

## O. HENRY: PHARMACIST.\*

BY CHARLES H. LAWALL AND MILLICENT R. LAWALL.

This is not an attempt to prove that because William Sydney Porter, who wrote under the pseudonym of O. Henry, had been for a time a pharmacist, that on this account he was a better writer of short stories; but it is an investigation into the possible influence which his pharmaceutical experience had upon his subsequent work. Indeed, the matter of his pharmaceutical experience has been questioned by no less an authority than the English author and humorist, Stephen Leacock, who wrote an article published in 1916, called "The Amazing Genius of O. Henry." In this article he refers to Mr. Porter's pharmaceutical experience in the following disparaging paragraph:

"From Central America O. Henry rolled, drifted or floated—there was no method in his life—back to Texas again. Here he worked for two weeks in a drug store. This brief experience supplied him all the rest of his life with local color and technical material for his stories. So well has he used it that the obstinate legend still runs that O. Henry was a druggist. A strict examination of his work would show that he knew the names of about seventeen drugs and was able to describe the rolling of pills with the life-like accuracy of one who has rolled them. But it was characteristic instinct for literary values that even on this slender basis O. Henry was able to make his characters "take down from shelves" such mysterious things as *Sod. et Pot. Tart.*, or discuss whether magnesia carbonate or pulverized glycerine (here Mr. Leacock slipped—see 'A Ramble in Aphasia' for the correct reference) is the best excipient, and in moments of high tragedy poison themselves with tincture of aconite."

With all due regard for Mr. Leacock's sagacity, in this case he is incorrect as to fact and wrong as to inference.

A careful compilation of the drugs, chemicals, pharmaceutical preparations and technical terms and phrases peculiar to pharmaceutical literature, shows that instead of seventeen the number reaches nearly one hundred, and there are very few duplications as would be the case if he had only a smattering of the subject, as Mr. Leacock infers. Besides, Mr. Leacock is wrong in his chronology. Mr. Porter's short drug store experience in Texas was not obtained after he returned from Central America, which was in 1896, but twelve years earlier, after he had been sent from his home town and birthplace, Greensboro, North Carolina, because the close confinement in the drug store of his uncle, Clarke Porter, was undermining his health.

Arthur W. Page, a North Carolina author, and for a number of years editor of *World's Work*, has given us the best and most detailed account of Porter's early days in Greensboro. The following extracts are illuminating:

"After the short school days Porter found employment as prescription clerk in the drug store of his uncle Clarke Porter, and it was there that his genius as an artist and writer budded forth and gave the first promise of the work of after years. The old Porter drug store was the social club of the town in those days. A game of chess went on in the back room always, and around the old stove behind the prescription counter the judge, the colonel, the doctor and other local celebrities gathered and discussed affairs of state, the fate of nations, and other things, and incidentally helped themselves to liberal portions of Clarke's *Vini Gallici*, or smoked his cigars without money and without price. There were some rare characters who gathered around that old stove, some queer personalities, and Porter caught them and transferred them to paper

---

\* Section on Historical Pharmacy, Baltimore meeting, 1930.

by both pen and pencil in an illustrated comedy satire that was his first public literary and artistic effort."

As was stated before, this drug store experience ended with a trip to the Texas ranch of Richard and Lee Hall in 1882—and Greensboro never saw him again.

The intervening years between 1882 and 1904, when his stories first began to bring him fame, were filled with romance, comedy and tragedy. The tragedy is concerned with his serving a sentence of nearly five years in the Federal Penitentiary for alleged embezzlement of funds from a bank in Texas, in which he worked for a short time. His friends always believed him innocent of the crime charged against him. Whether this is so or not, the fact remains that the two years that he spent as a fugitive in Central and South America provided him with much of the local color which give his stories distinctiveness and atmosphere.

But let us turn to the stories themselves for evidences of the influence which his pharmaceutical experience had upon his writings. There are half a dozen stories which should be read in full, for either the plot or the details are replete with pharmaceutical interest. The first and best of these is *The Love Philtre of Ikey Schoenstien* from **The Four Million**.

This story is about Ikey Schoenstien, the night clerk in the Blue Light Drug Store located in down town New York between the Bowery and First Avenue. The story is short but full of pharmaceutical atmosphere and of action. Ikey and Chunk McGowan were rivals for the hand of Rosy Riddle, the daughter of Ikey's landlady. "She tinctured all his thoughts; she was the compound extract of everything that was chemically pure and officinal—the Dispensatory contained nothing equal to her." The way in which Ikey, under the guise of helping his rival, planned to circumvent McGowan and bring down upon him the wrath of Rosie's heavy footed father, was cleverly planned, but the manner in which the story ends is one of O. Henry's most startling surprises.

The second best in our opinion is *A Ramble in Aphasia* from **The Trimmed Lamp**. Only the first part of this story deals with pharmacy. It concerns a prominent Denver lawyer who is a victim of pseudo-aphasia, and who finds himself on a train filled with western delegates en route to a pharmaceutical convention in New York. The aphasiac adopts the name of Edward Pinkhammer and claims to be a druggist from Cornopolis, Kansas. Much humor results from the arguments between him and his seatmate Mr. Bolder of Hickory Grove, Missouri, on the proper location of certain shelf bottles and the proper excipient for a pill mass.

Another good story about a drug clerk is *The Enchanted Kiss* from **Roads of Destiny**. This story concerns the love affair of Samuel Tansey, a clerk in a cut rate drug store. Tansey fortifies his soul with several absinthe-anisettes and starts out upon a series of adventures in which chronology, geography and history are all mixed up in a glorious romance of which Tansey is the dominant and heroic character. In the last scene Tansey's inferiority complex comes back with a rush and Fate mixes things up in her usual manner.

A story of an entirely different type is *Let Me Feel Your Pulse* from **Sixes and Sevens**. This is the story of a neurasthenic dipsomaniac and his adventures in search of health. It is full of medical and pharmaceutical terms and is an interesting tale with a touch of grotesqueness very cleverly applied.

And still another, this time of toxicological interest, is *At Arms with Morpheus* from *Sixes and Sevens*. A very short story in which the principal character takes an overdose of morphine, accidentally mistaking it for quinine.

*The Gentle Grafter* contains a series of stories which have frequent reference to pharmaceutical preparations. Probably the best to read first is *Jeff Peters as a Personal Magnet*. This is one of the best of a series of tales about Jeff Peters and Andy Tucker. These two characters are the most attractive pair of conscienceless swindlers ever described by a writer. Many of the episodes related concerning them have to do with the selling of medicines to the "paretic populace." Jeff is best described by himself in the story just named, and is about the sale of a compound hypothetical pneumo-cardiac antiscorbutic tonic on the main street:

"Jeff Peters has been engaged in as many schemes for making money as there are recipes for cooking rice in Charleston, S. C. Best of all I like to hear him tell of his earlier days when he sold liniments and cough cures on street corners, living hand to mouth, heart to heart with the people, throwing heads or tails with fortune for his last coin. 'I struck Fisher Hill, Arkansas,' said he, 'in buckskin suit, moccasins, long hair and a thirty carat diamond ring that I got from an actor in Texarkana.' I don't know what he ever did with the pocket knife I swapped him for it. I was Dr. Waugh-hoo, the celebrated Indian medicine man. I carried only one best bet just then, and that was Resurrection Bitters. It was made from life-giving plants and herbs accidentally discovered by Ta-que-la, the beautiful wife of the chief of the Choctaw Nation while gathering truck to garnish a platter of boiled dog for the annual corn dance.

"Business hadn't been good in the last town, so I only had five dollars. I went to the Fisher Hill druggist and he credited me for a half gross of eight ounce bottles and corks. I had the labels and ingredients in my valise, left over from the last town. Life began to look rosy again after I got in my hotel room with the water running from the tap and the Resurrection bottles lining up on the table by the dozen. Fake? No, sir! There was two dollars worth of fluidextract of cinchona and a dime's worth of aniline in that half gross of bitters. I've gone through towns years afterward and had folks ask for 'em again."

Andy is excellently described by Jeff in another story called the *Octopus Marooned*, in the same volume:

"That man was the most talented conniver at stratagems I ever saw. Whenever he saw a dollar in another man's hand he took it as a personal grudge, if he couldn't take it any other way. Andy was educated, too, besides having a lot of useful information. He had acquired a lot of experience out of books, and could talk for hours on any subject connected with ideas and discourse. He had been in every line of graft from lecturing on Palestine with a lot of magic lantern pictures of the annual custom made clothiers association convention at Atlantic City to flooding Connecticut with bogus wood alcohol distilled from nutmegs."

Another story in this volume which has nothing to do with drugs, but which has much to do with education, is that one called *The Chair of Philanthropomathematics*.

Now let us take a ramble through a number of the stories, selecting passages which are of interest from the standpoint of the pharmacist:

*A Cosmopolite in a Café* from **The Four Millions**: "Anon. he would be telling you of a cold he acquired in a Chicago lake breeze and how old Escamila cured it in Buenos Ayres with a hot infusion of the chichula weed."

*Springtime a la Carte* from **The Four Million**: "Had Juliet so seen her love token dishonored the sooner would she have sought the lethean herbs of the good apothecary."

*Telemachus Friend* from **Heart of the West**: "The whirlpool of squills and chalybeate."  
"Paisley drops around with oil of bergamot on his hair."

"Now I give my own recipe for inveigling a woman into that state of affairs when she can be referred to as *née* Jones. Learn how to pick up her hand and hold it and she's yours. It ain't so easy. Some men grab at it so much like they was going to set a dislocation of the shoulder that you can smell the arnica and hear 'em tearing off bandages. Some take it up like a hot horseshoe and hold it off at arms' length like a druggist pouring tincture of asafetida in a bottle."

*The Handbook of Hymen* from **Heart of the West**: "I've seen them Eastern college fellows working in camps all through the West, and I never noticed but what education was less of a drawback to 'em than you would think. Why, once over on Snake River, when Andrew Mc-Williams' saddle horse got the botts he sent a buckboard ten miles for one of these strangers that claimed to be a botanist. But that horse died."

*Seats of the Haughty* from **Heart of the West**: "Eighteen carat sulphate of copper scarf pin."

*The Higher Abdication* from **Heart of the West**:

"The saloon was small and in its atmosphere the odors of meat and drink struggled for the ascendancy. The pig and cabbage wrestled with hydrogen and oxygen. Behind the bar Schwegel wrestled with an assistant whose epidermal pores showed no signs of being obstructed."

*Cupid a la Carte* from **Heart of the West**:

"'Tis my opinion that the biographies of the heart should be confined with the historical romances of the liver to the advertising pages of the magazines."

"If the drug stores don't run out of pepsin I'll give you a run for your money that'll leave you a dyspeptic at the wind up."

*The Missing Chord* from **Heart of the West**:

"You would have thought he was a professor of the weather and politics and chemistry and natural history and the origin of derivations. Any subject you brought up Old Cal could give you an abundant synopsis of it from the Greek root up to the time it was sacked and on the market."

*The Indian Summer of Dry Valley Johnson* from **Heart of the West**:

"Dry Valley shook the bottle. You have to shake the bottle before using, for sulphur will not dissolve. Then Dry Valley saturated a small sponge with the liquid and rubbed it carefully into the roots of his hair. Besides sulphur there was sugar of lead in it and tincture of nuxvomica and bay rum. Dry Valley found the recipe in a Sunday newspaper."

*Modern Rural Sports* from **The Gentle Grafter**:

"How we got off the train there the night before I can't tell you; for she went through the village so fast that what looked like a saloon to us through the car window turned out to be a composite view of a drug store and a water tank two blocks apart."

"When I woke up I heard roosters crowing and smelt something like the fumes of nitromuriatic acid and heard something heavy fall on the floor below us, and a man swearing."

"'Cheer up, Andy,' says I, 'we're in a rural community. Somebody has just tested a gold brick down stairs.'"

Later:

"'And say, Jeff, make that succotash fancier give you nice clean new bills. It's a disgrace to our Department of Agriculture, Civil Service and Pure Food Law, the kind of stuff some of these farmers hands out to us.'"

*The Exact Science of Matrimony* from **The Gentle Grafter**:

"An old friend of mine who used to draw soda water and teeth in a tent show, had made his wife a widow a year before by drinking some dyspepsia cure of the old doctor's instead of the liniment he always got boozed up on."

*A Midsummer Masquerade* from **The Gentle Grafter**:

"Old Smokeout Smithers who used to be the best open air painless dentist and electric liver pad faker in the Southwest."

"I expected trouble when Andy began to drink. He has the artistic metempsychosis which is half drunk when sober and looks down on airships when stimulated."

*Innocents of Broadway* from **The Gentle Grafter**:

"One day in the papier maché palm room of a chloral hydrate and hops agency in a side street about eight inches off Broadway, me and Andy had thrust upon us the acquaintance of a New Yorker."

"I can't go off with this man's money without doing something to earn it, like taking advantage of the bankrupt act or leaving a bottle of eczema lotion in his pocket to make it look more like a square deal."

*Conscience in Art from The Gentle Grafter:*

"Well, to make a dense story more condensed, me and Andy cached our Paris green and antipyrine powders and albums in a friend's cellar and took the trail to Pittsburgh."

*The Man Higher Up from The Gentle Grafter:*

"I don't suppose you've brought along any hair tonic or rolled gold watch chains or similar law-defying swindles that you could sell on the plaza to the pikers of the paretic populace, have you?"

*A Tempered Wind from The Gentle Grafter:*

"What's your graft these days?" Buckingham Skinner asks me. 'The legitimate,' says I. 'I'm handling rhinestones and Dr. Oleum Sinapis' electric headache battery and the Swiss warblers' bird call, a small lot of new queer ones and twos, and the Bonanza Budget, consisting of a rolled gold wedding and engagement ring, six Egyptian lily bulbs, a combination pickle fork and nail clipper, and fifty engraved visiting cards—no two names alike—all for the sum of thirty-eight cents.' "

"Me and Buck knew more about selling corn salve than we did about Wall Street."

"If you had seen me and Buck the next night you'd have had to go to a little bum hotel over near the West side ferry landings. We was in a little back room, and I was filling up a gross of six-ounce bottles with hydrant water colored red with aniline and flavored with cinnamon. \* \* \* \* \* Directly I dragged out my valise and went into it for labels. 'Hair tonic labels are all out,' says I, 'only about a dozen on hand.' 'Buy some more,' says Buck. We investigated our pockets and found we had just enough money to pay our hotel bill in the morning and pay our passage over the ferry.

"Plenty of the Shake-the-Shakes Chill Cure labels,' said I, after looking.

"What more do you want?' says Buck. 'Slap 'em on. The chill season is just opening up on the Hackensack low grounds. What's hair, anyway, if you've got to shake it off?'

"We pasted on the chill cure labels about half an hour, and Buck says: 'Making an honest living better than that Wall Street, anyhow, ain't it, Pick?'

"You bet,' says I."

The following four quotations are from **Roads of Destiny**, under the headings of the different stories in which they occur:

*Next to Reading Matter:* "Before I sailed I rushed into the *botica* of old Manuel Iquito, a half breed Indian druggist. I could not speak but I pointed to my throat and made a sound like escaping steam. He began to yawn. In an hour, according to the customs of the country, I would have been waited on. I reached across the counter, seized him by the throat and pointed to my own. He yawned once more and thrust into my hand a small bottle containing a black liquid. 'Take one small spoonful every two hours,' says he." \* \* \* \* \* "When I went back to Oratama I found out from Manuel Iquito what was in the mixture he gave me for my lost voice. I told you how quick it cured me. He made that stuff from the *chuchula* plant."

"Judson Tate drew an oblong white pasteboard box from his pocket. 'For any cough,' he said, 'or cold or hoarseness, or bronchial affection whatsoever, I have here the greatest remedy in the world. You see the formula printed on the box. Each tablet contains licorice, 2 grains; balsam tolu,  $\frac{1}{10}$  grain; oil of anise,  $\frac{1}{20}$  minim; oil of tar,  $\frac{1}{60}$  minim; oleoresin of cubebs,  $\frac{1}{60}$  minim; fluidextract of chuchula,  $\frac{1}{10}$  minim.'" \* \* \* \* \* "I may as well add, to make a clean breast of it, that you can't buy the chuchula plant in the drug stores."

*The Passing of Black Eagle:* "Mamma said he was to ask the drug store man for ten cents worth of paregoric in the bottle."

*The Emancipation of Billy:* "On the return march the general would invariably suggest that, His Excellency being no doubt fatigued, it would be wise to recuperate for a few minutes at the Drug Emporium of Mr. Appleby R. Fentress ('an elegant gentlemen, sir, one of the Chatham County Fentresses—so many of our best blooded families have had to go into trade, sir, since the war')."

"Mr. Appleby R. Fentress was a connoisseur in fatigue. Indeed, if he had not been his memory alone would have enabled him to prescribe, for the majestic invasion of his pharmacy was a casual happening that had surprised him almost daily for years. Mr. Fentress knew the formula of and possessed the skill to compound a certain potion antagonistic to fatigue, the salient ingredient of which he described (no doubt in pharmaceutical terms) as genuine old hand made Clover Leaf 59, Private Stock."

*Two Renegades:* "After I got the fever hard enough to kill a Port-au-Prince nigger, I had a relapse in the shape of Doc Milliken. There was a doctor to attend a sick man! If Doc Milliken had your case, he made the terrors of death seem like an invitation to a donkey party. He had the bedside manners of a Piute medicine man and the soothing presence of a dray loaded with iron bridge-girders. When he laid his hands on your fevered brow you felt like Cap John Smith just before Pocohontas went his bail.

"Well, this old medical outrage floated down to my shack when I sent for him. He was built like a shad, and his eyebrows was black, and his white whiskers trickled down from his chin like milk coming out of a sprinkling pot. He had a nigger boy along carrying an old tomato can full of calomel, and a saw.

"Doc felt my pulse and then he began to mess up some calomel with an agricultural implement that belonged to the trowel class.

"'I don't want any death mask made yet, Doc,' I says, 'nor my liver put in a plaster of Paris cast. I'm sick; and it's medicine I need, not frescoing.'

"'You're a blame Yankee, ain't you?' asked Doc going on mixing up his Portland cement.

"'I'm from the North,' says I, 'but I'm a plain man, and don't care for mural decorations. When you get the Isthmus all asphalted over with that boll weevil prescription, would you mind giving me a dose of pain killer, or a little strychnine on toast to ease up this feeling of unhealthiness that I have got?' \* \* \* \* \* 'What I need is more laudanum. If you're mixing that compound gefloxide of gefloxicum for me, please fill my ears with it before you get around to the battle of Gettysburg.'

"By this time Doc Milliken had thrown up a line of fortifications on square pieces of paper; and he says to me: 'Yank, take one of these powders every two hours. They won't kill you. I'll be around again about sundown to see if you're alive.' Old Doc's powders knocked the Chagres fever.

"'Twas a beautiful system of medical practice introduced by old Doc into that isthmus of land. He'd take that bracket saw and the mild chloride and his hypodermic, and treat anything from a yellow fever to a personal friend.' \* \* \* \* \* 'Jenks stretched himself and took a morphine tablet.'

*The Phonograph and the Graft from Cabbages and Kings:* "A good story is like a bitter pill with the sugar coating on the inside of it."

Here are two from **Options**.

*The Head Hunter:* "That evening I was taken down with pernicious fever. That is a kind of coast fever with improvements and high geared attachments. Your temperature goes up among the threes and fours and remains there, laughing scornfully and feverishly at the cinchona trees and coal tar derivatives." \* \* \* \* \* "I took to my bed in the two-roomed thatched hut where I had been comfortably established and sent for a gallon of rum. That was not for myself. Drunk, Stamford was the best doctor between the Andes and the Pacific. He came, sat himself at my bedside and drank himself into condition. 'My boy,' said he, 'my lily-white and reformed Romeo, medicine will do you no good. But I will give you quinine, which, being bitter, will arouse in you hatred and anger, two stimulants which will add ten per cent to your chances.'"

*The Higher Pragmatism:* "But when I come out of my faint I was laying on the floor in a drug store saturated with aromatic spirits of ammonia."

From **Rolling Stones:**

*A Ruler of Men:* "There's only one thing bothering me. In novels the light-haired friend of the hero always gets killed. Think 'em all over that you've read and you'll see that I'm right. I think I'll step down to the Botica Espanola and lay in a bottle of walnut stain before war is declared."

*Helping the Other Fellow:* "She gave me a double handful of bark—calisaya, I think it was—and some more herbs that I was to mix with it, and told me what to do. I was to make a tea of it and give it to him, and keep him from rum for a certain time."

*An Unfinished Christmas Story:* "The rest of her was yellow. Her hair, in some by-gone age, had been dipped in the fountain of folly presided over by the merry nymph Hydrogen; but now, except at the roots, it had returned to its natural grim and puzzled white."

**From Whirligigs:**

*The World and the Door:* "Pedrito the Castilian-mannered barkeep, was goaded to extra duty until his agility would have turned a Boston cherry phosphate clerk a pale lilac with envy."

*The Hypothesis of Failure:* "'You want to state a hypothetical case?' suggested lawyer Gooch. 'That's the word I was after. Apothecary was the best shot I could make at it in my mind.'"

*A Matter of Mean Elevation:* "Why are we made serious and solemn and sublime by mountain heights, grave and contemplative by an abundance of overhanging trees, reduced to inconstancy and monkey capers by the ripples on a sandy beach? Did the protoplasm—but enough. The chemists are looking into the matter and before long they will have all life in the table of symbols."

*A Blackjack Bargainer:* "The tonic air put to shame the pharmacopœia."

**From The Voice of the City:**

*The Harbinger:* "The base attempt of the drug trust to boost the price of quinine foiled in the House by Congressman Jinks."

*The Plutonian Fire:* "He talked of the grave, and South America, and prussic acid."

*The Easter of the Soul:* "'Tis a bit of tea will do ye good, made from pipsissewa and gentian bark at the druggist's."

**From The Trimmed Lamp:**

*The Last Leaf:* "'She has one chance in, let us say, ten,' he said, as he shook down the mercury in his clinical thermometer. 'And that chance is for her to want to live. This way people have of lining up on the side of the undertaker makes the entire pharmacopœia look silly.'"

**From Strictly Business:**

*A Municipal Report:* "I stepped off the train at 8 P.M. Having searched the thesaurus in vain for adjectives, I must, as a substitution, hie me to a comparison in the form of a recipe.

"Take of London fog, 30 parts; malaria, 10 parts; gas leak, 20 parts; dewdrops gathered in a brick yard at sunrise, 25 parts; odor of honeysuckle, 15 parts; mix.

"The mixture will give you an approximate conception of a Nashville drizzle. It's not so fragrant as a moth ball, nor so thick as pea soup; but 'tis enough, 'twill serve."

*A Night in New Arabia:* "There was no mandragora in the honorary draught of learning that he had bought. That was before the passage of the Pure Food and Drugs Act." \* \* \* \* \*

"She had a wide mouth that kept the peppermint-pepsin tablets rattling like hail from the slot machine wherever she went."

*Proof of the Pudding:* "She thinks I'm the only genuine preparation on the market that bears the old doctor's signature."

*The Duel:* (New York) "It woos you to its heart with the subtlety of a siren. It is a combination of Delilah, green Chartreuse, Beethoven, chloral and John L. in his best days."

**From Waifs and Strays:**

*The Snow Man:* "The man who can stand the test is a snow man, and this is his reading by Fahrenheit, Réaumur, or Moses' carven tablets of stone." \* \* \* \* \*

"The snow is not merely a blockade; it is a chemical test. It's a good man who can show a reaction that is not chiefly composed of a drachm or two of potash and magnesia, with traces of Adam, Ananias, Nebuchadnezzar and the fretful porcupine."

<i>Caramba:</i> "Caramba di Sarsaparillio	O chili con carne and Piccolo
Cinchona, Peruna, Mondoo;	Mazeppa di Buffalo Bill;
Bologna, Cologna, Vanillio	So hurry and drop in your nickle-o
Northwestern and eke C. B. Q.	Caramba di Sarsaparill."

From a letter to an admirer requesting a picture:

"I don't believe in inflicting one's picture on the public unless one has done something to justify it, and I never take Peruna."

From *The Marionettes* in *Rolling Stones*: "The physician laid back his outer garments and then with a pen-knife slit the shirt-front from collar to waist. He laid his ear to the heart and listened intently.

"Mitral regurgitation?" he said softly when he rose. The words ended with the rising inflection of uncertainty. Again he listened long; and this time he said 'Mitral insufficiency,' with the accent of an assured diagnosis." \* \* \* \* \* "Drawing from his pocket a little pad of prescription blanks, he scribbled upon one of them a formula suited, according to the best practice, to the needs of the sufferer. Going to the door of the inner room, he softly called the old woman, gave her the prescription and bade her take it to some drug store and fetch the medicine." \* \* \* \* \* "Dr. James looked at his watch. He could call half an hour his own, since before that time the old woman could scarcely return from her mission. Then he sought and found water in a pitcher and a glass tumbler. Opening his medicine case he took out the vial containing the nitroglycerin—the oil,' as his brethren of the brace and bit term it.

"One drop of the faint yellow, thickish liquid he let fall in the tumbler. He took out his silver hypodermic syringe case and screwed the needle into its place. Carefully measuring each modicum of water in the graduated glass barrel of the syringe, he diluted the one drop with nearly half a tumbler of water. Two hours earlier that night Doctor James had, with that syringe, injected the undiluted liquid into a hole frilled in the lock of a safe, and had destroyed, with one dull explosion, the machinery that controlled the movement of the bolts. He now purposed, with the same means, to shiver the prime machinery of a human being—to rend its heart—and each shock was for the sake of the money to follow.

"The same means, but in a different guise. Whereas, that was the giant in its rude, primary dynamic strength, this was the courtier, whose no less deadly arms were concealed by velvet and lace. For the liquid in the tumbler and in the syringe that the physician carefully filled was now a solution of glonoin, the most powerful heart stimulant known to medical science. Two ounces had riven the solid door of the iron safe; with one-fiftieth part of a minim he was now about to still forever the intricate mechanism of a human life.

"But not immediately. It was not so intended. First there would be a quick increase of vitality; a powerful impetus given to every organ and faculty. The heart would respond bravely to the fatal spur; the blood in the veins return more rapidly to its source.

"But, as Doctor James well knew, over stimulation in this form of heart disease means death, as sure as by a rifle shot. When the clogged arteries should suffer congestion from the increased flow of blood pumped into them by the power of the burglar's 'oil,' they would rapidly become 'no thoroughfare,' and the fountain of life would cease to flow."

Here we have a palpable slip on the part of the author. Nitroglycerin is not soluble in water and could not have been diluted in the manner described, for the administration of a dose. Glonoin is an alcoholic solution of nitroglycerin.

It is said that O. Henry wrote 251 short stories. The foregoing quotations cover 50 stories, or about 20 per cent of the total number that he wrote. This would seem to prove that his pharmaceutical experience had permeated his work in a manner not to be denied.

Christopher Morley has paid a beautiful tribute to this phase of O. Henry's experience in the lines, which are chosen as a fitting conclusion to this article:

O. HENRY, APOTHECARY.—By Christopher Morley.

"Where once he measured camphor, glycerin,  
Clove, aloes, potash, peppermint in bars,  
And all the oils and essences so keen  
That druggists keep in rows of stoppered jars—  
Now blender of strange joys more volatile,  
The master pharmacist of joy and pain  
Dispenses sadness tintured with a smile

And laughter that dissolves in tears again.  
O brave apothecary! You who knew  
What dark and acid doses life prefers,  
And yet with smiling face resolved to brew  
These sparkling potions for your customers—  
Glowing with globes of red and purple glass  
Your window gladdens travelers who pass."