

kept up my home-building stock, and play that I am my own landlord and am paying myself rent. That's the way a publication of the economics department of Virgilina and the banker continue to explain the matter to me. But every time I stand before him at that little window in the village bank and meet, with forage from Parnassus, the

monthly instalment and the interest on the mortgage, I recall a significant passage from Cicero's "On the Nature of the Gods": "It seems an unaccountable thing how one soothsayer can refrain from laughing when he sees another. It is yet a greater wonder that you can refrain from laughing among yourselves."



Black Truth

BY DAVID WILLIAM MOORE

JOE TWEED was listening to Hattie, as usual. Why would he scatter ashes all over the floor? Didn't he care anything about the house? Didn't he concern himself with how much work his wife had to do? Surely, a husband ought to take a little interest in the home. Most husbands tried to make things easy for their wives. Why, there were many husbands who wouldn't even smoke in the house, at all.

But Joe didn't answer back. Just sat with his face buried in the sport page. Now and then he'd sigh, and Hattie would take a new start. Somewhat like a sparrow chasing a crow, the way Hattie scolded Joe.

Joe was big, outlandishly big. And Hattie was little. Just a handful of fuss, was what old Doctor Rankin called her. Most folks expected Joe to get "riled" some day and turn her over his knee. And nobody would have cared. It would have made him a hero in the village. Folks knew how Hattie had been nagging Joe for nearly eighteen years. They said Joe was too easy-going.

But this evening—after Hattie had talked for perhaps an hour—Joe suddenly got up from his chair and walked over in front of his wife. This was so strange that Hattie stopped talking. Joe glared down at her, somewhat like a Newfoundland dog would glare at a mouse, and pointed a huge bony finger. A time or two he wiggled that finger, and Hattie cringed.

"Now you listen to me, Hattie Tweed! I been putting up with your jawin' for a long time, and I'm getting mighty tired of it. You been talking your head off without nothing to talk about. If you want to talk, then I'll give you something worth while to gab about. To-morrow morning I'm going to New York——"

Hattie's face brightened instantly. Her anger was gone. "I'll have to get a new dress, Joe."

The finger still pointed. "No, you don't get no new dress nor nothing, for you ain't going to New York. I'm going alone and I'm going to have a good time. I'm going on a spree, and I don't

give a damn what you say or think. You can take it or lump it. I may get drunk and I may do a heap of things. And I'll come back when I get good and ready!"

With that he went off to bed and was soon snoring the snore of the righteously indignant, while Hattie fumed and fretted far into the night—also righteously indignant, righteously furious, and righteously everything else that an outraged wife should be. "Why, I can't understand it. I can't understand it," she moaned to herself. "I never gave him a single reason to find fault with me. I've been a good, true wife."

Breakfast was a sullen meal. Joe had nothing to add. Hattie couldn't get her tongue started. But she was seething, and she set down his coffee cup with a gesture that made Joe twitch. When the meal was finished, Joe packed his suitcase and went off toward the railway station without a word. Not even a good-by.

He reached New York late in the afternoon. He wasn't accustomed to travelling, and he was tired. His eyes ached from looking so much out of the car window. Now, as he stepped out of the big station he was confused. A million taxicabs beckoned him; a million porters tried to grab his suitcase; a million strangers surged about him; a million lights dazzled his eyes.

He gritted his teeth, shrugged his shoulders, and started out on foot. He didn't know the names of any hotels, except the expensive ones. He'd find a nice quiet clean place that didn't cost too much. "And when I get settled down, I'm sure going to raise old Ned," he smiled ruefully to himself as he plodded along.

It was almost an hour later when he finally came upon the kind of hotel he had in mind. He went right up to his

room. He'd change his collar, maybe, and comb back his hair. Then he'd start out. He sat down on the edge of the bed, and sighed heavily as the relaxation eased up on his many aches. He ached all over! His arms ached; his back ached; his feet ached; his head ached—and his eyes ached so he could hardly see.

"I'll just loaf around here a little while and get my energy back, then I'll start out," he concluded, as he straightened himself out lengthwise on the bed. And as he lay there, he thought of all the things he was going to do. Find a gay café somewhere, maybe a night club, pick up a cute little companion, and then just naturally cut loose. He fell asleep over his plans.

And when he awoke it was morning! He looked around the room in wonder, then realized where he was. He chuckled. "Well, I sure wasted one evening, all right. Gosh, but I'm hungry! Some of Hattie's sausage would be—but no, darn her! I ain't going to even think of her!"

He found a little restaurant around the corner, where he ate heartily, and felt much better. But it was broad daylight, and a man couldn't go spreeing at this time of the day. He went back to the hotel, and lay on the bed reading the morning paper. Lunch was at the same little restaurant. The hours dragged; he had a long inactive afternoon ahead of him yet. What to do? He thought of going out to see the Giants play. But no, he didn't want to get all worn out again. He'd just rest some more, keep himself in shape. He was in the restaurant again at six o'clock. He had changed his mind about eating his regular meals in a night club. For one thing, he didn't know where to find one, and he was afraid to ask. No telling

what kind of a gag these city slickers might frame up on him. He'd just have his meal, and then he'd start out and walk till he met a good-looking girl who showed interest in him. She'd know where there was a dance hall, or a café.

That evening, Joe Tweed walked all the way from Thirty-second Street down to Battery Park and back, and not one girl looked at him! Yes, there were plenty of girls on the street, but their minds seemed to be occupied with thoughts far distant from Joe Tweed and his spree. He looked at them, watching alertly for a twinkling eye. No eyes twinkled.

At nine o'clock he was back in his hotel room, crawling into bed completely disgusted. "There's more chance to have a spree in Dry Bottom than there is in this fool city!"

The next afternoon at four o'clock he reached home—and Hattie. He lumbered into the door, smiling sheepishly at her. He dropped his now-too-heavy suitcase with a cheerful sigh. Joe Tweed was glad to be home. "Well, how's tricks, Hattie, old girl?"

She replied with a withering look of scorn, biting her lip.

"Ain't you glad to see me?"

"You tell me what you did, Joseph Tweed! This instant!"

Joe grinned frankly. "I didn't do a thing."

"Hmph!" Hattie sat primly in her chair, tapping a menacing toe on the carpet. "Fine tale. Tell me what you did, tell me the truth, or I'll—I'll——"

"Honest, Hattie, I didn't do a thing."

Perhaps it was because he was glad to get home; perhaps it was because he had acquired a bit of assurance from having been on a trip. But, whatever the reason, Joe Tweed spoke those words too easily. They didn't have the ring of truth in them.

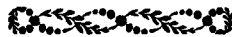
"I never heard a bigger lie in my life," rasped Hattie. "I declare I never did!"

But Joe had nothing more to say, therefore he said nothing more. He picked up his suitcase and took it upstairs to unpack. Hattie looked after him with helpless tears in her eyes.

But when Joe came down again, Hattie had a fine supper ready. Custard pie, and fried steak, and black-raspberry jelly, and things like that. She had brightened, too, and didn't say anything more about his trip. But Joe would now and then catch her looking at him curiously, as if she was trying to read his thoughts.

They say she hasn't nagged him since—but every week or so she looks straight into his eyes and says: "Joe Tweed, if you don't tell me what you did in New York I'll never forgive you."

But Joe merely grins.





My Town

BY DELANCE LENHART

WHEN I came to this town forty years ago there were six hundred people here. I was a boy ten years old, and the town and I grew up together. To-day there are six thousand inhabitants and I am fifty. From a kid in knee-breeches I have stuck so close to the old town that I have never been more than two hundred miles from home or away from it more than two days at a time.

It is not that I thought the town would fall apart or some one would run away with the spoke-mill, but at that age I had a feeling of great importance. Some one just had to climb Joe Whisler's trees and throw the plums out in the alley to the fellows; some one just had to go up in the schoolhouse belfry and fix the rope so that the gang could hide across the street and ring the bell all night on Hallowe'en. And, since I was the best at shinnying up a pole, of course I tied down the woollen-mill whistle.

I am writing this not because I made such a wonderful success of anything, but because I want to show how a person can spend his life happily in one small town, where every one knows him, and where he knows how much every one makes and what they owe. The town has a personality to me. It is not just a collection of houses and streets, stores and factories. It's a living thing with a character like a human being. I notice all its changes just as I would in one of my family.

While others are spending their lives trying to earn the monthly instalments on their new sedans, I can drive the old Ford. I have no interest to pay every six months on mortgages, so that I can live on Chartier Avenue and belong to the West Shore Country Club. But in my case it makes no difference. Everybody knows who I am and what I am. I can hobnob with the Lovingtons at "Green Gables" or drop in to see Tony Cazenzi at his "shoe-fix" shop. I didn't have to join the Methodist church to get in the social swim.

The fire company has elected me a life member with no dues to pay, a thing they have done in only one other case. I served two terms in town council, was president of that body, and for nearly twenty years have been justice of the peace. Many have told me I threw away good opportunities by staying here; some even pitied me for being such a goose. Just last week I was called "seventeen cock-eyed fools" and "a boot-legger," but I know the fellow who said it. I would feel neglected if something were not said about me.

The Silver Cornet Band would have been without a drum-major had I gone to the city as did the older ones in the family. From the time I was eleven years old until I was sixteen I was right out there at the head of the line, all dressed up in a Zouave uniform, swinging a baton and musket with a bayonet.

Thirty-five years ago I was captain of the first town football team. During the