



David Harum



Edward Noyes
Westcott

David
Malin



Westport



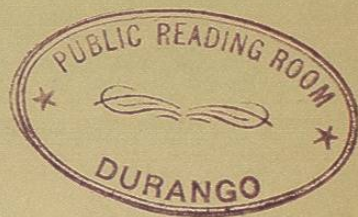
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DAVID HARUM

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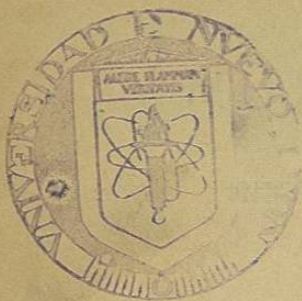
A Story of American Life

BY
EDWARD NOYES WESTCOTT



NEW YORK
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
1899

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ACERVO DE LITERATURA

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INTRODUCTION.

There's as much human nature in some folks as th' is
in others, if not more.—DAVID HARUM.

ONE of the most conspicuous characteristics of our contemporary native fiction is an increasing tendency to subordinate plot or story to the bold and realistic portrayal of some of the types of American life and manners. And the reason for this is not far to seek. The extraordinary mixing of races which has been going on here for more than a century has produced an enormously diversified human result; and the products of this "hybridization" have been still further differentiated by an environment that ranges from the Everglades of Florida to the glaciers of Alaska. The existence of these conditions, and the great literary opportunities which they contain, American writers long ago perceived; and, with a generally true appreciation of artistic values, they have created from them a gallery of brilliant *genre* pictures which to-day stand for the highest we have yet attained in the art of fiction.

Thus it is that we have (to mention but a few) studies of Louisiana and her people by Mr. Cable; of Virginia and Georgia by Thomas Nelson Page and Joel Chandler Harris; of New England by Miss Jewett and Miss Wilkins; of the Middle West by Miss French (Octave Thannet); of the great Northwest by Hamlin Garland; of Canada and the land of the *habitans* by Gilbert Parker; and finally, though really first in point of time, the Forty-niners and their successors by Bret Harte. This list might be indefinitely extended, for it is growing daily, but it is long enough as it stands to show that every section of our country has, or soon will have, its own painter and historian, whose works will live and become a permanent part of our literature in just the degree that they are artistically true. Some of these writers have already produced many books, while others have gained general recognition and even fame by the vividness and power of a single study, like Mr. Howe with *The Story of a Country Town*. But each one, it will be noticed, has chosen for his field of work that part of our country wherein he passed the early and formative years of his life; a natural selection that is, perhaps, an unconscious affirmation of David Harum's aphorism: "Ev'ry hoss c'n do a thing better 'n' spryer if he's ben broke to it as a colt."

In the case of the present volume the condi-

tions are identical with those just mentioned. Most of the scenes are laid in central New York, where the author, Edward Noyes Westcott, was born, September 24, 1847, and where he died of consumption, March 31, 1898. Nearly all his life was passed in his native city of Syracuse, and although banking and not authorship was the occupation of his active years, yet his sensitive and impressionable temperament had become so saturated with the local atmosphere, and his retentive memory so charged with facts, that when at length he took up the pen he was able to create in David Harum a character so original, so true, and so strong, yet withal so delightfully quaint and humorous, that we are at once compelled to admit that here is a new and permanent addition to the long list of American literary portraits.

The book is a novel, and throughout it runs a love story which is characterized by sympathetic treatment and a constantly increasing interest; but the title rôle is taken by the old country banker, David Harum: dry, quaint, somewhat illiterate, no doubt, but possessing an amazing amount of knowledge not found in printed books, and holding fast to the cheerful belief that there is nothing wholly bad or useless in this world. Or, in his own words: "A reasonable amount of fleas is good for a dog—they keep him f'm broodin' on bein' a dog." This horse-trading country banker and reputed Shy-

lock, but real philanthropist, is an accurate portrayal of a type that exists in the rural districts of central New York to-day. Variations of him may be seen daily, driving about in their road wagons or seated in their "bank parlors," shrewd, sharp-tongued, honest as the sunlight from most points of view, but in a horse trade much inclined to follow the rule laid down by Mr. Harum himself for such transactions: "Do unto the other feller the way he'd like to do unto you—an' do it fust."

The genial humor and sunny atmosphere which pervade these pages are in dramatic contrast with the circumstances under which they were written. The book was finished while the author lay upon his deathbed, but, happily for the reader, no trace of his sufferings appears here. It was not granted that he should live to see his work in its present completed form, a consummation he most earnestly desired; but it seems not unreasonable to hope that the result of his labors will be appreciated, and that David Harum will endure.

FORBES HEERMANS.

SYRACUSE, N. Y., August 20, 1898.

DAVID HARUM.

CHAPTER I.

DAVID poured half of his second cup of tea into his saucer to lower its temperature to the drinking point, and helped himself to a second cut of ham and a third egg. Whatever was on his mind to have kept him unusually silent during the evening meal, and to cause certain wrinkles in his forehead suggestive of perplexity or misgiving, had not impaired his appetite. David was what he called "a good feeder."

Mrs. Bixbee, known to most of those who enjoyed the privilege of her acquaintance as "Aunt Polly," though nieces and nephews of her blood there were none in Homeville, Freeland County, looked curiously at her brother, as, in fact, she had done at intervals during the repast; and concluding at last that further forbearance was uncalled for, relieved the pressure of her curiosity thus:

"Guess ye got somethin' on your mind, hain't ye? You hain't hardly said aye, yes, ner no sence you set down. Anythin' gone 'skew?"

David lifted his saucer, gave the contents a precautionary blow, and emptied it with sundry windy suspirations.