

# **DRY STORIES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649322619

Dry Stories by Narnie Harrison Bell

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**NARNIE HARRISON BELL**

# **DRY STORIES**



# Dry Stories

BY

NARNIE HARRISON BELL

---

TO THE BOYS OF TEXAS

This Book is Affectionately Dedicated

By

The Author

---

1915

TELEGRAM PUBLISHING COMPANY

Temple, Texas



**A STORY OF THE COTTON PATCH**



## A Woman's Strategem

---

When Anne Winter looked down at the face of her first-born, she felt that motherhood was the supreme event of a woman's existence.

She had been a clever artist in her time; had painted some pictures that people talked of noisily, had decorated the ceiling of a big church in a big town, and done a portrait in oil of one of the ladies of the cabinet.

But on a certain January morning all this seemed mere nothingness to the light touch of tiny pink fingers like a drift of rose leaves on her breast. The babe had wailed because it had come into this big, brutal world, and when she had hushed its wailing, it seemed to her that she, Anne Winter, for the first time counted for something in this world. For the first time, she was a real factor in the history of humanity.

Her psychic senses seemed so quickened that the simplest things had a new significance, and everything in earth or heaven circled about that infant's head. A strip of sunlight coming through the shutter, and falling across the brow of the child, was, to her, the prophecy of a brilliant career; old nigger July told her that the tiny purplish V in the middle of the forehead was "a shore sign he'd git money—lots of it," and the nurse declared that she knew a thing or two about babies, and



she never saw a baby yet with its ears doubled up like that, who didn't have temper—plenty, and to spare. Anne smiled contentedly. That was all right. Everything was all right today. Temper meant force of character, Anne said proudly.

The child was a boy—otherwise this force of character would have been rated a defect unmentioned by either nurse or mother. He looked exactly like his father, of course; that chin, which was really nothing but a wrinkled cushion of pink velvet, was "Marse John Winter over agin—wasn't nothing 'bout 'im like Miss Anne 'ceptin' jes' the look outen his eyes"—there wasn't any look yet.

Anne thought that the shape of the baby's head resembled pictures she had seen of Daniel Webster or Henry Clay—she had forgotten which. She was ashamed to tell this to anybody but July, who retorted, "Clay—who's he? Hump, 'is head looks like a red apple—a big, fine red apple, though, Miss Anne—to me—but jes look at that mouf, ain't it jes' zackly like his daddy?—jes' for the world."

A light sigh fluttered from Anne Winter's lips, and a shadow dimmed the edge of her golden day. Her husband had not yet held their first-born in his arms. This morning he had to hurry to his work in the city, and could not possibly come back at noon. But how eagerly she waited his home-coming tonight, for Anne Winter thought when she should see her husband, tall and strong, standing beside her, holding on his arm this wee bit of humanity, this little life, which meant so much to both of them, a new bond, more sacred and more tender than before, would bind their lives together. Surely, she said to

herself, he would come home all right tonight—this, the first night when they could talk together about "our boy."

For the dark thread running through the golden pattern of today was the sickening fear that John would not be "at himself" tonight. The nights when he was not at himself were too many in the last year—though things had been better of late, and she had hoped that the child's coming would lead him away from the hateful habit which scorched his life and hers. Then a happy, helpful thought came to her. Calling the nurse she dictated a note to her husband, which she gave to old July to take to him at his work. She asked him to be sure to stop at a certain dry-goods store on his way home tonight, and buy the baby a shawl, blue and white, with soft fringes, she had seen in the window there.

Then she gave the note to the old negro, charging her especially not to wait for an answer. "Hand it to Mr. John," she said, "and hurry away, without even waiting for him to read it, do you understand?" Old July nodded. She understood very well. She had helped in such tactful stratagems before.

Then Anne lay back on her pillow and closed her eyes, with a smile on her lips. She felt that she had saved the day. For him to buy the shawl on his way home was to go to a dry-goods store near by. To go to the dry-goods store was to miss the saloon on the other side. To miss the saloon, was to miss his chiefest temptation. Thus she felt that she had done the very best thing to bring him home as he should be tonight.

Just let him come home sober to her and the wee laddie tonight, and surely his

tender heart would feel the sanctity of the hour. She would not say one word to him of reform—only she knew that the solemn power of their first night together with their first-born would consecrate him to a better life, if the heart and brain were clear to feel, to understand. Tonight was a pivot in the history of her life. She had done well. All would be right, and swiftly Anne Winter's thoughts ran along the years before her; ran as a river singing and smiling to the sea. Soon she would hold the babe to the window at night to reach for the slim, new moon, and a little later to smile at the flash of spring's first bluebird through a slant of silver rain. How quickly would come the days when his small fingers would curl around hers, and she would lead him out to the garden to tiptoe for the half-open lily buds.

Children grew so fast, people told her, and how soon, he and she would stand side by side watching the rose-flush fade from the West, and the sentinel stars come out. Then later they would go down into the fields and drive the cows home, while they heard the birds call from the thicket edging the meadow pond. She would teach her boy to see and to hear the beautiful. To see and to hear it would be to love it. To love the pure and beautiful, would be to despise the vile and base. So, lying there, and dreaming on, she saw the wee one leap into years, when he hated vice and the homes and haunts of it. He would be careful of everything weak and helpless that crossed his path, would step aside from the cricket in the grass lest he should crush its chirp—would be tender with the little new wobbly calf, or the old tottering beggar passing by—she saw him a big boy, strong, yet tender, so her