

Reader, you have in hand an unusual book, unusual in itself and in what it means. Many student generations have enjoyed Ed Wolfe's unique style and perceptiveness. This book in its variety brings that influential presence before a wider audience.

The combined realism and sociability of the author—his readiness to face trouble even while retaining the bounce required of us dwellers on earth—made Ed Wolfe a memorable teacher; and these qualities plus his craft as a writer have distilled into this three-layer display of fiction.

"Nor the Furious Winter's Rages" comes on like a saga. It has the laconic language, the inhumanly imposing scenery, the combination of weather and drama. Heroic actions without vainglory are here. And the wry voice of the author persists throughout. You can sense that side glance and spark of understanding in the dialogue, as when Mark talks about a woman being a worrier and Hank loads a lifetime of wisdom into his offhand rejoinder: "Sometimes they got reason."

Next comes "As Nice as a Dog," a Chaucerian extravaganza about Hardi the rooster, who "was a bachelor for most of his life," but who lived a life that provides abundant occasion for a story-essay on heroics, fun, and the glimmering reflections of daily experience confronted by indomitable qualities. Hardi had the good luck to live with an appreciative master, one splendidly ready to note and pass along like jewels the episodes worthy of such renown in the career of this gentleman-fowl.

Rounding out the variety of this book is "Instead of Bread?" Calmly and inexorably this story moves from light-hearted family joking to death and beyond. In a questioning young mind the great issues present themselves. First and last things come before us and are faced squarely.

Never giving up enjoyment in the face of tragedy, and never denying tragedy as a part of our lives—Ed Wolfe taught and exemplified that balance. "Instead of Bread?" is an exemplum, sturdy and fearless—or fearful like us but with us—in the world that this author's writing and teaching have helped us to know and respect and enjoy.

*William Stafford*