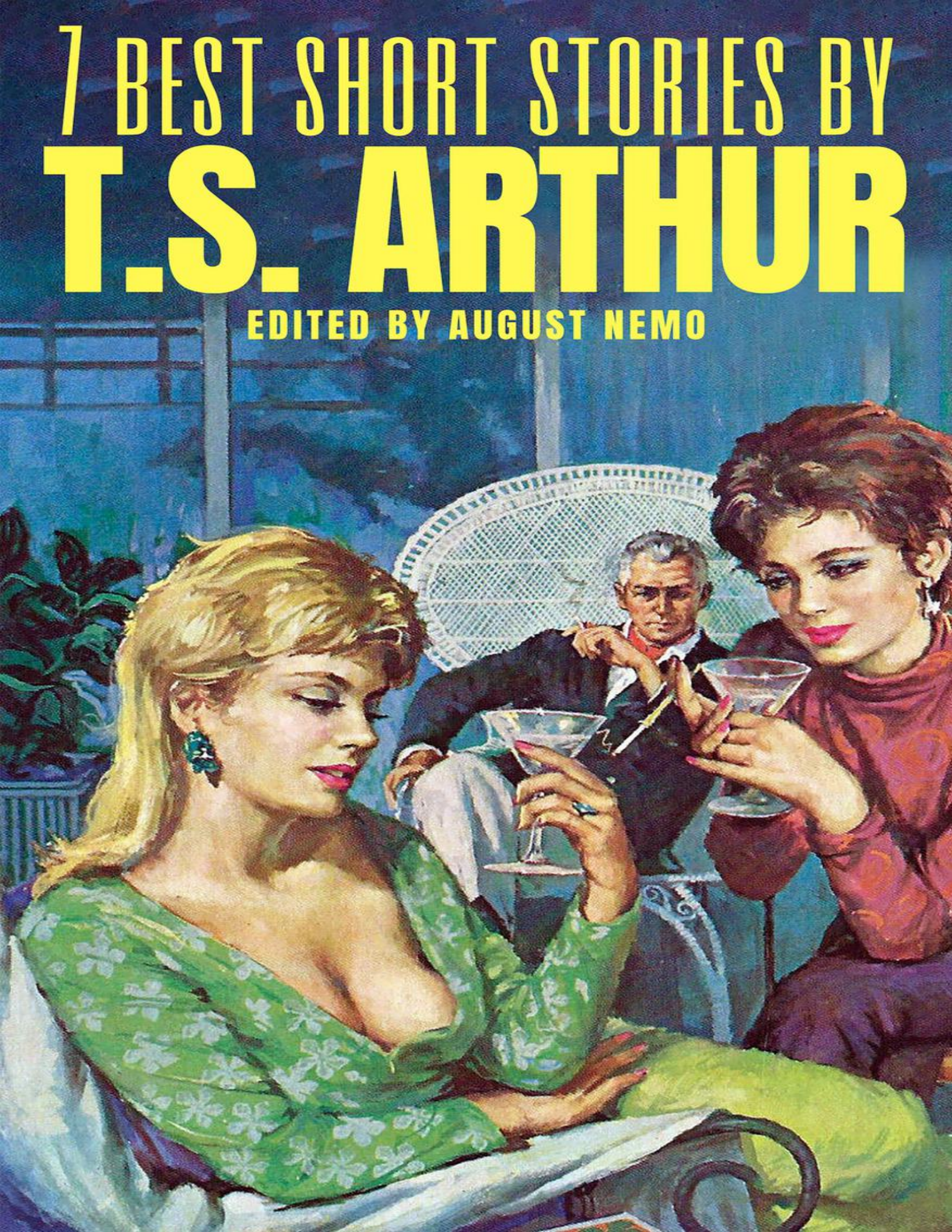
7 BEST SHORT STORIES BY T.S. ARTHUR

EDITED BY AUGUST NEMO



TACET BOOKS

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Table of Contents

The Author

TIMOTHY SHAY ARTHUR was born on June 6, 1809, on a farm in Orange County, New York, the second of four sons and a daughter of William Arthur and Anna Shay. Arthur and his family moved to Baltimore, Maryland, in 1817, where Arthur attended school. At age 13, Arthur left school and decided to work in a mill. When he was 15-years-old, he worked as an apprentice for a tailor, but his poor eyesight forced him to quit that job five years later.

In 1833 Arthur became a journalist in Baltimore, where he wrote about several social causes including temperance, feminism, and socialism. Arthur founded the *Baltimore Literary Monument* in 1836, which was considered a respected literary periodical, and he also published his first book, *The Young Wife's Book: A Manual of Moral, Religious and Domestic Duties*.

Arthur became a member of the Washington Temperance Society in 1840 due to an interest in the temperance movement, one of the big reform movements of the nineteenth century. A year later, Arthur moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with his wife and children. He wrote a collection of stories inspired by the temperance movement called *Six Nights with the Washingtonians: A Series of Original Temperance Tales* in 1842. According to J.B. Dobkin, this collection "established Arthur's reputation as a literary crusader against the evil of strong drink, a theme that pervaded much of his literary output for the remainder of his career."

In 1850, Arthur started a weekly magazine called *Arthur's Home Gazette*. In 1853, the publication became a monthly and changed its name to *Arthur's Home Magazine*. The magazine was not as popular as other magazines and only had a circulation of 30,000 maximum, but "it represented an excellent example of the smaller women's publications that were produced in the mid to late nineteenth century. It also illustrated how Arthur was able to translate a highly successful literary formula into an editing philosophy that appealed to middle-class nineteenth-century women."

In 1854, Arthur wrote the largest selling temperance book of the period, titled *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room and What I Saw There*. The book focuses on the consequences of drinking and is about protagonist, Sam Slade, who decides to open a tavern. As a result, his daughter is killed in an accident, his wife is driven mad, and Sam is killed by his own son.

Arthur began a periodical called the *Children's Hour* in 1867 for *St. Nicholas' Magazine*. In 1869, he added *Workingman*, which was for the middle-working class. The periodical was intended "to furnish good reading for mechanics and their families" and to offset "the ill-offices of the many sensational family papers available to the public."

Arthur died on March 6, 1885, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, from illness. He was buried in the Chestnut Street Cemetery.

An Angel in Disguise

IDLENESS, VICE, AND intemperance had done their miserable work, and the dead mother lay cold and still amid her wretched children. She had fallen upon the threshold of her own door in a drunken fit, and died in the presence of her frightened little ones.

Death touches the spring of our common humanity. This woman had been despised, scoffed at, and angrily denounced by nearly every man, woman, and child in the village; but now, as the fact of her death was passed from lip to lip, in subdued tones, pity took the place of anger, and sorrow of denunciation. Neighbors went hastily to the old tumble-down hut, in which she had secured little more than a place of shelter from summer heats and winter cold: some with grave-clothes for a decent interment of the body; and some with food for the half-starving children, three in number. Of these, John, the oldest, a boy of twelve, was a stout lad, able to earn his living with any farmer. Kate, between ten and eleven, was bright, active girl, out of whom something clever might be made, if in good hands; but poor little Maggie, the youngest, was hopelessly diseased. Two years before a fall from a window had injured her spine, and she had not been able to leave her bed since, except when lifted in the arms of her mother.

"What is to be done with the children?" That was the chief question now. The dead mother would go underground, and be forever beyond all care or concern of the villagers. But the children must not be left to starve.

After considering the matter, and talking it over with his wife, farmer Jones said that he would take John, and do well by him, now that his mother was out of the way; and Mrs. Ellis, who had been looking out for a bound girl, concluded that it would be charitable in her to make choice of Katy, even though she was too young to be of much use for several years.

"I could do much better, I know," said Mrs. Ellis; "but as no one seems inclined to take her, I must act from a sense of duty expect to have trouble with the child; for she's an undisciplined thing—used to having her own way."

But no one said "I'll take Maggie." Pitying glances were cast on her wan and wasted form and thoughts were troubled on her account. Mothers brought cast-off garments and, removing her soiled and ragged clothes, dressed her in clean attire. The sad eyes and patient face of the little one touched many hearts, and even knocked at them for entrance. But none opened to take her in. Who wanted a bed-ridden child?

"Take her to the poorhouse," said a rough man, of whom the question "What's to be done with Maggie?" was asked. "Nobody's going to be bothered with her."

"The poorhouse is a sad place for a sick and helpless child," answered one.

"For your child or mine," said the other, lightly speaking; "but for tis brat it will prove a blessed change, she will be kept clean, have healthy food, and be doctored, which is more than can be said of her past condition."

There was reason in that, but still it didn't satisfy. The day following the day of death was made the day of burial. A few neighbors were at the miserable hovel, but none followed dead cart as it bore the unhonored remains to its pauper grave. Farmer Jones, after the coffin was taken out, placed John in his wagon and drove away, satisfied that he had done his part. Mrs. Ellis spoke to Kate with a hurried air, "Bid your sister good by," and drew the tearful children apart ere