

**MY TUSSLE WITH
THE DEVIL: AND
OTHER STORIES**

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My tussle with the devil: and other stories by O. Henry's Ghost

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O. HENRY'S GHOST

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The Barrage Fire



FEEL I cannot give O. Henry's Ghost better ammunition with which to meet his critics than a bit of truth voiced by Joan in one of Algernon Blackwood's wonderful books.

"The beloved dead step nearer when their bodies drop aside. They know where they are and what they are doing. It's not for us to worry—in that way. And they are *out of hours and minutes.*"

To meet the onslaught of you, Mr. Scoffer and Mr. Skeptic, who will say, "Impossible! They are not a bit like O. Henry's stories! They lack all his virility, etc., etc." I say at once, of course they are different! Where before his stories were written in the bold black and red of human passions, which belong to materiality,

now, they must of necessity be pastel in hue and delicate gossamer things, for O. Henry's Ghost is using finer material to mold his creations. The land where he dwells is subject to a different rate of vibration, and as the rhythm must be totally unlike, it is natural that the thoughts should flow and take form in the vehicle of poets.

But one characteristic is dominant still—the completeness of each Pastel. Not a word more is needed to complete a picture or convey an emotion, and while the aspiration of O. Henry's Ghost has changed and he deals with higher, finer forces and desires, he still retains his mastery of the short story.

Attack from all sides, if you will, but the only guns you can fire are, "I believe" and "I think," which shall bring forth in reply the bomb "I KNOW!!"

Because the spirit known as O. Henry came before the curtain on this particular stage in the garb of heavy woolen materiality, thundering vivid, scarlet tales, is no reason why, having made his exit,—after playing out his role,—he should not return in a different characterization and in chiffon garb.

If he is not recognized in the new one upon his entrance it is no evidence that the same spirit does not animate both. and the perfection of detail and artistry in both characterizations is convincing proof of the same dominant spirit.

While the stories necessarily reflect in their style the high aspiration that prompted them, they prove, as O. Henry's Ghost so vividly remarked, that a leopard can change its spots.

Flashes of the O. Henry who wrote "The Man About Town" are found

in the bits of personal conversation from O. Henry's Ghost, and the old and new are blended in the following birthday greeting: "I give you my gladsome wish for a comrade and gratitude for opening the doors to a scrivener. If it was the olden days I should have been foolish enough to say 'Have a drink to celebrate.' Now I shall tell you to take a whiff of ambrosia fit for gods and shall join you with a gladsome spirit. Here's how!"

The sledge hammer blows wielded by the personality of O. Henry can only dull to insensibility and bring forth a murmur of "I think" and "I believe," while the darting shafts of O. Henry's Ghost will pierce the clouds and bring forth the chorus of "I know" to those who, having eyes—see—and having ears—hear!

It is today the same as when Plato said:

"Strange times are these in which we
live, forsooth:
When old and young are taught in
Falsehood's School!
And the one man who dares to tell
the Truth
Is called at once a 'Lunatic' and 'Fool.'"

But at any rate, they go forth at
the request of O. Henry's Ghost and
with the belief that the beauty of
thought will be a joyful remembrance
of one who was known as O. Henry.

PARMA.

June 27th, 1918.
158 Ocean Boulevard,
Atlantic Highlands,
New Jersey.

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