

The world moves on a-pace. Civilizations rise and fall, one upon the other. There have been Gardens of Eden in every corner of the globe since the first dawn of day, and it is quite possible that there are edens, beyond the horizon of our dreams, just as inviting as was this United States of America to our forefathers when they settled here. It may well be that the desert, where the first garden flourished, will again blossom with the rose, and that man will build a stairway to the stars to discover new home sites for the sons of freedom.

This old town was founded by the Puritans who fled from their native land to escape religious persecution, and who thought they were doing the will of God when they hanged three peace-loving Quakers, who came here for like reason, to a tree on Boston Common. The Puritans were determined and resourceful men, of great courage and vitality. They gave us our form of representative government, and imposed their religious views upon their fellow citizens in the form of the New Jersey Blue Laws which have remained on the statute books for nearly three centuries, and have scarcely ever been observed.

We have repeated all the inept and tragic blunders of our Puritan ancestors, over and over again; but, in the revealing interludes between wars, we have permitted our neighbors to worship God according to their lights. There is, indeed, this fundamental difference, implicit in our way of life, which distinguishes the old order from the new: we have acquired a saving sense of humour. It is no longer a sin to laugh.

This, then, is history—the record of the deeds and misdeeds of humanity as gleaned from the lives of successive generations of representative men. It is a tale that is told and retold, a continuous comedy-drama, in the little town, in the big town—everywhere! As the gentle philosopher and humorist, O. Henry, remarked in the closing hours of his eventful life, "We are like little chickens, picking at the shells."

So, if the casual reader, just before retiring, should seek relaxation in the pages of this book, it is the earnest hope of the writer that his eye may chance upon a tale of the not-too-long-ago, that will recall the days of his youth, and invite pleasant dreams.—R. V. H.  
March 20, 1947.

