

# O. Henry Stories

## VII.—Art and the Broncho

By O. HENRY

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UT of the wilderness had come a painter, Genius, whose coronations alone are democratic, had woven a chaplet of chaparral for the brow of Lanny Briscoe. Art, whose divine expression flows impartially from the finger tips of a cowboy or a dilettante emperor, had chosen for a medium the Boy Artist of the San Saba. The outcome, seven feet by twelve of besmeared canvas, stood, gilt framed, in the lobby of the capitol.

The legislature was in session. The capital city of that great western state was enjoying the season of activity and profit that the congregation of the solons bestowed. The boarding houses were corraling the easy dollars of the gossamer lawmakers. The greatest state in the west, an empire in area and resources, had arisen and repudiated the old label of barbarism, law-breaking and bloodshed. Order reigned within her borders. Life and property were as safe there, sir, as anywhere among the corrupt cities of the affluence. Pillowcases, churches, strawberry feasts and habes corpus flourished. With impunity might the tenderfoot ventilate his "stovepipe" or his theories of culture. The arts and sciences received nurture and ambly. And, therefore, it behoved the legislature of this great state to make appropriation for the purchase of Lanny Briscoe's immortal painting.

Rarely has the San Saba country contributed to the spread of the fine arts. Its sons have excelled in the soldier's grace, in the throw of the lariat, the manipulation of the esteem-91-45, the intrepidity of the one card draw and the nocturnal stimulation of towns from undue lethargy. But hitherto it had not been famed as a stronghold of aesthetics. Lanny Briscoe's brush had removed that disability. Here among the limestone rocks, the succulent cactus and the drought parched grass of that arid valley had been born the boy artist. Why he came to you art is beyond postulation. Beyond doubt some spore of the affluence must have sprung up within him in spite of the desert soil of San Saba. The tricky spirit of creation must have lured him to attempted expression and then have sat hilarious among the white hot sands of the valley watching his miscellaneous work, for Lanny's picture, viewed as a thing of art, was something to have driven away dull care from the bosoms of the critics.

The painting—one might almost say panorama—was designed to portray a typical western scene, interest culminating in a central animal figure, that of a stampeding steer, life size, wild eyed, fiery, breaking away in a mad rush from the herd that, close ridden by a typical cow puncher, occupied a position somewhat in the right background of the picture. The landscape presented fitting and faithful accessories. Chaparral, mesquite and pear were distributed in just proportions. A Spanish dagger plant, with its waxen blossoms in a creamy aggregation as large as a water bucket, contributed floral beauty and variety. The distance was undulating prairie, bisected by stretches of the intermittent stream peculiar to the region lined with the rich green of live oak and water elm. A richly mottled rattlesnake lay coiled beneath a pale green clump of prickly pear in the foreground. A third of the canvas was taken up by the sky and the flying clouds, rainless and featureless.

Between two plastered pillars in the commodious hallway near the door of the chamber of representatives stood the painting. Citizens and lawmakers passed there by twos and groups and sometimes crowds to gaze upon it. Many—perhaps a majority of them—had lived the prairie life and recalled easily the familiar scene. Old cattlemen stood, reminiscent and caudally pleased, chatting with brothers of former camps and trails of the days it brought back to mind. Art critics were few in the town, and there was heard none of that jargon of color, perspective and feeling such as the erstwhile loves to use as a curb and a rod to the pretensions of the artists. "Twas a great picture, most of them agreed, admiring the gilt frame—larger than any they had ever seen.

Senator Kinney was the picture's champion and sponsor. It was he who so often stepped forward and asserted, with the voice of a bronco herder, that it would be a lasting blot, sir, upon the name of this great state if it should decline to recognize in a proper manner the genius that had so fitly transferred to imperishable canvas a scene so typical of the great sources of our state's wealth and prosperity, land—and—er—live stock.

Senator Kinney represented a section of the state in the extreme west—499 miles from the San Saba country—far from the true lover of art is not limited by notes and bounds. Nor was Sen-

ator Mullens, representing the San Saba country, lukewarm in his belief that the state should purchase the painting of his constituent. He was advised that the San Saba country was unanimous in its admiration of the great painting by one of its own deities. Hundreds of connoisseurs had straddled their broncos and ridden miles to view it before its removal to the capitol. Senator Mullens desired re-election, and he knew the importance of the San Saba vote. He also knew that with the help of Senator Kinney, who was a power in the legislature, the thing could be put through. Now, Senator Kinney had an irrigation bill that he wanted passed for the benefit of his own section, and he knew Senator Mullens could render him valuable aid and information, the San Saba country already enjoying the benefits of similar legislation. With these interests happily dovetailed, wonder at the sudden interest in art at the state capital must, necessarily, be small. Few artists have uncovered their first pictures to the world under happier auspices than did Lanny Briscoe.

Senator Kinney and Mullens came to an understanding in the matter of irrigation and art while partaking of long drinks in the cafe of the Empire hotel. "I'm in," said Senator Kinney, "I don't know. I'm not art critic, but it seems to me the thing won't work. It looks like the worst kind of a chromo to me. I don't want to cast my reflections upon the artistic talent of your constituent, Senator, but I, myself, wouldn't give six bits for the picture—without the frame. How are you going to cram a thing like that down the throat of a legislature that looks about a little time in the expense bill of 1916 for rubber stamps for only one term? It's wasteful time. I'd like to help you, Mullens, but they'd laugh us out of the senate chamber if we were to try it."

"If you don't get the point," said Sen. Mullens, in his deliberate tones, tapping Kinney's glass with his long forefinger, "I have my own doubts as to what the picture is intended to represent, a bullfight or a Japanese alligator, but I want this legislature to make an appropriation to purchase. Of course, the subject of the picture should have been in the state historical line, but it's too late to have the paint scraped off and changed. The state won't miss the money and the picture can be stowed away in a lumber room where it won't annoy any one. Now, here's the point to work on, leaving art to look after itself—the chap that painted the picture is the grandson of Lucien Briscoe."

"Say it again," said Kinney, leaning his head thoughtfully. "Of the old, original Lucien Briscoe?" "Of him. The man who, you know, the man who carried the state out of the wilderness. The man who settled the Indians. The man who cleaned out the horse thieves. The man who refused the crown. The state's favorite son. Do you see the point now?" "Wrap up the picture," said Kinney. "It's as good as sold. Why didn't you say that at first, instead of phillandering along about art. I'll resign my seat in the senate and go back to chain carrying for the county surveyor the day I can't make this state buy a picture calculated by a grandson of Lucien Briscoe. Did you ever hear of a special appropriation for the purchase of a home for the daughter of One Eyed Smoother? Well, that went through like a motion to adjourn, and old One Eyed never killed half as many Indians as Briscoe did. About what figure had you and the calculator agreed upon to sandbag the treasury for?"

"I thought," said Mullens, "that maybe five hundred."

"Five hundred?" interrupted Kinney as he hammered on his glass for a lead pencil and looked around for a waiter. "Only five hundred for a red steer on the hoof delivered by a grandson of Lucien Briscoe? Where's your state pride, man? Two thousand is what I'll be. You'll introduce the bill and I'll get up on the floor of the senate and wave the scalp of every Indian old Lucien ever murdered. Let's see: there was something else proud and foolish he did, wasn't there? Oh, yes; he declined all emoluments and benefits he was entitled to. Refused his head right and veteran donation certificates. Could have been governor, but wouldn't. Declined a pension. Now's the state's chance to pay up. It'll have to take the picture, but then it deserves some punishment for keeping the Briscoe family waiting so long. We'll bring this thing up about the middle of the month after the tax bill is settled. Now, Mullens, you send over as soon as you can and get me the figures on the cost of those irrigation ditches and the statistics about the increased production per acre. I'm going to need you when that bill of mine comes up. I reckon we'll be able to pull along pretty well together this session and maybe others to come, eh, senator?"

"This did fortune elect to smile upon the boy artist of the San Saba. Fate had already done her share when she arranged his atoms in the cosmogony of creation as the grandson of Lucien Briscoe. The original Briscoe had been a pioneer both as to territorial occupation and in certain arts prompted by a great and simple heart. He had been one of the first settlers and crusaders against the wild forces of nature, the savage and the shallow politician. His name and memory were revered equally by the wild and the tame. Houston, Boone, Crockett, Clark and Green. He had lived simply, independently and unweary by ambition. Even a less shrewd man than Senator Kinney could have prophesied that his state would hasten to honor and reward his grandson, come out of the chaparral at even so late a day.

And so before the great picture by the door of the chamber of representatives at frequent times for many days could be found the breezy, robust form of Senator Kinney and be heard his clarion voice reciting the past deeds of Lucien Briscoe in connection with the handiwork of his grandson. Senator Mullens' work was more subtle in sight and sound, but directed along identical lines.

more and somebody would 'a' been snake bit."

With these artful dodges, contributed by Lanny's faithful coterie, with the sonorous Kinney perpetually sounding the picture's merits and with the solvent prestige of the pioneer Briscoe covering it like a precious varnish, it seemed that the San Saba country could not fail to add a reputation as an art center to its well known superiority in steer roping contests and achievements. Thus was created for the picture an atmosphere, due rather to externals than to the artist's brush, but through it the people seemed to gaze with more admiration. There was a magic in the name of Briscoe that counted high against faulty technique and crude coloring. The old Indian fighter and wolf slayer would have smiled grimly in his happy hunting grounds had he known that his delirious ghost was thus figuring as an art patron two generations after his uninspired existence.

Came the day when the senate was expected to pass the bill of Senator Mullens appropriating \$2,000 for the purchase of the picture. The gallery of the senate chamber was early pre-empted by Lanny and the San Saba lobby. In the front row of chairs they sat, wild haired, set conscious, jingling, creaking and rattling, subdued by the majesty of the council hall.

The bill was introduced, went to the second reading, and then Senator Mullens spoke for it dryly, loudly and at length. Senator Kinney then arose, and the welkin seized the heliophage preparatory to ringing.

Senator Kinney spoke for an hour. History was his theme—history mitigated by patriotism and sentiment. He referred casually to the picture in the outer hall—it was unnecessary, he said, to dilate upon its merits—the senators had seen for themselves. The painter of the picture was the grandson of Lucien Briscoe. Then came the word pictures of Briscoe's life set forth in thrilling colors. His ride and venturesome life, his simple minded love for the commonwealth helped to up-build, his contempt for rewards and praise, his extreme and sturdy independence and the great services he had rendered the state. The subject of the oration was Lucien Briscoe. The painting stood in the background serving simply as a means, now happily brought forward, through which the state might bestow a tardy recompense upon the descendant of its favorite son.

The bill passed without an opposing vote. Tomorrow it would be taken up by the house. Already was it fixed to glide through that body on rubber tires. Blandford, Grayson and Plummer, all wheelhouses and orators and covered with plentiful memoranda concerning the deeds of Pioneer Briscoe, had agreed to furnish the motive power.

The San Saba lobby and its proteges stumbled awkwardly down the stairs and out into the capitol yard. Then they herded closely and gave one yell of triumph. But one of them—Buck Knead Summers it was—hit the key with the thoughtful remark:

"She cut the mustard," he said, "all right. I reckon they're gone to buy Lanny's steer. I ain't right much on the parliamentery, but I gather that's what the signs added up. But she seems to me, Lanny, the argument ran principal to grandfather instead of paint. It's reasonable calculation that you want to be glad you got the Briscoe brand on you, my son."

That remark clinched in Lanny's mind an unpleasant, vague suspicion to the same effect. His reticence increased, and he gathered grass from the ground, chewing it pensively. The picture as a picture had been humbly absent from the senator's arguments. The painter had been held up as a grandson, pure and simple. The hotel Lanny stopped at was near the capitol. It was near to the 1 o'clock dinner hour when the appropriation had been passed by the senate. The hotel clerk told Lanny that a famous artist from New York had arrived in town that day and was in the hotel. He was on his way westward to New Mexico to study the effect of sunlight upon the ancient wall of the Zuni. Modern stone reflects light. Those ancient building materials absorb it. The artist wanted this effect in a picture he was painting and was traveling 2,000 miles to get it.

Lanny sought this man out after dinner and told his story. The artist was an unheavenly man, kept alive by genius and indifference to life. He went with Lanny to the capitol and stood there before the picture. The artist pulled his head and looked unhappy.

"Should like to have your sentiments," said Lanny, "just as they run out of the pen."

"It's the way they'll come," said the painter man. "I took three different kinds of medicine before dinner—by the tablespoonful. The taste still lingers. I am primed for telling the truth. You want to know if the picture is or if it isn't?"

"Right," said Lanny. "Is it wool or cotton? Should I paint some more or cut it out and ride herd a plenty?" "I heard a rumor during pie," said the artist, "that the state is about to pay you \$2,000 for this picture."

"It's passed the senate," said Lanny, "and the house rounds it up tomorrow."

"That's lucky," said the painter man. "Do you carry a rabbit's foot?" "No," said Lanny. "But it seems I had a grandfather. He's considerable mixed up in the color scheme. It took me a year to paint that picture. Is she entirely awful or not? Some says now that that steer's tail ain't badly drawn. They think it's proportioned nice. Tell me."

The artist glanced at Lanny's wry figure and nut brown skin. Something stirred him to a passing irritation. "For art's sake, son," he said, frantically, "don't spend any more money for paint. It isn't a picture at all. It's a gun. You hold up the state with it if you like and get your \$2,000, but don't get in front of any more canvas. Live under it. Buy a couple of hundred ponies with your money—I'm told they're that cheap—and ride, ride, ride. Fill your lungs and eat and sleep and be happy. No more pictures. You look healthy. That's genius. Cultivate it." He looked at his watch. "Twenty minutes to 3. Four capsules and one tablet at 3. That's all you wanted to know, isn't it?"

At 3 o'clock the cowpunchers rode for Lanny, bringing Hot Tamales, as they called them. Traditions must be observed. To celebrate the passage of the bill by the senate the gang must ride wildly through the town, creating uproar and excitement.

"Come on, boys," said Lanny, urging Hot Tamales into a gallop with his knees. With a whoop the inspired lobby tore after him through the dust. Lanny led his cohorts straight for the capitol. With a wild yell the gang indulged his now evident intention of riding into it. Hoopay for San Saba! Up the six broad limestone steps clattered the bronchos of the cowpunch-

ers. Into the resounding hallway they pattered, scattering in dismay those passing on foot. Lanny, in the lead, shoved Hot Tamales direct for the great picture. At that hour a down-pouring, soft light from the second story windows bathed the big canvas. Against the darker background of the hall the painting stood out with valuable effect. In spite of the defects of the art you could almost fancy that you gazed out upon a landscape. You might well fancy a step from the convincing figure of the life sized steer stampeding across the grass. Perhaps it thus seemed to Hot Tamales. The scene was in his line. Perhaps he only obeyed the will of his rider. His ears pricked up; he snorted. Lanny leaped forward in the saddle and elevated his elbows, wing-like. Thus signals the cowpuncher to his steed to launch him full speed ahead. Did Hot Tamales fancy he saw a steer, rod and carting, that should be headed off and driven back to herd? There was a fierce clatter of hoofs, a rush, a gathering of steely flank muscles, a leap to the jerk of the bridle rein, and Hot Tamales, with Lanny bending low in the saddle to dodge the top of the frame, ripped through the great canvas like a shell from a mortar, leaving the cloth hanging in ragged shreds about a monstrous hole.

Quickly Lanny pulled up his pony, and rounded the pillars. Spectators came running, too astounded to add speech to the commotion. The sergeant at arms of the house came forth, frowned, looked ominous and then grinned. Many of the legislators crowded out to observe the tumult. Lanny's cowpunchers were stricken to silent horror by his mad deed.

Senator Kinney, happened to be among the earliest to emerge. Before he could speak Lanny leaped in his saddle as Hot Tamales pranced, pointed his quirt at the senator and said calmly:

"That was a fine speech you made today, mister, but you might as well let up on that 'proprietation' business. I ain't askin' the state to give me nothin'. I thought I had a picture to sell to it, but it wasn't one. You said a heap of things about Grandfather Briscoe that makes me kind of proud 'n' his grandson. Well, the Briscoes ain't takin' presents from the state yet. Anybody can have the frame that wants it. Hit her up, boys."

Away scuttled the San Saba delegation out of the hall, down the steps, along the dusty street.

Halfway to the San Saba country they camped that night. At bedtime Lanny stole away from the campfire and sought Hot Tamales, placidly eating grass at the end of his stake rope. Lanny hung upon his neck, and his art aspirations went forth forever in one long, regretful sigh. But as he thus made renunciation his breath formed a word or two.

"You was the only one, Tamales, what seen anything in it. It did look like a steer, didn't it, old hoss?"

"Don't spend any more money for paint."

DR. STONE'S DRUG STORE

## HOUSEHOLD HINTS

### Ginger Grapefruit.

Grapefruit is wonderfully appetizing when served with ginger. Remove the hard pithy center, the skin between the sections and the seeds. Shred the pulp with a silver fork, adding to each half a heaping teaspoonful of sugar, the same quantity of defatted coconut and one table-spoonful of preserved ginger cut into dice and a table-spoonful of the ginger syrup. Cool for several hours before serving. When ready to serve place on small dessert plates and put a table-spoonful of whipped cream in the center of each half.

### Individual Salad

For each individual salad three lettuce leaves (head lettuce preferred); one pickled beet with center cut out to form a cup. Fill cup in beet with creamed cheese beaten smooth, with pineapple juice. Roll an egg chop white and yolk separately. Sprinkle a little of yolk on top of cheese (in cups), and add dash of paprika for color. Make a small pile of chopped whites on each leaf and add a little salad dressing or creamed cheese. Serve cold.

### Tulip Luncheon.

Here are two suggestions for a tulip luncheon:

Cards—From green crepe paper cut stem and leaves. From red, cut bud or blossom of tulip. Mount on small white card.

Tulip Salad—Shape tulip blossom from half a canned pimento. Use strips of green pepper for stem and leaves. Place these on a slice of pineapple and serve on a lettuce leaf. Edge the tulip blossom with salad dressing.

### Stove Blacking Hints

To keep stove polished, wash red and rusty parts with vinegar before using polish. Stove will take and keep polish much better. To keep grease off stove, use cloth dipped in alcohol. Add soap to stove blacking and it will not come off so quickly. Put some vinegar in stove polish, or a few drops of turpentine; will help polish stick. Gasoline or coal oil will take off the grease and will make it look nice and black.

To remove grease from gas stove, put gasoline on a dry cloth (have stove perfectly cold) and apply; also takes dirt from tops of stovepipes. To keep stove black, put a little black coffee in the paste and have stove just warm. By using this daily the shine will not wear off. Use a flannel cloth instead of brush.

### For the Baby

Covering Baby's Feeding Bottles—Instead of using cotton for corking the bottle containing baby's milk, use clean waxed paper, putting same over the tops of the bottles and fastening it on with a rubber band. This eliminates the trouble sometimes caused by bits of lint getting into the milk and so stopping up the nipple, if small-necked bottles are used, and the expense of the rubber caps which are sold for covers to the wide-mouthed bottles.

### The Table.

Mock Goose.—Two cups bread crumbs, two cups black walnuts, two cups boiled rice, six hard-cooked eggs, three raw eggs, one table-spoon grated onion, salt, pepper, grated nutmeg to taste. Put bread crumbs in sauce pan with two cups water, cook a few minutes, add hard-cooked eggs chopped. Take sauce pan from fire, add black walnut meats and the rice. When this is well mixed add raw eggs, slightly beaten, and seasonings. Form this into shape of a goose, reserving portions for legs and wings. Take a table-spoon of mixture in your hand and press it into shape of a leg, put piece of dry mackerel into it for bone and fasten full speed ahead. Did Hot Tamales fancy he saw a steer, rod and carting, that should be headed off and driven back to herd? There was a fierce clatter of hoofs, a rush, a gathering of steely flank muscles, a leap to the jerk of the bridle rein, and Hot Tamales, with Lanny bending low in the saddle to dodge the top of the frame, ripped through the great canvas like a shell from a mortar, leaving the cloth hanging in ragged shreds about a monstrous hole.

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