

in the morning, because I've got to go back to my work. I'm behind the
hosiery counter at Casey's Mammoth Store, and my vacation's up at eight
o'clock tomorrow. That paper dollar is the last cent I'll see till I draw my
eight dollars salary next Saturday night. You're a real gentleman, and
you've been good to me, and I wanted to tell you before I went.

"I've been saving up out of my wages for a year just for this vaca-
tion. I wanted to spend one week like a lady if I never do another one.
I wanted to get up when I please instead of having to crawl out at seven
every morning; and I wanted to live on the best and be waited on and
ring bells for things just like rich folks do. Now I've done it, and I've had
the happiest time I ever expect to have in my life. I'm going back to my
work and my little hall bedroom satisfied for another year. I wanted
to tell you about it, Mr. Farrington, because I—I thought you kind of
liked me, and I—I liked you. But, oh, I couldn't help deceiving you up
till now, for it was all just like a fairy tale to me. So I talked about
Europe and the things I've read about in other countries, and made you
think I was a great lady.

"This dress I've got on—it's the only one I have that's fit to wear—
I bought from O'Dowd & Levinsky on the instalment plan.

"Seventy-five dollars is the price, and it was made to measure. I
paid \$10 down, and they're to collect \$1 a week till it's paid for. That'll
be about all I have to say, Mr. Farrington, except that my name is
Mamie Siviter instead of Madame Beaumont, and I thank you for your
attentions. This dollar will pay the instalment due on the dress tomor-
row. I guess I'll go up to my room now."

Harold Farrington listened to the recital of the Lotus's loveliest
guest with an impassive countenance. When she had concluded he
drew a small book like a checkbook from his coat pocket. He wrote
upon a blank form in this with a stub of pencil, tore out the leaf, tossed
it over to his companion and took up the paper dollar.

"I've got to go to work, too, in the morning," he said, "and I might
as well begin now. There's a receipt for the dollar instalment. I've been
collector for O'Dowd & Levinsky for three years. Funny, ain't it,
that you and me both had the same idea about spending our vacation?
I've always wanted to put up at a swell hotel, and I saved up out of my
twenty per, and did it. Say, Mame, how about a trip to Coney Saturday
night on the boat—what?"

The face of the pseudo Madame Héloïse D'Arcy Beaumont
beamed.

"Oh, you bet I'll go, Mr. Farrington. The store closes at twelve on
Saturdays. I guess Coney'll be all right even if we did spend a week
with the swells."

Below the balcony the sweltering city growled and buzzed in the July night. Inside the Hotel Lotus the tempered, cool shadows reigned, and the solicitous waiter single-footed⁹ near the low windows, ready at a nod to serve Madame and her escort.

At the door of the elevator Farrington took his leave, and Madame Beaumont made her last ascent. But before they reached the noiseless cage he said: "Just forget that 'Harold Farrington,' will you? McManus is the name—James McManus. Some call me Jimmy."

"Good-night, Jimmy," said Madame.

⁹single-footed: walked with a rapid, regular step

O. Henry is the pseudonym of William Sydney Porter, who was born in North Carolina, U.S., in 1862. He worked in Texas as a clerk and bank teller for over ten years, but was charged with embezzling funds from the bank in 1896. Although the amount was minimal, he fled to the Honduras and only returned to Texas when he discovered that his wife was dying. He turned himself in after her death. Porter was released from prison after serving three years of his five-year sentence, and moved to New York City where he began to write full time. During his lifetime, he published ten collections of short stories and, after his death, a further four collections were published.