

The story and the appendices include material for the historian, engineer, general reader and for the artist as well. The phenomena of explosion are given and even the coloring of the "Maine," and her equipment. The mortuary statistics—not omitting their harrowing features—are set forth in an appendix in the hope of dispelling doubt in the minds of relatives and friends of the dead; in brief, the purpose of the book is more comprehensive than is likely to appear from a casual reading.

U. S. S. "TEXAS," PASSAGE HAVANA, CUBA to CIENFUEGOS, March 12, 1899.

*Charles S. Sigbee,  
Captain, U. S. Army.*

MISS NUMÈ OF JAPAN. By ONOTO WATANNA.

I might give a score of reasons that suggest the writing of a book, and which would suit as a paragraph in the column in which you wish to use it, but I prefer to tell the truth, and the truth—the reason why I wrote the book—might not appeal to many people as a particularly worthy reason. Well, I wrote because I was hard up and wanted to make some money. I had been writing short story after short story—some were accepted—some not. Someone suggested my writing a novel, which they said would help me with the magazines. You doubtless know what it is to make a living solely by writing—unless one has a big reputation and a big income, from a dozen books, say. Well, for some time I have been trying to make two ends meet solely by writing short stories, and when I tell you that there is not merely myself to be considered, you will understand somewhat of the struggle I had. When I started out with the book I did not even have a plot planned. I went ahead and the plot developed as I wrote. I took keen pleasure in writing it—and as is my nature, suffered and rejoiced with my characters. But the book was written under pressure. I had to steal the time from my regular work of writing short stories—which were my livelihood. I don't know whether this story is good or bad—I hope it is good. To me writing is something I enjoy, but which I am constantly questioning—can I afford to do it, for art is a luxury, and one has to have something practical to live by in order to indulge one's taste for writing. I have written ever since I could remember—scribbled away at one thing and another—fairy tales as a child—newspaper articles when I was on the little newspaper in the West Indies—I wrote under five different *nome-de-plumes*. Now I am writing almost entirely Japanese stories, and as of course I am in sympathy with my subject I dare say I will please the fickle public. My new book I am putting my whole heart into, and it will be good—better than anything I have done yet.

I do not need to ask your pardon for my being honest in this, but I am so sorry that I could not give you a nice reason for writing the book "Miss Numè of Japan." You may, if you wish, use the real reason—that I wrote it because I was hard up. You know it is a good thing that there is such a thing as want and poverty in the world. (Not that I have suffered that actually,) for there are so many people with the ability to do this or that and with talent—genius—dormant in them—and yet who are to *indolent*—yes actually too indolent to do anything towards developing it. Necessity brings it out—they are crowded into a corner, and the world hears of them then. We have to thank grim old want, perhaps, for some of our masterpieces, both in literature and art. Don't you think so?

Well, I will never grow indolent in my work—no matter how independent I become, because I love it for itself. Maybe I don't know myself, however—I am only a girl in age yet. Years—a lifetime is before me—and if indeed I have any talent, I shall make the most of it.

I am impulsive—and write on impulse generally. A pathetic little incident or a thought appeals to me—I scribble it out, and the little laughing things of life I grasp after also. The book "Miss Numè" does not pretend to be a great book—it was written in a simple fashion—all the world understands simplicity, though the wise pretend to despise it. I did not try to solve any problems in the book—there is no psychological analysis. The good, great, old authors dished up so much of that to us that I thought I'd just go ahead and tell the story without pausing to ruminate or moralize. The book is pure—as all my work shall be, even though they tell me to be successful in literature one must needs introduce harrowing or realistic plots and situations. Well then I will never be a success if that is so, for I cherish

the absurd idea that perhaps the world is just as interested in clean books as in clean people. I didn't try to make any of my characters extraordinary or fine—I tried to paint them as we are in life—never wonderfully good, and let me believe it, seldom wonderfully bad. Just ordinary human beings. I write because I can't help myself—because I love to, and because I earn my living that way—but I don't think I have any particular mission in life—save to play my part as the days go by—and so, seldom write with an object. Life altogether to me is objectless—I live from day to day in that day only, and make the most of it—am glad I am alive. But your kind letter did not call for all this, and you must forgive me.

CHICAGO, ILL., March 24, 1899.

*Onoto Watanna*

MR., MISS AND MRS. By CHARLES BLOOMINGDALE, JR.

I wrote "Mr. Miss and Mrs." in the hope that my income might get nearer my outcome.

PHILADELPHIA,  
March 24, 1899.

*Charles Bloomingdale Jr.*

THE SEED OF THE POPPY. By CLIVE HOLLAND.

You ask why I wrote "The Seed of the Poppy." I did so to give a picture of a certain phase of London literary life, which is well defined as coming mid-way between the mere fashionable author, much seen in society, and the more insistent "hustling" journalist-author. It was meant as a companion picture to that sketched in my little novel, "A Writer of Fiction," which is a record of failure just as "The Seed of the Poppy" is one of success. The character of Beatrice Armathwaite—beautiful, clever victim to the morphia scourge—was drawn largely from life, and introduced as a contrast to the simple country girl, Pearl Conway. I studied the morphia habit carefully with a view to presenting without exaggeration, the awful power it gains over all who are brought under its subtle influence.

BERGEN, Bournemouth, W., England,  
March 7, 1899.

*Clive Holland*

THE WIRE CUTTERS. By M. E. M. DAVIS.

The vivid and picturesque life of Western Texas, with its setting of prairie and woodland, and particularly that stirring time during the scene of my story, "The Wire Cutters" is laid, has always interested me keenly. Certain problems of heredity and environment also laid hold of my imagination in a way not to be resisted. And so, from a desire to set forth this familiar life, and these mysterious problems, the story grew.

NEW ORLEANS, LA., March 25, 1899.

*M. E. M. Davis*

A YANKEE FROM THE WEST. By OPIE READ.

"How is it," I have been asked, "that being a Southerner you managed to get the atmosphere so truthfully in a 'Yankee from the West'?" The fact is that it would be rather singular if I had not succeeded in catching the atmosphere at least in a way remindful of truth. The scene of the book is laid in Lake County, Illinois, about fifty miles from Chicago. A country quietly picturesque and quaintly peopled. During the summers of ten years I have lived in the community, to study it, and I studied it, dreamed over it, till I could make myself feel, when away, the same as I might feel if there. Ten years of close observation ought to result in some little resemblance to the truth.

CHICAGO, ILL., March 8, 1899.

*Opie Read.*