

Wide-Open Eyes

All the world loves a storyteller. To illustrate this, a mischievous lecturer once caught his university audience about and yanked away from an honest pun, so he told them a boy-misadventure yarn. It was the most banal, stupid, and wholly predictable little plot he could dream up. Yet—as he lightly told them all a few minutes later—he supposedly sophisticated audience perked up and listened with whole absorption while he foisted the boring little misadventure on them. It was suggested that he give up lecturing and tell more stories, good ones this time.

Irvine S. Cobb was the classic stylist of storytelling. He could enthrall you even if you'd heard him tell the same story before. His was a literary craftsmanship, considering very close to an art, which kept you all at once listening and waiting and still wishing he'd never come to the point.

Such storytellers are rare, but, when they appear, all the more welcome for it. And welcome in *Esquire* is an author who brings high up on the list—William Francis. On page 28 of this issue is his latest *Esquire* contribution, *Wide Open With Open*. Mr. Francis has the true storyteller's touch for the plot, eye for character, and intangible timing that all add up to good writing and good reading.

Not, because he's in *Esquire*, but because he really has a way with a story, we recommend Mr. Francis to you.

Although, come to think of it, maybe both reasons are really the same.

—D.A.R.

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The Fable of the Mousey Mouse

Not addressed to kiddies, this disenchanching tale suggests hard work will get you nowhere, that the race is not to the righteous but to the wrong guys

by JOHN HENRY

Once upon a time there was a mouse named Knock who was not very bright but extremely willing. When his father in Britain, he tried to compensate for in Energy and Hard Work, a Good Provider and Family Man, he always managed to keep his beautiful wife, Evangelina, in all the necessities and a few luxuries too, because he was a bit slow, he had to work hard and long to do it. Other mice, smarter and quicker than Knock, fared much better than he and with less effort, while Knock plodded wearily along Life's Path, often to Evangelina's disgust because she was a Girl with Mice.

For a good many years Knock had worked for Mr. Molepat, manufacturer of prefabricated nests, who, at a special dinner last summer, presented Knock with a lapel pin in recognition of years of faithful service and called him "The Rat of the Rats." This upset pleased Knock, but disappointed Evangelina which, more than a thousand words, explains the difference between them.

Three weeks following the testimonial dinner, Knock was laid off due to shortage of material and, unable to find employment elsewhere in the area where he lived, he set out into the world to seek his fortune, leaving Evangelina at home until he could send for her. Unfortunately, the demand for Rats of the Rats was at low ebb. The sales-for-activities was a pit on the market. But Knock was a gladiator and persevered in his search until, at long last, at a distant location he found another manufacturer of prefabricated nests, by whom he was employed.

As soon as he could accumulate enough money to move his wife to their new home he returned to his native wife where, to his surprise, he found her in a Very Delicate Condition. Even with his limited knowledge of mathematics, Knock was not long in working out a ratio between the length of certain biological periods and the length of his absence, which gave him the wrong answer.

An investigation revealed that a rat by

the name of Two-Face Gossamer was the stinker in the case and Knock went looking for him with suspicious intentions. Two-Face was so trouble to find, principally because he made no effort to hide.

They met, the Mouse and the Rat, just inside Emergency Exit No. 2. Knock accused Two-Face admitted. He did more than admit; he bragged and asked Knock what he was going to do about it, a question which Knock found difficult to answer. He thought it over carefully. The difference in size between them convinced Knock he was going to do nothing physical about it. He considered the legal angle and dismissed it as too embarrassing. He felt he was in the right morally, but there was little satisfaction in just feeling right as Knock turned away and walked slowly up the city with the laughter of Two-Face Gossamer ringing in his ears.

Word: If you are a mouse, come out will push you around sooner or later. ☹

ILLUSTRATION BY GORDON LUTHER

