

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 Malonc.

"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 insouciance of legal phraseology) was put while we sat in Roussell's little red-tiled cafe near Congo square, in New Orleans.

Brown faced, white hatted, finger ringed captains of adventure came of ten to Roussell'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 Ananiases 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 Malonc was an Ibero-American creature 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 Ecuadorian 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 Roussell. "Strolling along Tchoupitoulas street one night," began Captain Malonc, "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 epypnae of care. Gruff 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 cafe down the street, where we had some vile vermouth and bit-ter."

"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 par-ben molasses 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 coal 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, as 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 I'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. Manned 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 Patrio Malonc 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 intrigues, 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 you! 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 tar-paulins, which, as you know, is the distinctive flavor of cafes in the lower part 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 heaped to his feet and wrote my hand with the strength of a roustabout. He was nice, he said, till the last minion of the hated despot was buried from the highest peaks of the Cordilleras into the sea."

"I paid the score and we went out. Near the door Kearny's elbow over-turned 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 cursing again in the dull, monotonous, sibilant 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 Balboa'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 plow. And that's why they all 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 more I make up boys Saturn and blocks it. He's the hoodoo planet of the heavens. They say he's 50,000 miles in diameter and no soldier's 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 soaked me in the solar plexus. It was bad luck for Francis Kearny from A to Z 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. "Curses 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 line waters

of the gulf at the storm clouds of the Atlantic seemed to have concentrated in 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 floorwalker. 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—busted!"



"Get busy, you one eyed banshee!"

perando. Our Jonah swallowed the bad credit of it with appalling 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 Escudillo. 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 whistles 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—but, alas, performed only with sticks of bamboo. The guns, captain—say that you have brought the guns!'"

"A thousand good rides, 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 patient 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 fatboat."

"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 seat 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 fatboat 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."

"You realize that Bad Luck Kearny is still on deck. It was a shame, now, about that gun. She only needed to be siewed two inches to clear the rail, and that's why I grabbed that rope's end. Who'd have thought that a sailor, even a Sicilian lubber on a banana coaster, would have fastened a line in a bowknot—Don't think I'm trying to dodge the responsibility, captain. It's my luck."

"There are men, Kearny," said I gravely, "who pass through life blaming upon luck and chance the mistakes that result from their own faults and incompetency. I do not say that you are such a man. But if all your mishaps are traceable to that star that counts," said Kearny, "it's the quality, just the way it is with women. That's why they gave the biggest planets masculine names and the little stars feminine ones—to even things up when it comes to getting their work in. Suppose they had called my star Agamemnon or Bill McCarty or something like that instead of Phoebe. Every time one of those old boys touched their calamity button and sent me down one of their wireless pieces of bad luck I could talk back and tell 'em what I thought of 'em in suitable terms. But you can't address such remarks to a Phoebe."

"It pleases you to make a joke of it, Kearny," said I without smiling. "But it is no joke to me to think of my Gatling mired in the river ooze."

"As to that," said Kearny, abandoning his light mood at once, "I have already done what I could. I have had some experience in hoisting stone in quarries. Torres and I have already spliced three hawsers and stretched them from the steamer's stern to a tree on shore. We will rig a tackle and have the gun on terra firma before noon tomorrow."

"One could not remain long at outs with Bad Luck Kearny."

"Once more," said I to him, "we will waive this question of luck. Have you ever had experience in drilling raw troops?"

"I was first sergeant and drill master," said Kearny, "in the Chilean army for one year and captain of artillery for another."

"What became of your command?" I asked.

"Shot down to a man," said Kearny, "during the revolution against Balmaina."

"Somehow the misfortunes of the evil starred one seemed to turn to me their comely side. I lay back upon my goat's hide cot and laughed until the woods echoed. Kearny grinned. 'I told you how it was,' he said."

"Tomorrow," I said, "I shall detail 100 men under your command for manual of arms drill and company evolutions. Now, for God's sake, Kearny, I urged him, 'try to combat this superstition if it is one. Bad luck may be like any other visitor—preferring to stop where it is expected. Get your mind off stars. Look upon Esperando as your planet of good fortune.'

"I thank you, captain," said Kearny quietly. "I will try to make it the best handicap I ever ran."

"By noon the next day the submerged Gatling was rescued, as Kearny had promised. Then Carlos and Manuel Ortiz and Kearny (my lieutenants) distributed the rifles among the troops and put them through an incessant rifle drill. We fired no shots, blank or solid, for of all coasts Esperando is the stillest, and we had no desire to sound any warnings in the ear of that corrupt government until they should carry with them the message of liberty and the downfall of oppression."

"In the afternoon came a mule rider bearing a written message to me from Don Rafael Valdevia in the capital, Aguas Frias."

"Whenever that man's name comes to my lips words of tribute to his greatness, his noble simplicity and his conspicuous genius follow irrepressibly. He was a traveler, a student of peoples and governments, a master of sciences, a poet, an orator, a leader, a soldier, a critic of the world's campaigns and the idol of the people of Esperando. I had been honored by his friendship for years. It was I who first turned his mind to the thought that he should leave for his monument a new Esperando—a country freed from the rule of unscrupulous tyrants and a people made happy and prosperous by wise and impartial legislation. When he had consented he threw himself into the cause with the undivided zeal with which he endowed all of his acts. The coffers of his great fortune were opened to those of us to whom were intrusted the secret moves of the game. His popularity was already so great that he had practically forced President Cruz to offer him the portfolio of minister of war."

"The time, Don Rafael said in his letter, was ripe. Success, he prophesied, was certain. The people were beginning to clamor publicly against Cruz's misrule. Bands of citizens in the capital were even going about at night hurling stones at public buildings and expressing their dissatisfaction. A bronze statue of President Cruz in the botanical gardens had been lassoed about the neck and overthrown. It only remained for me to arrive with my force and my thousand rifles and for himself to come forward and proclaim himself the people's savior to overthrow Cruz in a single day. There would be but a half hearted resistance from the 600 government troops stationed in the capital. The country was ours. He presumed that by this time my steamer had arrived at Quintana's camp. He proposed the 18th of July for the attack. That would give us six days in which to strike camp and march to Aguas Frias. In the meantime Don Rafael remained my good

friend and compadre en 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 dirt, 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. Rising 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 we allied its great eyes almost humanly toward Kearny and expired. That was bad, but worse to our minds was the comical 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 bear. The limit had been reached."

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

"Mr. Kearny," said I, "here 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, companero."

"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 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, fishing 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 camp. Here's your \$100. You're nearly there now, captain. Let me in on the scrapping tomorrow."

"Not for a hundred times a hundred would I have the thinnest 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 warty a traveler and as good a soldier as you are

Lieutenant Kearny. Manuel Ortiz's 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 wits 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!'"

"I opened my eyes. The hills were still there, dark and solid. It had not been, then, a volcano or an earthquake. I looked up at the sky and saw a comet-like trail crossing the zenith and extending westward, a fiery trail waning fainter and narrower each moment."

"A meteor," I called aloud. "A meteor has fallen. There is no danger." "And then all other sounds were drowned by a great shout from Kearny's throat. He had raised both hands above his head and was standing tip-toe."

"Phoebe's gone!" he cried with all his lungs. "She's busted and gone to hell—! Look, captain! The little red-headed hoodoo has blown herself to smithereens. She found Kearny too tough to handle, and she puffed up with spite and meanness till her boiler blew up. It'll be 'Bad Luck' Kearny no more. Oh, let us be joyful!"

"Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall; Humpty busted, and that'll be all!"

"I looked up, wondering, and picked out Saturn in his place. But the small red, twinkling luminary in his vicinity, which Kearny had pointed out to me as his evil star, had vanished. I had seen it there but half an hour before. There was no doubt that one of those awful and mysterious spasms of nature had hurled it from the heavens."

"I clasped Kearny on the shoulder."

"Little man," said I, "let this clear the way for you. It appears that astrology has failed to subdue you. Your horoscope must be cast anew with pluck and loyalty for controlling stars. I play you to win. Now, get to your tent and sleep. Daybreak is the word."

"At 9 o'clock on the morning of the 18th of July I rode into Aguas Frias with Kearny at my side. In his clean linen suit and with his military pose and keen eye he was a model of a fighting adventurer. I had visions of him riding as commander of President Valdevia's bodyguard when the plums of the new republic should begin to fall."

"Carlos followed with the troops and supplies. He was to halt in a wood outside the town and remain concealed there until he received the word to advance."

"Kearny and I rode down the Calle Ancha toward the residencia of Don Rafael at the other side of the town. As we passed the superb white buildings of the University of Esperando I saw at an open window the gleaming spectacles and bald head of Herr Bergowitz, professor of the natural sciences and friend of Don Rafael and of me and of the cause. He waved his hand to me with his broad, bland smile."

"There was no excitement apparent in Aguas Frias. The people went about leisurely as at all times. The market was thronged with bareheaded women buying fruit and corn. We heard the twang and tinkle of string bands in the patios of the capitans. We could see that it was a big game that Don Rafael was playing."

"His residencia was a large but low building around a great courtyard in grounds crowded with ornamental trees and tropic shrubs. At his door an old woman who came informed us that Don Rafael had not yet arrived."

"Tell him," said I, "that Captain Malonc and a friend wish to see him at once. Perhaps he has overslept."

"She came back looking frightened. 'I have called,' she said, 'and rung his bell many times, but he does not answer!'"

"I knew where his sleeping room was. Kearny and I pushed by her and went to it. I put my shoulder against the thin door and forced it open."

"In an armchair by a great table covered with maps and books sat Don Rafael with his eyes closed. I touched his hand. He had been dead many hours. On his head above one ear was a wound caused by a heavy blow. It had ceased to bleed long before."

"I made the old woman call a mozo and dispatched him in haste to fetch Herr Bergowitz."

"He came, and we stood about as if we were half stunned by the awful shock. Thus can the letting of a few drops of blood from one man's veins drain the life of a nation."

"Presently Herr Bergowitz stooped and picked up a darkish stone the size of an orange which he saw under the table. He examined it closely through his great glasses with the eye of science."

"A fragment," said he, "of a detonating meteor. The most remarkable one in twenty years exploded above this city a little after midnight this morning."

"The professor looked quickly up at the ceiling. We saw the blue sky through a hole the size of an orange nearly above Don Rafael's chair."

"I heard a familiar sound and turned. Kearny had thrown himself on the floor and was babbling his compendium of bitter, blood freezing curses against the star of his evil luck."

"Undoubtedly Phoebe had been feminine. Even when hurling on her way to fiery dissolution and everlasting doom the last word had been hers."

"Captain Malonc was not unskilled in narrative. He knew the point where a story should end. I sat reveling in his effective conclusion when he aroused me by continuing:

"Of course," said he, "our schemes were at an end. There was no one to take Don Rafael's place. Our little army melted away like dew before the sun."

"One day after I had returned to New Orleans I related this story to a friend who holds a professorship in Tulane university."

"When I had finished he laughed and asked whether I had any knowledge of Kearny's luck afterward. I told him no; that I had seen him no more, but that when he left me he had expressed confidence that his future would be successful now that his unlucky star had been overthrown."

"No doubt," said the professor, "he is happier not to know one fact, if he derives his bad luck from Phoebe, the ninth satellite of Saturn, that malicious lady is still engaged in overlooking his career. The star close to Saturn that he imagined to be her was near that planet simply by the chance of its orbit. Probably at different times he has regarded many other stars that happened to be in Saturn's neighborhood as his evil one. The real Phoebe is visible only through a very good telescope."

"About a year afterward," continued Captain Malonc, "I was walking down a street that crossed the Poydras market. An immensely stout, pink faced lady in black satin crowded me from the narrow sidewalk with a frown. Behind her trailed a little man laden to the gunwales with bundles and bags of goods and vegetables."

"It was Kearny—but changed. I stopped and shook one of his hands, which still clung to a bag of garlic and red peppers."

"How is the luck, old companero?" I asked him. I had not the heart to tell him the truth about his star.

"Well," said he, "I am married, as you may guess."

"Francis," called the big lady in deep tones, "are you going to stop in the street talking all day?"

"I am coming, Phoebe, dear," said Kearny, hastening after her."

"Captain Malonc ceased again. "After all, do you believe in luck?" I asked.

"Do you?" answered the captain, with his ambiguous smile shaded by the brim of his soft straw hat.

"English as She is Spoke."

Writing in the Autocrat, an English publication, an English motorist seriously advises his kind who contemplate visiting America to provide themselves with dictionaries so that they may be able to understand the natives. As instances of outre Americanisms, he cites that Americans say they want to examine the "gasoline line" when they mean the "petrol tank." When we complain that the car "only hits on three" we imply that it is "possible only to make it fire on three cylinders." We further confuse this critic when we say "hood" instead of "bonnet."

"Mudgnards" should be called "accutle dashes," and to use "cement" instead of "tyre solution" is also wrong.

Nature and the Artist. And when the evening mist clothes the riverside with poetry, as with a veil, and the poor buildings lose themselves in the dim sky, and the tall chimneys become campanilli, and the warehouses are palaces in the night, and the whole city hangs in the heavens, and fairyland is before us, then the wayfarer hastens home. The workman and the cultured one, the wise man and the one of pleasure, cease to understand, and they have ceased to see, and nature, who, for once, has sung in tune, sings her exquisite song to the artist alone, her son and her master—her son in that he loves her, her master in that he knows her.—Whistler's "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies."



"A fragment of a detonating meteor."