

FOUR HUNDRED GOOD STORIES

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Four Hundred Good Stories by Robert Rudd Whiting

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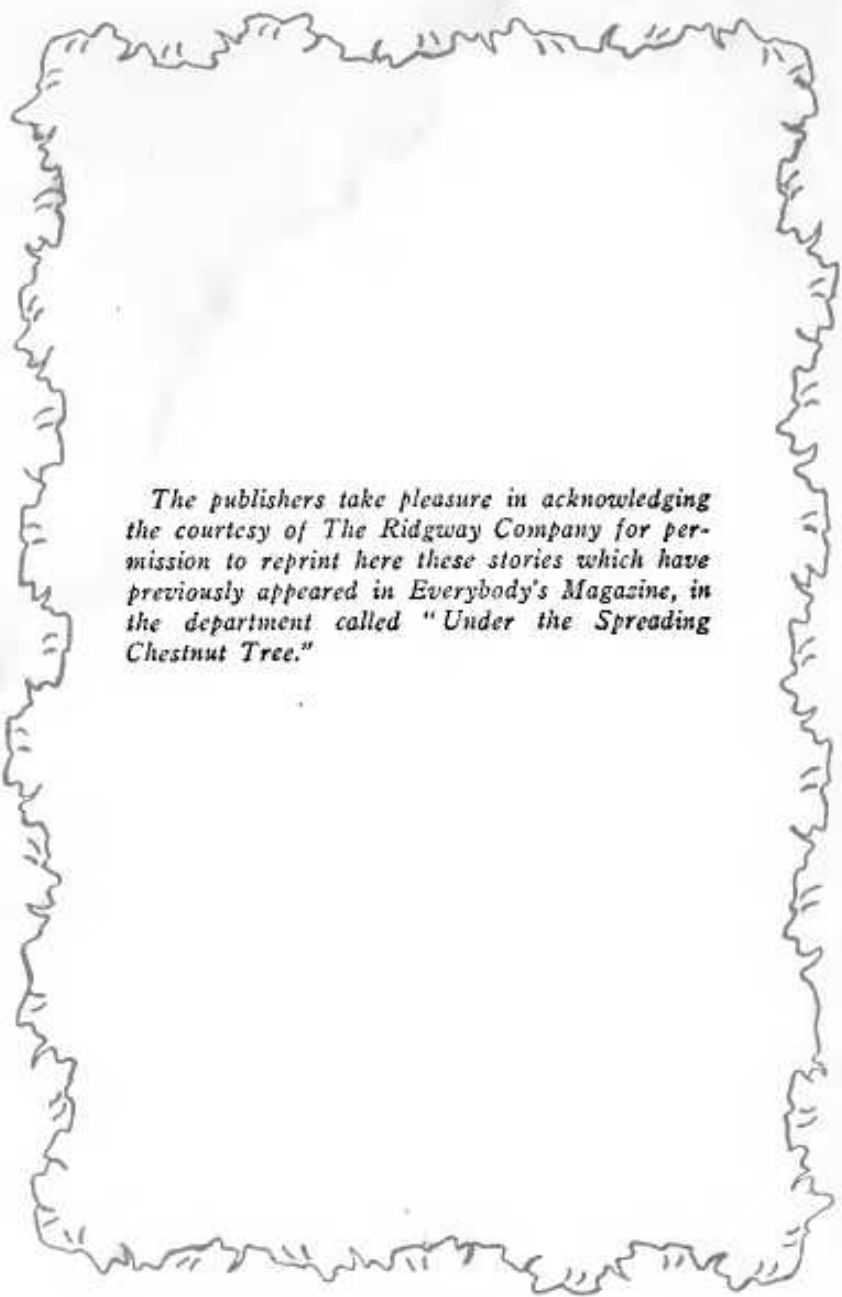
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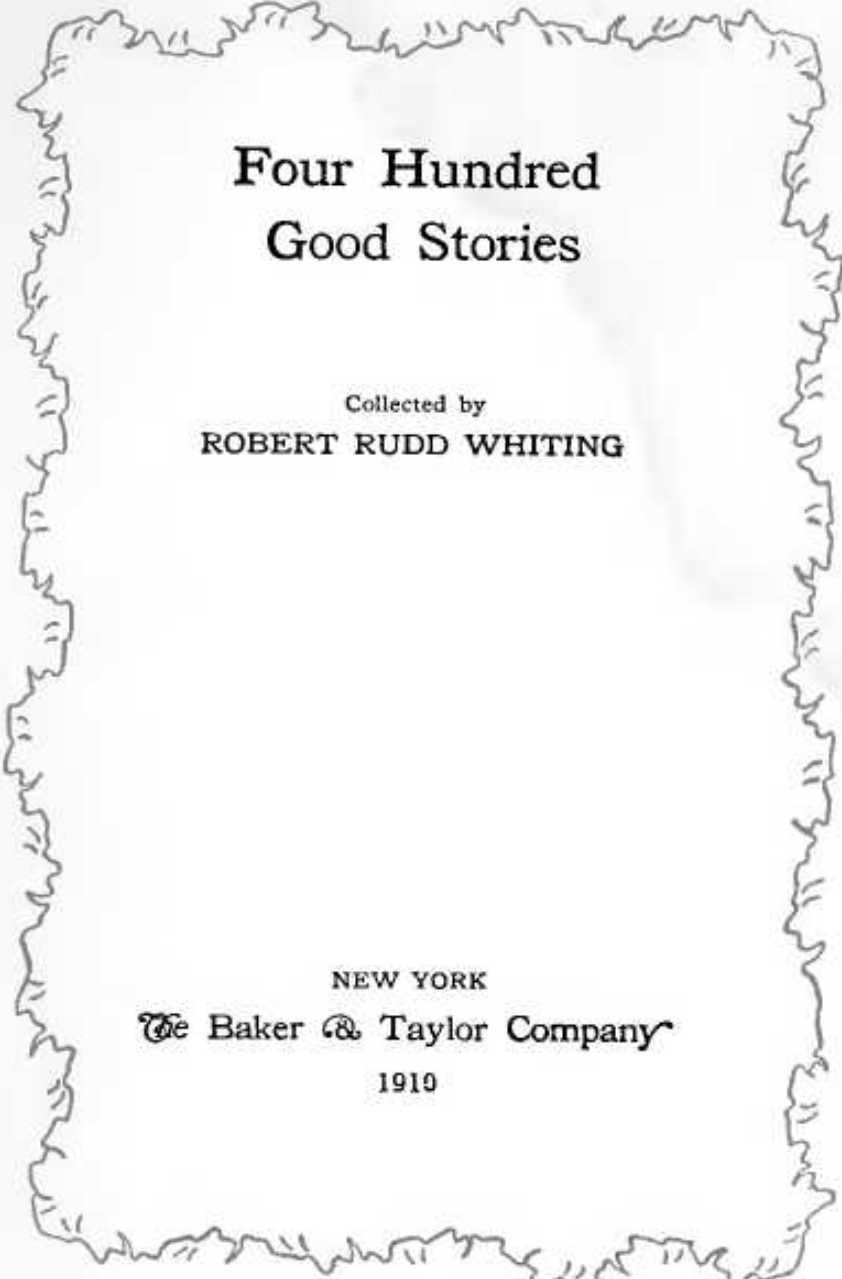
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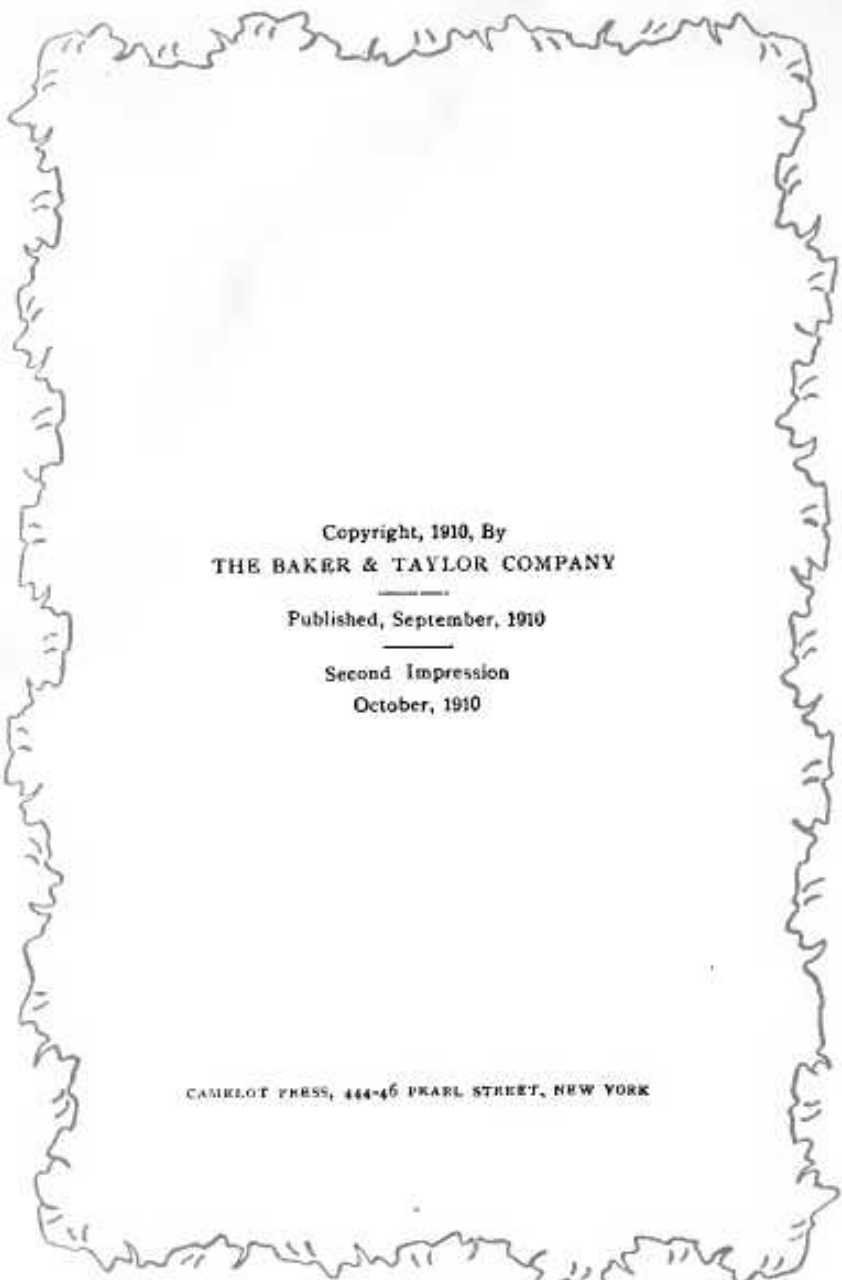
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**Four Hundred
Good Stories**

Collected by
ROBERT RUDD WHITING

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1910



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INTRODUCTION

A collection of anecdotes, like corned beef hash, should be judged as much by what is left out as by what is put in. The editor has sought to exclude from this little book all stories of purely local appeal, as well as stories that depend for their humor upon ridicule of any nation or creed.

The index of the subjects illustrated by these stories will, it is thought, be helpful to public speakers. A speech is a long, narrow passage leading to some broad conclusion. Anecdotes are the lamps that light the way. If the passage be obscure and gloomy, it may be that few will follow it. But if the passage be cheerfully lighted, all will gladly accompany the guide, and long after reaching the conclusion they will remember with pleasure the way through which he led them.

Some of the anecdotes in this collection are new—such have the virtue of youth. Others are old—the very fact that these have lasted as long as they have is proof of their merit. For among anecdotes the good do not die young. No attempt will be made here to distinguish between the old and the young, for in respect to age an anecdote is like a woman: it is almost impossible to determine exactly how old one is, and it is very impolite to ask. Probably some of the “newest” of Lincoln stories were causing smiles long before Lincoln’s birth, while some of the “oldest” first saw light years after his death.

“As nearly as I can discover,” said a man who keeps in touch with the humorous departments of the magazines, “all anecdotes can be roughly divided into six general classes: those related by Abraham Lincoln, those of which ‘the Southern colonel of the old school’ was the hero, the things that Mark Twain did, the various amusing experiences that befell the Bishop of X while so-

journing in the quaint little village of Y, the cutting retorts of James McNeill Whistler, and the shocking behavior of little Willie in the presence of the minister. What did they do for anecdotes before these people were born? Didn't they have any?"

Let us see. Here is a Mark Twain story that has been going the rounds of the magazines:

Mark Twain once went to borrow a certain book from a neighbor in Tarrytown.

"Why, yes, Mr. Clemens, you're more than welcome to it," the neighbor told him. "But I must ask you to read it here. You know I make it a rule never to let any book go out of my library."

Some days later the neighbor wished to borrow Twain's lawn mower.

"Why, certainly," the humorist genially assured him. "You're more than welcome to it. But I must ask you to use it here. You know I make it a rule"——

Hold on, though! What of the story