed, sat beside fat Uncle Joseph during their long, long drive, relatives of hers were indeed going into fits; at least, so Florence would have described their gestures and incoherencies of comment. And straight into such a fitful scene did the luckless Herbert walk when driven home, after the movies by thoughts of food, at about had to write every single word or it, or else let Henry and Herbert try to, and 'course they'd just of ruined it. Oh, it isn't so much to talk about I guess; it just sort of comes to me to do things that way."
That evening, Henry Rooter had strongly advised him against returning.
It may reasonably be felt that it required no particular gift of prophecy to hazard the prediction that in all probability a most unpleasant form of liquidation awaited Herbert on his return to his home. And Henry Rooter had the wisdom (and experience) of thirteen.
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