

THE STOLEN STORY
& OTHER NEWSPAPER STORIES

JESSE LYNCH WILLIAMS

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
DAVIS



(WMS -
5993
(1st ed.)

THE STOLEN STORY





And found himself face to face with the whole staff.

The STOLEN
STORY and other
Newspaper Stories

by

Jesse Lynch Williams

Author of "Princeton Stories"



New York

Charles Scribner's Sons

1899

Copyright, 1899, by
Charles Scribner's Sons

TROW DIRECTORY
PRINTING AND BOOKBINDING COMPANY
NEW YORK

TO

A. L. W.

CONTENTS

	Page
The Stolen Story	I
The New Reporter	61
Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes . .	103
The Great Secretary-of-State Interview	125
The City Editor's Conscience . . .	161
The Cub Reporter and the King of Spain	183
The Old Reporter	215

The Stolen Story

The Stolen Story

I

THEY had warned Billy Woods so often before and had not yet asked him to resign that the rest of the staff believed they never would. This was reasonable, because there was only one Billy Woods, and the newspapers that wanted geniuses were many.

Woods wore glasses that slid down his nose, and he was a born reporter. He had an absent-minded manner that went well with the glasses, but his nose for news was the best on Park Row.

The first impression he gave was of unpractical guilelessness, but he could ask a greater number of intelligent questions about a greater variety of interests than

The Stolen Story

three average reporters, and they are all pretty good at it. He had the power of making anybody talk. The busiest bank presidents and the crustiest lawyers opened their mouths for him quite as readily as East Side saloon-keepers. If there was news to be had Woods could dig it out; and after he got it he knew how to handle it. These two qualities don't always go together.

Woods had been taken on the staff of *The Day* as a cub reporter, younger, and even more ignorant of the meaning of the word "news" than most cub reporters. Since then he had learned a good deal, but had never seen fit to leave off reporting for a place at the copy-reading desk, or even to become assistant city editor, because reporting was not only more pleasurable but decidedly more profitable. He led as unmonotonous a life as anyone in town, and his space bills averaged nearly three times as much as an ordinary copy-reader's salary and fully twice that of the assistant city editor—not to speak of his fame as the star reporter of *The Day*.

The Stolen Story

Many other newspapers wanted him to be their star man. There was a very large standing offer from one of these, *The Earth*, but he always refused because it would be such a bother to overhaul and clear out the drawers of his desk, and also because *The Day* was the best newspaper in the country to stick to. There was a saying along the Row, borne out by fact, that a *Day* man was fixed for life if he minded his business and kept sober till the paper went to press. But this latter was very difficult for Billy Woods, and that was the reason dust was on his desk and the men were talking about him this morning. This morning meant 12.30 P.M., and the reporters were arriving for the day's work. Some of them were just out of bed and were waiting to be sent off on their first assignments before getting breakfast.

"There'll be the devil to pay when he comes back this time," said the man with the high collar.

"Oh, I don't know," said the one on the desk, swinging his legs. "This is only the fourth day. That time last year he was gone a week, and they told him they would have

The Stolen Story

to fire him, and Billy bobbed his head and looked pathetic, and agreed with all they said about him; and, as usual, they told him——”

“Yes, but don't you see,” the high collar went on, knowingly, “Billy never let the paper get beaten before. I don't understand it; no matter how absent-minded he was he never fell down on his story. At first they thought he had merely forgotten that we go to press early on Saturday nights—he has to be reminded every time, you know—but when it got later and later, everybody began to guess what was the matter, though nobody wanted to say so. You ought to have heard them swear—I was doing the long wait that night—when they finally locked up and went to press with only the ‘flimsy’ story that had it five killed instead of nine.” In newspaper offices flimsy means News Bureau reports. “Of course,” the reporter added, “they corrected that in the later editions with a lift from *The Press*, but you know what a botch of a story it was. They sent me out for the steamboat company's end of it, but every-

The Stolen Story

body had gone to bed and didn't know any boiler had exploded till I woke 'em up and told them."

The leg-swinger remarked: "He was all right all the afternoon and evening. In fact, he'd been trying so hard to be good for several months, poor old Billy—but then you know his way. Probably began by deciding it was cold going down the bay on the tug."

"You're mistaken," said somebody in a confident tone from a near-by desk. This was Sampson, one of the older men, who was clipping his space from the morning paper, and had not been in the conversation before. "Billy Woods did not start in on the way down. He never drinks when out on an assignment. You know that. What's more, I've good reason for believing that a certain cur from a certain paper got him drunk on the way home after Billy had written his story in the cabin—deliberately. Let me tell you what *The Herald* man on that tug said to me last night." But he did not tell, for just then the city editor called out "Sampson," and this reporter

The Stolen Story

tossed down his scissors and went up to the desk to take an assignment.

“Good-morning. Who’s that you’re talking about?” Another reporter had joined the group, taking off his coat.

“Billy Woods.”

“Why, I saw him a minute ago in the drug store drinking bromo-seltzer. Here he is now.”

Woods was bending over the latch of the little gate that kept those who had no right to go inside from those who had.

The gate shut with a click behind him, and, looking scholarly and dignified, he marched straight up the room for the city editor’s desk, rapping the floor with his cane at every two steps. His glasses were tipped forward at an angle so that he had to elevate his chin to focus through them, and he did not even see his friends as he strode up between the rows of desks, hurrying with his whole body.

“R-E-morse,” said Jones, with the high collar.

Sampson was still standing beside the city editor, listening to instructions as to the

The Stolen Story

style of story wanted about the sanitary condition of Ludlow Street Jail; so Woods had to wait. The men down at the other end of the room observed him frowning as though just in with an important piece of news instead of the remnants of a four days' spree. Jones and one of the others, pretending to look for mucilage, sauntered up the room to hear what would take place.

As soon as Sampson started off, without waiting for Mr. White, the city editor, to turn to him, Billy Woods said, "Well, there were nine persons killed there down the bay, sir."

News that is four days old is rather ancient history for a city editor to recall immediately and, at first, Mr. White looked puzzled. Then he stopped a smile and said, "Mr. Woods, Mr. Manning wants to see you, I believe," and bent over his clippings again. He did not usually call Billy "Mr. Woods."

Woods knew what that meant, but he only said, "Yes, sir," and, holding his body very erect, walked over to the managing editor's desk. It was in the same room.

The Stolen Story

Mr. Manning spoke a few brief sentences which the other reporters could not distinguish, though they could hear Billy saying, "Yes, sir," every now and then; "That's so," "Yes, I agree with you," while his head nodded attentively, and then, "Good-by, sir;" and in a little over a minute Billy Woods marched down the room and out of the gate, no longer a member of *The Day's* staff. Newspaper editors have no superfluous time to spend, even upon geniuses.

II

Woods was now completely sober for the first time in four days.

He could turn either up or down the Row, he knew, and get a position in the first newspaper office he came to. But to be "discharged for intoxication" meant more to Woods than even his intimate friends imagined. It had made him a great deal soberer than he cared to be, and before he reached the foot of the stairs he had made up his mind what to do about it. It was not

The Stolen Story

to a newspaper office that he turned. He still had some money left. But, as it chanced, he did not carry out his intention.

Things move so quickly in Newspaper Row. The news of Wood's dismissal had permeated the entire room before he was quite out of it. Before he was down the stairs a certain mature-faced office-boy had stolen unobserved to the telephone closet, carefully closed the door and called up the city editor of *The Earth*.

"Is that you, Mr. McCarthy?" said the boy in *The Day* office, glancing behind him to see that no one was watching him through the sound-proof glass door—"Hello, Mr. McCarthy, you know who this is—yes. Well, B. W. turned up, and dey give him de grand t'row down—what?—Yes, just now, just dis minute—what? I don't know where he went.—Naw, I couldn't sneak downstairs after him. I'm scared to death now—I say I'm scared to death now dat dey's getting onto me here. No, he was sober—Yes, if you hurry. All right, yes, sir. Good-by."

Then the office-boy rang off, and walked

The Stolen Story

out and began throwing spit-balls, made of copy paper, at the other office-boys, while in the city room of *The Earth* Mr. McCarthy was speaking rapidly to two men hastily summoned to his desk:

“You’ll find him some place along the Row. Maybe he hasn’t any money; in that case he won’t get drunk, but I think he’ll wander ’round awhile before he looks for a job. Let’s see—if he’s plenty of money he’ll probably go to the café, you know; but more likely you’ll find him at Andy’s. Munson, you go to Andy’s. Murphy, you go to the other place. Jolly him up if he doesn’t want to join us—promise him any amount of money (I hope he’s hard up); he can’t hold you to it, you know—anything to get him here before he’s gobbled up by somebody else. Now, then, hurry on. Wait a minute. See here, don’t make him drunk unless necessary. I’ve got a big story waiting for him.”

It was just four minutes later that Munson was saying, effusively, “Why, hello, Billy, glad to see you, old man; didn’t expect to see you in here this time of day.

The Stolen Story

Great old time coming up on the tug last Saturday night—hey? Say, what're you doing, eating breakfast here all alone?"

It was very lonely. Everyone else in town was busy and Woods had had but one drink.

In less than half an hour from the time Woods was dismissed from *The Day's* staff he was a member of *The Earth's*, and it took but one more round of drinks, for which Woods himself paid, though Munson put down in his next week's expense account: "To getting Woods in condition to join staff, \$1.75," which was O. K.'d without question.

This newspaper hated *The Day* with loud, outspoken hatred, as bad boys hate. But it loved *The Day's* men. That may have been one of the reasons.

When it could *The Earth* lured away *The Day's* crack men with golden promises, gave them unlimited space and *Earthly* assignments, thereby demoralizing their English and their self-respect until they became ordinary reporters, and then they were used like ordinary reporters.

The Stolen Story

It was not a nice newspaper, but it was an exceedingly enterprising one. Perhaps it did not always overhaul every item of news as carefully as *The Day*, but it had more occasions for congratulating itself on "exclusive news," as they call beats in the editorial column.

It so happened that a valuable tip had just come into the office which, if worked in the right way, would result in an "article" on the first page calculated to make the public set down its coffee-cup and pick up the paper with both hands. And, what would be a source of greater delight to McCarthy and his crew, it would make all the rest of Newspaper Row writhe in impotent fury at being so badly beaten.

It was such a precious gem of a tip that the city editor fairly trembled as he whispered about it. There was reason for his being excited. The newly appointed municipal official that gave out the tip—in the form of a twenty-word statement—to an *Earth* reporter, did so, only because he believed the latter when he promised to tell all the other newspapers about it. This

The Stolen Story

shows what a new official he was. It also suggests that a great deal of carefulness would be required to work up the story.

“There isn’t a man here that can handle that story right,” the managing editor said. That was five minutes before Woods left *The Day* office. About three minutes after he came to *The Earth’s* office, McCarthy was saying: “Well, Mr. Woods, what do you think of *that* for a story to begin with!”

The instant McCarthy left off promising him great things and began to tell about this piece of news, Woods had left off sullenly comparing this city editor with Mr. White, and began listening in his tense, absorbed manner, and now could have repeated McCarthy’s every word and intonation. “Is that tip absolutely straight?” he asked, scowling.

“You see who it’s from. There’s the Commissioner’s name.”

Billy Woods reached for his hat and stick with his right hand, and some copy paper with his left. “Then it’ll make the biggest local story this year,” he said.

“Cover it thoroughly, Mr. Woods.

The Stolen Story

Make one of your artistic stories of it. Don't try to round it up by to-night. Take two days to it. The Commissioner's out of town, so none of the other papers will—— ”

But Woods was half way down the room, and his head was tipped back. It was less than an hour since he had stalked out of *The Day* office with the same gait, but he had forgotten all about that now. He had forgotten how he had intended to make himself forget. He was keenly and joyously alive, and every faculty was hot for work and glowing with the delicious excitement of one hurrying to perform a big feat that he is confident of doing well. This thing is a form of intoxication, too, though it is not usually called that.

First he ran across to the City Hall and sauntered into the Mayor's office and had a talk with the Mayor's private secretary, who called him Billy, and asked what he could do for him to-day. Here Woods talked arrogantly and found out what had been the Mayor's attitude at a certain hearing a month before. Then he jumped on a Broadway cable-car and went down to Wall

The Stolen Story

Street to catch the president of a certain large corporation before he went out to luncheon. It was nearly two o'clock, but Woods knew something of the habits of all prominent New Yorkers, and this one lunched late.

"Just gone a few minutes ago," said the boy, and then Woods slammed the door and remembered that this was Wednesday and that the old gentleman had to finish his luncheon in time for the meeting of the Rapid Transit Commission at three o'clock. "I could have caught him on the way into the club," he whispered to himself, and cursed his stupidity all the way back to the Equitable and up the elevator to the Lawyers' Club.

There were several other men in the neighborhood of The Street to be seen, but he did not stop now because the whole story hung on this president's statement. And it was necessary to bag him before the Rapid Transit Commission meeting, because immediately after it the old gentleman would take a train for his place in the country and play golf.

The Stolen Story

But of course he did not interrupt the president at luncheon. That would have killed the story. He sent his card to the steward, whom he knew well and who, at Wood's request, sent out the head waiter of the white and gold room. From him Woods found out that the president had a friend lunching with him, that he had sent down a larger order than usual to-day, with claret instead of ale, and was now only finishing the oysters. So Woods knew he had no other engagement before the Rapid Transit meeting at three and it would be safe to leave him for three-quarters of an hour.

He hurried down to Wall Street again and called upon five lawyers. Woods hated lawyers. But he was lucky enough to find on the first trial two of them unengaged as well as in, and on the second trial he caught a third and he found out just what he wanted. Most reporters would have secured nothing. It required talent.

With the first, he did what his friends used to call his "refined ingénue" act. The lawyer who thought, as most lawyers do,

The Stolen Story

that he knew all about the ways of newspapers had growled out, "I have nothing to say," but he looked up again when he heard Woods's gentle, well-modulated voice saying, "Certainly. I think I appreciate your position in the matter exactly. Of course you cannot talk about the company's private affairs. But this is all I wanted to know—that is if it is not unprofessional in you to tell me—is it so that"—and in a few minutes Billy bowed himself out of the private office with a half-column of interview and the good-will of the interviewed, and was looking for the next lawyer.

This time he saw that he must employ the friendly slangy manner which a few years ago would have made him despise himself, but he was used to it now. The third man he bullied outright. "Don't try to be so mysterious," he sneered. "It doesn't impress me at all. I'm merely asking you a civil question, and if you don't care to answer it all you have to do is to say so, and I'll go away. But you know as well as I do that this thing is bound to come out, that it's something which concerns the public

The Stolen Story

more than a little, and something the citizens of New York ought to know. What's more, I am going to tell them. It's all a matter of whether you want me to get your client's side of it or not."

And the little, bald-headed lawyer scowled and said, "There's nothing in it, at all. Sit down. It's simply this way," and told Billy what he already knew but now had authority for, which made it good news. It was not good news before. It would be poor stuff if published as "it is said," or "there is reason for thinking," etc. And if printed as a fact without quotation marks it would invite a libel suit.

It was a quarter before three at the Lawyers' Club when the president lighted a black cigar and signed a check for it. Billy Woods, waiting for him by the elevator, had the satisfaction of seeing the man that had lunched with him step across the reception-room to the library, and the further satisfaction of noting by the clock that the president would not have to hurry to the meeting. Little things of this sort often mean a column or two.

The Stolen Story

The dignified president was feeling benign after his luncheon and his success at making his guest see the wisdom of a certain plan of reorganization. He shook Billy's hand almost jovially and said, "Well, my boy," to him. They walked up Broadway together. The old gentleman was deaf and Billy shouted at him.

After spending the time between the Equitable and Maiden Lane in trying apparently to make the pleasant-mooded old gentleman admit a certain state of affairs in regard to a certain franchise, which he wouldn't, Woods employed the remainder of their walk in extracting a number of strong, emphatic statements from him to the contrary, which was exactly what Woods wanted. And he naïvely said so as they bade each other good-by, "only they claim, you know, sir, that they have a perfect legal right to do it."

"They claim! the damned lying thieves! they'd claim the whole of Manhattan Island if they could." Only, this remark Billy was considerate enough to leave out of his interview, for it would not have looked well

The Stolen Story

in type with this benevolent old gentleman's quotation marks about it. Besides, the president had been stirred to indigestion as it was, and deserved to be spared further discomfort out of gratitude. For from him Woods had obtained a succinct statement of facts—which he was now rapidly writing down, word for word, by a Broadway corner lamp-post—a perfect crowbar of a statement it was, with which Billy could prod and pry out the whole of the story, and without which he could have done nothing. The story was practically secured now. The rest was only a matter of time, for Woods.

There were nearly a dozen persons, up and down town, of various walks of life and degrees of importance that he had to see, and it was now three o'clock. He had not heard what McCarthy said about taking two days to the story, and would not have done so if he had. He gulped a cup of coffee and a sandwich, stepped into a cigar-store, turned the pages of the directory over rapidly several times and then started out.

At ten o'clock that evening he sighed and said, "Well, that's the last. That covers

The Stolen Story

it." He had just hurried down some stone steps in Seventieth Street and was making for the Seventy-second Street "L" station. He had forgotten to dine.

He outlined his story on the half-hour trip downtown. He was so intent that he did not hear the guard call out the stations. When the train turned the sharp little curve into Murray Street, he arose automatically, walked to the door, then stepped out when the train stopped at Park Place, loped down the stairs just as he had done hundreds of times before, and hurried up toward City Hall Park. He was planning his introduction now. He prided himself on the reserve of his introductions. He did not hear a few belated newsboys crying sporting editions in the park or see the indigent and sleepy ones on the benches about the fountain. He hurried across the street and mechanically dodged a clanging Third Avenue cable-car, smiling to himself as a fetching opening sentence flashed into his mind. Then, like a homing pigeon, he darted in at the familiar doorway of *The Day*, just as he had always done ; ran up the stairs two steps

The Stolen Story

at a time, unlatched the gate, hurried down to his old desk, swore at somebody's coat lying there, threw it upon another desk, sat down and began to write like nothing in the world but a reporter with a tremendous beat, who knows only that the paper goes to press within three hours.

III

Meanwhile Mr. Stone, the night city editor of *The Day*, had come on at 5.30 o'clock to take the desk, and the first thing Mr. White said to him was, "Billy's gone at last."

Stone took out his pipe and said, "Too bad," which was a good deal for the night city editor to say; then he put it back again and went over the assignment list with White.

The copy-editors began gathering in now and they also said "Too bad." But they had considerably more to say than that; for Sampson, the old reporter, had by this

The Stolen Story

time related to the whole staff what *The Herald* man had told him about the trip up the bay in the tug. He said it was only one of a series of attempts on the part of *The Earth* office at making Billy Woods drunk—not merely in order to get *The Day* beaten on the news, but to get hold of *The Day's* best reporter.

“And that is the only way they ever could get Billy to join their dirty sheet,” somebody remarked.

“Well,” said Bascom, the ancient copy-reader, sadly, “I see his finish—in that pretty crowd. . . . I suppose they'll hunt him up as soon as he's sober.”

“That won't be for a week,” said somebody else. Then each sat down before a little pile of copy and began his night's work. This was about the time most of the town was sitting down to its dinner.

At twenty minutes before eleven the Police Head-quarters man sent in by telephone a bunch of precinct returns—arrests, accidents, and so on. Mr. Stone turned his glistening eye-glasses down the room over the even rows of reporters' desks to see whom

The Stolen Story

to send out on one of these stories. Most of the men were still scattered about over the town and adjacent country on assignments; those in the office were all, except one of the new reporters, busily writing, with coats off and the incandescent lights gleaming on shirt-sleeves and copy paper.

Just then a man entered the room in a hurry. Stone turned to the assistant night city editor. "Haskill," he said, "who's that sitting down in Woods's old place?" One cannot have the best eyesight and the best copy-reading ability in town at the same time.

"Why, it's Billy himself," said Haskill.

"I thought so," said Stone; "what's he doing here?"

"Lord knows," said Haskill, running his pencil through a half page of some poor space-grabber's copy. "Guess he's going to write a note to leave for someone."

Stone called up Linton, the cub, handed him the Head-quarters report, said, "Hurry," and bent over the Senator Platt interview he was "reading" for the first page.

It was not good Park Row form for a

The Stolen Story

man to walk into the office from which he had so recently been dismissed, but it was getting on toward midnight and there were more important things to think about. At least Stone and Haskill thought so. Meanwhile Woods, looking intense, began to fill many sheets of paper with good writing.

A few minutes later the man came in who had been sent out to Hasbrouck Heights to get up a humorous family-quarrel story which did not turn out to be so funny as he had hoped. He walked up to the desk and began to tell Mr. Stone, who kept on reading copy, what he had found out. When he finished Stone looked up with his usual cynical, bored expression long enough to say, "About two sticks—keep it inside quarter of a column anyway." But when he looked up, he once more spied Woods down there. He bent over his work again, but said, "He's still there, Haskill."

"Who?"

"Woods. Here, boy," ringing the bell, "copy. Haskill, will you find out what Jevins wants at the 'phone, please?"

"Still writing, too," said Haskill, aris-

The Stolen Story

ing. "Must be writing letters to the whole staff."

Haskill went down the room and took a story off the telephone from the man who had been sent up to Poughkeepsie to find out about a murder and could not get down before the paper went to press. This required ten minutes and Woods kept on writing furiously. Thus far no one else had noticed him except the office-boys, who wondered.

On the way from the telephone closet Haskill walked around by Woods's desk. Quite from force of editorial habit he glanced over the writer's shoulder, and then he stopped short. He leaned over, ran his eye rapidly down the rest of the page, then turned and fairly ran up the room with a scared look on his face. He grabbed Stone by the shoulder and whispered a few quick, excited words in his ear.

The editor instantly straightened up in his chair.

"What's that? Are you sure? The aldermen!" Then, at the rate of four hundred words to the minute, "Why, that

The Stolen Story

means a million dollar steal—who are the aldermen—when were they going to put the plot through—Haskill, where did Woods get this story?”

“I tell you I only saw that one page,” returned Haskill, excitedly starting down the room again. “I’ll ask——”

“Wait a minute.”

Haskill turned around. Stone was looking puzzled. “Why is he writing this story for us?”

“Stone, how do I know! but, this story is tremendous, man—tremendous! I’ll go——”

Stone took him by the arm. “Sit down. Certainly it’s a big story, but listen: If you were in his place and had picked up a beat, would you come here with it? Under the circumstances, you’d think he’d go to any other office in town first. Haskill, I don’t understand this thing——”

“That’s Billy Woods you’re talking about, isn’t it?” Harwood, the assistant theatrical man, had just come in and was taking off his coat to write unkind words about a first night. “You needn’t look so

The Stolen Story

excited about it. It's easy enough to understand. They offered him \$150 a week guarantee—that's the reason he didn't go to any other office first." He had overheard only the last words.

Stone turned quickly and looked at Harwood. "What are you talking about?"

"About Billy Woods. Why, haven't you heard the latest—about his going to *The Earth* just after he left us?"

Haskill gasped out a "What!" and looked at Stone. Stone said nothing and gazed at Harwood.

"It's so, though." Harwood's voice was lazy and gossipy. "Two of their men told me about it uptown at dinner."

"Harwood," whispered Haskill, taking him impressively by the shoulder. "Look down there! He's been here—we don't know how long."

"Great Scott! What's he doing in *this* office?"

"Shss—writing the biggest beat of the year—Good heavens, Stone, what's the matter?" The night city editor had suddenly jumped out of his chair.

The Stolen Story

“Great Scott! what is it?” from Harwood.

But Stone, with an unusual look in his face, only started down the room with Haskill running behind him, saying, in a low, beseeching tone, “What’s the matter, Stone, what’s the matter?”

“No,” muttered Stone, suddenly stopping. “That would only wake him up and make him realize—— Haskill, how shall we work it? Quick!” he snarled, angrily; “something is liable to happen that will——”

“Work what! what’re you talking about, man?”

Stone started toward Woods again, then, stopping so abruptly that Haskill bumped into him, he fairly screamed, “Jones! Jones! *Jones!* Come up to the desk,” and started up the room himself sidewise, as if to draw Jones away from Woods (Haskill trotting along behind). For Jones had just finished writing, and, being idle, had spied Billy Woods, had started around toward his desk and had gone as far as “Why, hello, Billy,” when Stone cut him off.

The Stolen Story

The rest of the reporters had heard the impatient calling and wondered for a second or two what big piece of news had come in, but did not look up from their work. But one of the copy-readers exclaimed, "Hello! there's Billy Woods."

"Come here, Mr. Harwood," Stone was saying in a quick voice. Haskill was already there, looking with dumb amazement in his superior's face. Jones was there too.

"Now listen," said Stone. He had formed his plan and now sat on the edge of the desk. "Woods left our staff to-day, as you know. Since then he has run across the beat of the year and has walked into our office and is writing it now——"

"Oh, you mean——" exclaimed Haskill, with intelligence and then alarm running into his eyes.

"Exactly. Now listen."

"Great Scott!" said Harwood, the theatrical man, in a low solemn voice, "from force of habit, you mean."

"Yes," whispered Haskill, "in his old, absent-minded way." They both looked

The Stolen Story

down toward Woods, but Jones was asking, mystified, "What's this, what's this?"

Haskill and Harwood dashed the idea at him like cold water in his face, while at the same time Stone went on incisively: "Now, though Woods is not a member of our staff, he has just as much right to sit here and write as any free lance that brings in stories."

"But say, Stone," whispered Harwood.

"Please keep still. I tell you this is the exposure that was rumored was coming; and you know as well as I do that the Commissioners never give things of this sort out, except in the form of a public statement. There's only one way McCarthy could get that tip exclusively. Here's our chance to teach him his lesson. Please keep still, Haskill. *That story is not to get out of this office except in print.* Jones, your duty for the rest of this night is to see to it that no one speaks a word to Woods so long as he is here. Don't let anybody get within ten feet of his desk, except me. Don't let them say anything or do anything that is likely to remind him where he is. *Please, keep still, Haskill.*

The Stolen Story

He's liable to wake up any moment. Understand?"

Haskill put in, "Catch everyone as he comes into the office and put him on to the thing."

It was unnecessary to say anything more to Jones. He was a newspaper man. He hurried toward the gate where a couple of reporters were entering the room.

"Now, Haskill," said Stone, "you go around and tell all the desk men in the office. And Mr. Harwood, will you please——"

But Stone broke off abruptly.

"Heavens!" whispered Haskill.

Woods had arisen from his chair and was looking straight up at them. Then he turned and walked rapidly down the room toward the gate.

Stone and Haskill and Harwood bolted down on tiptoe after him. But he wheeled off to the right, passed the newspaper files, stepped up to the water-cooler and filled a glass. He always looked around the room before getting a drink and they ought to have remembered it. They did now. Haskill was turning over an afternoon paper,

The Stolen Story

as if in a great hurry for something. Harwood was standing by the telephone-box trying to look as if he had never thought of Billy Woods. But Stone calmly turned back and walked across to Woods's desk.

There lay some pages of finely written copy. His experienced eye skimmed over a paragraph. It made him lust for the rest. It was risky, but he reached over, whisked up the closely written sheets, all but the last one, and hurried up to the desk with them just as Woods put down the glass, emitting a wet-lipped "Ah!" and started back, wiping his hand on his trousers. As he passed Haskill he was humming a little, tuneless tune. He sat down, ran his hand through his hair a moment, then, leaning over, began to write rapidly again, putting the next finished page on top of the one sheet left as unquestioningly as a hen goes to laying over one nest egg.

Meanwhile, Stone, reading the copy as rapidly as he alone could, hastily scrawled (*Nonp. Double lead—Rush*) across the first page and sent it up to the composing-room, where the foreman, dividing it into several

The Stolen Story

“takes,” gave them to several composers, who put them in type as fast as they knew how. In a few minutes the galley proofs were down on Stone’s desk, with Haskill bending over Stone’s shoulder saying, “Isn’t it beautiful! Isn’t it beautiful!”

Stone made a printer’s sign on the margin to turn a “u” right side up and said: “This much is ours, anyway.”

Haskill said, “Think we’ll get it all?”

Stone glanced down at Woods. “Hello,” he said, “what’s that boy up to?”

A few minutes before, one of the numerous office-boys had brought in some copy from the man covering a spiritualist convention uptown. Now he was walking slowly up and down behind Billy Woods. Presently he turned and walked up to the desk. He was an odd-looking boy with a peculiar, matured face. He looked very solemn. “Please, Mr. Stone,” he said, “kin I go home now? My old mother is sick and I promised her——”

“Well, I’m afraid you lied to her if you’re not lying to me, for you’re to stay here till we go to press to-night.”

The Stolen Story

“ Nah, I won’t,” said the boy, sullenly, “ I’ll t’row up me job, foist. I got to go home.”

“ You can throw up your job if you want to, but you can’t go home till the paper goes to press. Run on down to the end of the room where you belong.”

But Stone followed after him.

“ John,” he said to the head boy by the gate, “ no boy can get out of this office to-night on any excuse till after we go to press—not even on errands, without my permission. Understand?”

John said, “ Yes, sir,” and was excited. So were all the other boys. The very buzzing of the electric fans was abnormal to-night. There was suppressed excitement in the scurrying cockroaches when the reporters opened their desk-drawers. Stone returned to the other end of the room.

“ That youngster,” he said to Haskill, “ is the one we are after. I’ve thought so all along.”

“ Then why didn’t you drop him long ago?”

“ There would be another here inside of

The Stolen Story

a week. We'll catch this one red-handed. That may stop their dirty work."

The reporters were rounding up with the late stories. Everyone that came into the room, no matter how important his news, was first halted at the gate by Jones. Woods kept on writing uninterruptedly. The men only looked over at him in awe; then went up to the desk to tell their news.

"Haskill," said Stone ("go on talking," to one of the reporters), "the room is getting too full of people thinking about the same thing. If they keep on looking at Woods they'll hypnotize him into realization of everything—no matter how intense he is. Clear out the room." ("Go on talking, Lee. I can hear you." Lee went on.) "Tell Smith to start up a poker game in the back room."

"Stone," whispered Haskill, as he started to go, "what's the matter with him now?"

"Needs copy - paper," said Stone. ("That's no good, Lee, don't write anything.") And grabbing a bunch of paper himself, the editor walked down and tossed

The Stolen Story

it in front of Woods, who growled, "Thanks, boy," without lifting his eyes.

Stone hurried on down the room. "Boys, come here," he said—"all you boys." He sat down on a desk. They gathered about him. Their faces were almost ghastly, it was so horrifyingly unusual to be recognized by Mr. Stone, except as he recognized the bell he punched or the floor he threw copy upon.

"You boys," he said, "there's a big beat in this office to-night." They knew that, and he knew they did. "If it gets out of here you all get out, too—every one of you. Understand? You are all to be discharged unless we beat the town on this story." Then he left them. They even kept silent for several seconds. But that may have been because Stone had turned over to where Woods was writing. Jones saw this and Jones's jaw dropped.

There was Billy, tapping with his fingers on the desk as if waiting for a word, and as Stone came near he looked up and smiled amiably. It was a sweet, childlike smile, and those watching never forgot it. Stone

The Stolen Story

looked straight back at him. It was the only thing to do. The mere lowering of his eyes might kill the grandest beat of the year.

By telepathy, perhaps, nearly everyone in the room let go his work for the moment and was now watching these two smile at each other. The whole room held its breath as it saw Stone stop, close beside Woods. Its heart ceased beating as it heard him ask, "How much more of this is there, Woods?" It was his normal tone, too.

"Oh, well, I'm over half through, I think." It was the first time in four days, for some of them, that Woods's voice had been heard. It was quite natural.

"Hurry it along," said Stone, and then he had the audacity to hold out his hand.

"Yes, sir," said Billy, and from force of habit handed Stone the written sheets of copy, then leaned over and started in writing intensely again, and *The Day* staff thanked Heaven.

When Stone reached the desk Haskill looked admiringly at him a moment before saying, "My! you've got nerve."

"He's as safe as a man without a mem-

The Stolen Story

ory," said Stone, as he marked on the copy (*Add Aldermen Swindle*). But the fingers he did it with trembled.

The hands of the clock went on around and Woods went on scowling and throwing off page after page of copy. The night editor came down from the composing-room, where he was making up, and whispered to Stone, "He'll soon be through, Stone, won't he?"

Stone did not answer, for he saw one of the boys stealing hastily up toward the desk. "Mr. Stone," said the boy, looking ashamed, "Tommy Donovan's up to some game at the 'phone. He's been runnin' in an' out of the box for half an hour. We think he's givin' up Mr. Woods's beat. He's in there again an'——"

"All right," said Stone, "let him get them." Then turning to Haskill, "I *thought* they would be able to tell us something if they tried. Now you watch Woods, Haskill."

Stone stepped into the adjoining room, walked past the night editorial writer and into the chief's room, picked up the private

The Stolen Story

telephone and turned on the switch in time to hear, "Well, you tell the man at the desk it's T. D.—in a hurry."

Mr. Stone pulled down the switch and shut off the circuit of the *Day's* outer office, ran out into the main room again, tiptoed down to the telephone-box where he found Tommy sending boyish oaths at Central for cutting him off.

Stone reached in and put a hand over his mouth. "You needn't swear, boy," he said. "It's against the rules of the company. Besides, they can't hear you. Come, I'll show you why."

Through an avenue of big-eyed other boys Stone led Tommy into the private room. "You see I cut you off." He pushed the switch back again. "Now you could talk with *The Earth* office again if you were there. Come, we'll go into this nice little room over here. Now, then, this is to be your private office until we go to press. Then your resignation will be voted upon. It may prove better for you, though, if you tell me what you were going to tell the man at the desk."

The Stolen Story

Just then Haskill's excited voice was heard. "Stone! Stone! for Heaven's sake, where are you?"

"Right here. What's the matter?"

Haskill appeared at the threshold, panting: "Stone, Billy's through writing! He's standing up by his desk looking over the last pages. But he's running his hand through his hair; so I think he must be going to add a little more, don't you?"

Impulsively Stone grasped his assistant by the arm. "Haskill, listen. We lose our beat if Woods leaves this office before we go to press."

"Why?"

"Because, soon as he's finished writing——"

"He'll get drunk, Stone."

"No, he'll come to himself first—realize everything, soon as the tension is off his nerves—then, don't you see what'll happen——"

"Why, first he'll have a spasm or something at realizing what he's done, then I tell you, Stone, he'll go and get——"

The Stolen Story

“ You don’t know Woods. He’ll go like the devil over to his new bosses and confess the whole thing.”

“ They’ll give him——”

“ But not till they’ve made him sit down and dictate the whole story to a relay of stenographers—there’s still time for it—Then where’s our beat, Haskill! ”

“ We’ve got to keep him here then.”

“ But if he suddenly comes to now, here in this office, Haskill? ”

“ Then hold him anyway, Stone! ”

“ But we can’t, man; he’s no office-boy.” They both looked at the boy in Stone’s grasp. He had been quietly taking in all they said; also several features about the room that pleased him.

“ Here,” said Stone, “ you lock up this boy—lock him up tight. I’ll fix Woods somehow.” And he ran back to the outer room in time to see Billy, who had decided not to write any more after all, tap the collected sheets of copy even against the desk-top and start, rather gayly it seemed, up the room. Stone almost ran to beat him to the desk.

The Stolen Story

Woods put his copy down upon the desk. "Here's the rest of it," he said, briskly.

Stone apparently paid no attention.

Woods picked the sheets up again and planked them down directly under Stone's eyes. "That winds her up," he said.

The editor made no sign.

"Good-night," said Woods.

Stone picked up the copy in silence, wondering what to do.

"Good-night, I said, Mr. Stone. I'm going home." He started off.

"Er—oh, say Woods—hold up. We don't want you to go yet."

Woods stopped ten feet away. He turned around slowly. "But I'm nearly dead," he said, smiling, and he looked it. "I'd like to get something to eat and go to bed."

"Wait till I read your copy."

Woods sighed.

Stone thought he saw the tense lines fading out of his countenance. That would never do. "Besides, Woods," he said, "you haven't enough here. You don't seem to realize what a big story this is."

But Woods was realizing that he was

The Stolen Story

tired. It was like asking a man to run just one more lap at the end of a mile race. He said, in a hurt tone, "I've covered the story, I think."

Stone knew that in a moment more he might realize everything. An inspiration came to him. "Why, see here, Woods, why don't you round up your story with some detailed personal history of the people concerned and——" He was stopped by a gleam that suddenly came into Woods's face.

"Say, Mr. Stone," said the reporter, reaching up and running his hand through his hair—and now his tone was tense and eager once more—"I've just done that, but I'll tell you: A few sticks about similar attempts in the past would be good stuff. Here, give me some copy-paper. Dan, run and get me the back files of the *Tribune* for the years—here, I'll write 'em down—there, for those years. Be quick about it." Woods was a born reporter.

Hurrying back to his desk again, and looking happy, he began throwing off sheets of copy with one hand, holding open an old

The Stolen Story

bound volume of the *Tribune* with the other, while two office boys were hastily stacking up other dusty volumes before him. Stone, at the other end of the room, was mopping his brow.

A few minutes later the gate clicked and the managing editor himself came hurrying into the office. He had been dining out. Stone dived at him.

The managing editor showed no astonishment, because nothing ever astonished him, but at the conclusion he whispered, gravely, "Say, Stone, perhaps I'd better hide in the closet. Woods may look up and wonder at my dress suit."

Stone, who was watching Woods like a delicate machine, growled abstractedly to his superior: "Talk to Haskill," and ran to Billy, saying: "Better say something now about future possibilities—you know what I mean."

Woods bobbed his head. "Here's another batch," he said.

Stone brought the copy back to where Mr. Manning and Haskill were standing. "Just look at that good English," he whispered,

The Stolen Story

throwing it on the floor. The story itself was all in type and locked up in the form now, and Stone had put a head on it, one of his characteristic heads—a big, black-lettered head that would in a few hours make the now sleeping town buzz with astonishment and the newsboys rich selling *Days* alone if——

It was less than half an hour from the time of going to press. Most of the office was getting up and sitting down again, or stepping about the room, or looking at the clock.

Mr. Manning wet his lips and said, “Stone, Woods will know we can’t take copy much longer. Then he will commence wondering, then he will wake up, then he’ll run over to the *Earth* office and——”

“Haskill,” said Stone, “you’re fat; go down and stand in front of Woods, with your back toward him.”

Haskill walked down the room. Stone jumped up on the “Jersey” desk, jerked back the glass door of the clock, shoved the hands back twenty minutes, slammed the door shut and jumped down again. Five minutes later Billy called up, “How much more can you take?”

The Stolen Story

Stone called back in the ghastly stillness, "Keep on writing till we tell you to stop. Write fast." Then, in a low tone, "That'll keep you from thinking."

It was so silent that the whole room heard Billy muttering "Oh, I didn't know I had so much time." He had looked at the clock.

Another minute had dragged by in which the clock ticked and Woods's pen scratched and the rest of the room waited. Haskill sighed and for the seventh time was whispering to anybody, "Oh, we've surely got them beaten, don't you think so?" when two office-boys came scurrying in through the gate and up the room with looks on their young faces that made Stone start up and say, "What's coming, now?"

He had just sent these boys out to see why the shipping news bureau did not send in anything about the overdue Lucania, two boys instead of one, so they would watch each other. They ran up to Stone, holding out a letter.

"I found this," panted one of them.

"No, I found it," panted the other; "it fluttered down from some place upstairs here. It hit Dan on the head."

The Stolen Story

Stone had snatched it up, the others eagerly bending over it with him. It was addressed to "The night editor of *The Earth*—Rush," and the envelope was one of the regular office envelopes with "*The Day*" printed in the corner.

"What does *this* mean?" asked Mr. Manning.

"Keep Woods writing," said Stone, over his shoulder, for he had started on a run for the private office now occupied by Tommy Donovan.

It was a front room and Tommy was leaning out of the window. Stone grasped him firmly by the trousers. "What are you doing, boy?"

"Nuthin'." He was unperturbed.

"Let's see your fingers—the other hand. How did you get that ink-mark?"

"Writin'."

"What. This?" showing the envelope.

The boy waited a minute, then grinned.

"Yep," he said.

"What does it say inside?"

The boy looked up at Stone and then said, calmly, "It says 'Billy Woods is here with

The Stolen Story

a big beat. Yer gotter hustle if yer want it.'” Then, grinning again, “Might’s well tell yer, long as yer on.”

“I believe you this time,” said the editor, “though I haven’t opened it. See? It was not addressed to me.”

The boy sniffed contemptuously, either at himself or at Stone, or both. Then he impudently looked in Stone’s eyes and asked, “Why don’t yer send it to *The Eart*, then?”

Stone had a sense of humor and laughed. “I shall, in the morning,” he said, “with a note.”

“Huh,” said the boy. “They was six other envelopes on the table when I come in here. Some of ’em ought to got there by now.”

Stone only said: “Some day you’ll make a first-class crook and we’ll have column stories about you, with your picture.”

The boy almost blushed at this prediction of greatness, but Stone did not notice that, for a strange voice came in from the other room, saying: “I tell you I’ve got to see him.” Stone locked the door and ran out,

The Stolen Story

The head office-boy was shouting, excitedly, "See him—nuthin' ! You'll have to wait till he's trew writin'."

A number of the men, hearing the loud voices, were coming down toward the gate.

"Give him this note then, I tell you."

"Give nuthin'—not till he's trew writin'."

Now another stranger came in. He had been waiting in the hallway. To him the first young man turned and said, "He's in here, Munson, but they won't bring him out, and they won't give him the note."

"Here, let me take it," said Munson, the new arrival.

Jones, the reporter, who had been standing by the gate with his back toward it, as if not listening, now turned around.

But Munson, looking past Jones, exclaimed, dramatically, "Mr. Stone, give this to Woods if you dare!"

Stone, who had been passing by, apparently oblivious, stopped and looked at Munson a moment. "Young man," he said, "what is the occasion for so much emotion? Here, boy, take that note to Mr. Woods."

The Stolen Story

The boy looked at Mr. Stone.

“Hurry,” said the editor. “This person seems to be impatient.”

“Yes, sir,” said the boy, dazedly, and carried the envelope over to Woods, who nodded impatiently, stuck the thing hastily in his pocket with his left hand, and with his right kept on writing.

“He seems to be occupied,” Jones remarked, affably. “But he will be at leisure shortly. You see it’s nearly time to go to press.”

But Munson cried, “Well, then, I’ll go in and speak to him.”

Jones stood by the gate. “Sorry, but it’s against the rules of the office.” Stone, behind him, was filling a pipe and remarked, aloud: “This is one place where an *Earth* reporter cannot go,” which made some of the others laugh. Nearly the whole staff had moved down by the gate now.

Munson looked at them. He did not know what tack to take, and time was flying. He tried being civil. “But, see here, gentlemen,” he said, earnestly, “I’ve simply got to see Woods before we go to press.” He

The Stolen Story

looked up at the office clock. "We go to press in about twenty-five minutes."

"Well, there he is, look at him," put in Jones.

Then, for the first time, it suddenly occurred to Munson to call to Billy Woods. "Oh, Woods!" he shouted in a loud voice, "Billy Woods, come here a minute."

Woods shook his head, but no one heard him call back, "Just a second," for Mr. Manning now came down the room, saying, with some heat:

"See here, Jones, tell that young man to stop making a disturbance in this office;" which Jones began to do, assisted by several others, in loud tones.

Meanwhile, Billy, reaching the end of the page, made a double X mark to show that it was the end of the story, and said, "Here, boy," to the one that had brought him the note, "take this up to the desk," and walked down to the gate, saying: "Well, well, what's all this rumpus about. Who wants me——" just in time to hear Munson's high voice, almost screaming above the others: "*Billy Woods, I was sent to ask you why*

The Stolen Story

you joined our staff this morning, and then sneaked over here with our beat tonight! What have you got to say for yourself?"

And now, like fools, every one shut up and turned to look at Billy Woods. They all stood there in silence and watched him as the thing came over him.

He stopped short before reaching the gate, and opened his mouth. First, a look of childish dread came over his face. He looked at Munson. Then he looked around at the staff. Then he turned his face away and sat down at the nearest desk. He was a born reporter, and he had grasped the whole situation from beginning to end.

And just then the floor began to shake and there came up the deep, heavy rumbling of the mighty presses from far below. The story was a beat now.

Munson knew that sound, and looked up at the clock in alarm.

Stone was puffing his pipe contentedly. "Twenty minutes slow you'll find."

Then Munson knew that his paper was beaten, and that the best it could do was to

The Stolen Story

lift a stick or two of the story from *The Day* for the later editions. This would be done immediately and without him. So he decided to stay here a minute and say something. He was wrought up.

He slapped the gate-post with his hand. "This is the lowest trick ever perpetrated in this city," he began.

"Yes?" said Stone, who had his hands in his pockets.

"And I'd like to state that the man that would do such a thing——"

"Say," put in Haskill, "you needn't heap any abuse on Billy Woods. We aren't in the humor to hear it. He came up here from force of habit, and you're in hard luck; that's all. He forgot that he had been inveigled into joining your dirty sheet, until you reminded him of it just now. Didn't you, Billy?"

Woods made no reply. It would have been a good thing altogether if he could have fallen over in a dramatic faint at this point, or, say, when the presses began. But he did not know how. So he only sat there behind the others, with his glasses sliding down, lis-

The Stolen Story

tening to everything and holding tight to the desk.

Munson had laughed scornfully at Haskill's explanation. "Who do you think will believe that fairy story?" he asked. "Oh," he went on, "you have beaten us all right on this story—we acknowledge that."

Stone blew smoke. "Good of you," he said.

"But we'll have a story to-morrow that you won't have, that you won't *care* to print."

"It won't be the first time," replied Stone, who then remembered something and left the gate for the private office.

Munson was going on, "It'll be a three-column exposé of *The Day's* 'upright journalistic methods,' describing this whole traitorous performance. We can get affidavits that we gave that man Woods——"

Billy Woods's foot tapped on the floor and at the same time Haskill interrupted: "In the first place, no one would believe Woods was on your staff for ten minutes to-day; no one believes you, you know; and besides, how did you people get that tip anyway, I'd like to know——"

"As for affidavits," put in Sampson,

The Stolen Story

the old reporter, "a few striking ones might be secured about other things you've been giving Woods; for instance, on that trip up the bay Sunday night—you ought to remember that, Munson."

"Then, too, we might make pretty good reading out of this interesting young man," this from Stone, who was leading in young Tommy Donovan by the arm. "Did you ever see this lad before? Yes, they seem to recognize each other. And by the way, did you ever see handwriting like this?" He held up the envelope. "Ah, I wouldn't make a very big scare head about this interesting evening if I were you. Oh, no, don't swear at this little boy. What's that—break his neck? Well, if you must, why, we'll have to cover the story at the police station and make a front page spread of it, and tell all we know about the motives. What, are you going so soon? Well, good-night. The cool air will do you good."

Meanwhile, the others were getting ready to leave.

"Come, Woods," said Stone, "put on your coat."

The Stolen Story

Billy arose slowly. Haskill, who was fussing around him like a man that wants to be useful in a nursery and doesn't know how, said, "What he needs is a lot of good, nourishing food. Then I'll take him home to bed with me and to-morrow I'll put him in a Turkish bath. He better stay there all day, too, and not come down to work at all to-morrow. I suppose the office can let him have a day off. Don't you think so, Mr. Manning?"

They were helping Billy put on his coat. He looked up, timidly. "What do you mean?" he said.

"Better ask Mr. Manning," said Haskill, smiling.

"Come on, that's all right," said Mr. Manning, starting for the stairs, "we're all going to have some supper together."

The New Reporter

The New Reporter

ONE day a cub reporter was sent to cover a meeting of an East Side literary club, which was to debate about Arbitration and its effect upon international peace. But he came back to the office within an hour looking disappointed.

“Where’s your story?” asked the city editor.

“There wasn’t any story to write,” replied the new reporter, picking up a newspaper; “they couldn’t agree upon the wording of the subject, and they got to arguing and calling names, and finally the meeting broke up in a free fight; so I came back.”

The city editor came down from his desk and gazed pitifully upon the cub. “They were to have debated on peace,” he said, sorrowfully, “and the meeting broke up in a fight. And there was nothing to write! You may go.” That is a story they tell along

The New Reporter

the Row, and it is an old one. It is of another reporter I am to tell.

This, too, is old, but it has not been told before, perhaps because it is not a story. But I believe the reason is that those who know it best do not care to tell about it.

My cub reporter was pacing up and down before a comfortable-looking house on the avenue, trying to make his legs take him up the steps, and they would not do it.

He had been told to find out what a well-known New York family had to say about its son's ejection from a music-hall the night before for tossing hats and slippers at a variety actress on the stage from a box where he sat with his arm around another actress. The new reporter had been walking up and down before the house for ten minutes.

At last, looking in both directions to make sure no one he knew was near, he took a long breath, dashed up the steps and rang the bell.

"Is Colonel Richardson at home?"

"No sir," said the servant.

"Is—is Mrs. Richardson at home?"

The New Reporter

“They are both out, sir.”

“Thank God!” whispered the reporter, and ran down the steps again, two at a time. That was poor journalism.

But he was a cub reporter, and he had much to learn about the meaning of the word News.

The night before he had had another lesson, a different sort of lesson.

They had sent him over on the East Side to find out about the drowning of a ten-year-old boy. It was reported on the police station returns as possibly a suicide.

The night was hot and sticky (“as humid as a wet sponge,” wrote the man with the weather story), and the East Side was full of midsummer-night noises and awful smells. Thin children, with shrill voices, were playing in the streets. Some of these showed him the way up the dark stairs to the flat where the drowned child had lived.

“He’s the doctor,” whispered one of them.

“Ah, come on down-stairs,” called up another.

The door was open and the neighbors were

The New Reporter

gathering in. Linton, feeling like an intruder, went in, too. But they did not consider his presence displeasing at all. They seemed to feel it an honor. The father arose and gave the reporter a chair, and the mother began telling about it all over again and cried some more. The neighbors fanned themselves and nodded assent to all the mother said about the dead child's virtues. Occasionally they stared at Linton. The old man smoked hard and wiped perspiration on his sleeve.

It was not a suicide—he verified this from the police later—but it was very sad, and the new reporter was sorry about it. They seemed grateful for his sympathy, and asked if he wouldn't like to see the body. Linton said, "Oh, no; thank you." But they wanted to show him some attention and insisted upon taking him into the room where the small, thin body lay all alone, with the hair still wet and the mouth half open, showing two big childish teeth. The other children's yelling voices came in through the window from the street below.

The new reporter had seen but two dead

The New Reporter

persons before in all his life; and he went back through the noisy, hot, foul-smelling streets, thinking of the mystery of death and the sadness of desolation. Then entering the office, which seemed so thoughtlessly full of life and the interests of the living, he reported at the desk of the night city editor.

Stone, the night city editor, was reading copy, but twitched his ugly pipe, which meant, "Well, what did you get?" for this man did not believe in talking when he could help it.

The new reporter began to tell all about it. He thought it ought to make a pretty good little East Side pathetic story—the genuine unrestrained grief of the lowly; the mother crying; the father smoking and not saying much; the kind, gossipy neighbors, etc.

Without looking up, Mr. Stone asked, "Suicide or not?" and kept on running his pencil through copy.

"No," the new reporter replied, "he just fell in off the string-piece of the dock, at the foot of Rutgers Street. But it was pretty sad, I thought. They told me what a fine kid he had been, and how high he stood in his class

The New Reporter

and all that, and they took me in and showed me the body, with the medal he had won at school still around his neck, and the ribbon all wet and faded. He was to have spoken a piece, they said, next Friday at the school exercises. He had been rehearsing only an hour before. While they told me, the other kids, the ones he used to play with, were calling to each other outside in the street below, and——”

The night city editor looked annoyed. “Never mind,” he said, and turned over another sheet of copy.

Linton hesitated. “Well, sha’n’t I write anything?” he asked.

Mr. Stone finished with the paragraph he was editing, then looked up. “Hell, no,” he said; “hundreds of ’em fall in every summer. But a suicide at ten would have been good news, worth, perhaps, a column; for that is unusual. You see the distinction.” So did the cub reporter now.

This young man had thought that, with a college and university training and some experience at amateur scribbling, he ought

The New Reporter

to be able to write good enough reports of things for a newspaper. Any one could do that, he thought.

It was a perfectly natural mistake; others have made it. No one with or without two academic degrees and no experience could write reports of things good enough for a newspaper to publish. Not even William Shakespeare would know what to get or how to put it without some training at reporting. To be sure he might get better things and put them in immortal English, but his copy would not "get by the desk." For this thing reporting is a business involving considerable specialized knowledge, to be learned by experiments and mistakes, like every other job, and there's considerable toil and moil and drudgery at the bottom, just as there is at the bottom of any other business or pursuit. So young Linton was bossed around and jumped upon and made to feel very small and stupid and in the way, just as he would have been in a law office, or a mercantile house, or at the bottom of any other place. But he wanted to be bossed and banged around. That was one of the reasons why he had gone into this work.

The New Reporter

It was so much better than dreamily drinking beer in Germany and telling himself that he was a sociologist. It had been a pleasant, contemplative existence for awhile, and he had heard some interesting theories, but he had been doing the student thing too long; and so when he came back to his own country for a vacation he did not keep up the feeling of kindly patronage toward the United States he had felt coming up the bay. The good American yearning to go and do for himself had come upon him. He decided that he was sick of the ease and inexactness of the scholar—sick, too, of having some one else pay his bills, sick of leisurely reading theories about man as a unit. He wanted to see something of men as warm human beings, with their passions and pursuits, their motives and their ways of looking at things. He could not have chosen a better field for it.

“Here, Mr. Linton,” the city editor would say, “this man died this afternoon. See if it’s true that he drank himself to death. Run up and have a talk with the family.”

“Yes, sir,” Linton would reply, and then shudder at the thought of how nasty the

The New Reporter

crinkly crape was going to feel when he yanked it out of the way in order to jangle the doorbell and ask questions of red-eyed women.

He wondered if all this ever bothered the other reporters, many of whom seemed to be very much the same sort of people as himself and his friends. But—except when they got hold of a “beat,” which always caused absurd excitement—they seemed quite cheerful and businesslike in getting and writing their news. “I suppose you get used to it in time,” he said to one of these.

“Oh, they like to have the papers print the list of clubs he belonged to,” was the reply.

Down along the East River water front the big, brave ships from far away foreign ports rest at ease, with their bowsprits slouching out half way across South Street. Quaint figure-heads are on their bows, and on their sterns names still more quaint and full of soft vowels which mean something in some part of the seven seas; brigs from the West Indies and barks from South Africa;

The New Reporter

Nova Scotia schooners and full-rigged clipper ships from Calcutta and from San Francisco by way of the Horn.

Here the young reporter liked to prow! about when out on a weather story, looking at the different foreign flags and at the odd foreign cargoes unloading in strangely-wrought shipping boxes which smelled of spices, and wondering about the voyage over and about the private history of the bare-footed, underfed sailors who made it. The stevedores' derricks puffed and creaked, and far overhead the cars on the bridge rumbled on, but the big ships seemed calm and patient, and full of mystery, as if they knew too many wondrous things to be impressed by anything in America. But all this had nothing to do with the weather story, or how the fog was affecting the shipping, or how much behind their schedule the ferry-boats were running, or whether (by good fortune) there had been any collisions in the river. That was what he was down there for.

Then, too, he used to have some good times when his assignment took him over into what used to be Greenwich; along old,

The New Reporter

crooked, narrow, village-like streets running all sorts of directions and crossing each other where they had no right to; where the shops and people and the whole atmosphere still seemed removed and village-like. He had a lot of fun looking out for old houses with lovable doorways and fanlights and knockers, and sometimes good white Greek columns. And then, up along East Broadway, which was once so fashionable and is now so forlorn, with dirty cloakmakers in the spacious drawing-rooms and signs in Hebrew characters in the windows. He used to gaze at them as he walked by and dream about the old days of early century hospitality there; the queer clothes the women wore and the strong punch the men drank, and the stilted conversation they both liked, instead of planning how to work up his story, and then with a shock would discover that he had passed the house where he was to push in and ask a woman if it was true that her husband had run away with another man's wife; and the worst of it was that they generally talked about it.

Not that all his assignments were dis-

The New Reporter

agreeable. There was the bright, windy day he was sent down to the proving-grounds on Sandy Hook to write about the new disappearing gun-carriage (which covered him and the rest of the party with yellow-powder dust), and he lunched with the Secretary of the Navy, who was very jolly and gave him a half-column interview. There was Izi Zim, the pipe-maker, up on Third Avenue, and the Frenchman on Twenty-third Street, who taught skirt-dancing; and there was his good friend, Garri-Boulou, the old Hindoo sailor, who had landed on one of the big Calcutta ships suffering with beriberi, and was now slowly dying in the Presbyterian Hospital because he wouldn't lose caste by eating meat, and was so polite that he cried for fear he was giving the young doctors too much trouble. It took him into odd places, this news-gathering, and made him meet queer people, and it was a fascinating life for all its disagreeableness, and it was never monotonous, for it was never alike two days in succession. It was full of contrasts—almost dramatic contrasts, sometimes. One afternoon he was sent to cover a convention of

The New Reporter

spiritualists who wore their hair long; that evening, a meeting of the Association of Liquor Dealers, who had huge black mustaches, and the next day he was one of a squad of men under an old experienced reporter up across the Harlem River at work on a murder "mystery," smoking cigars with Central Office detectives and listening to the afternoon-paper men, who, in lieu of real news, made up theories for one edition which they promptly tore down in the next. That evening found him within the sombre walls of the New York Foundling Hospital, up on Lexington Avenue, asking questions of soft-voiced sisters and talking with wise young doctors about an epidemic of measles which was killing off the babies.

He liked all this. He thought it was because he was a sociologist; but it was because he was a boy. It gave him a thrill to go down into a cellar after murder-claws with a detective, just as it would any other full-blooded male. He was becoming good friends with some of these sleuths—most of whom, by the way, were not at all sleuth-like in appearance, and went about their day's

The New Reporter

work in very much the same matter-of-fact way as reporters and the rest of the town.

Indeed, if he could only shed some of his sensibilities when assignments involved talking to people about things they did not want to talk about, he thought he could be very happy in this wild, free, unconventional life, working when the rest of the town were asleep and eating wherever his work happened to bring him. But, ashamed of it as he was, his pulse beat faster every time he was called up to the desk. “*Now* what are they going to make me do?” he would ask himself. Of course, he never told anybody, but even when it was only to run down to Wall Street and try to find out from some big gun if that rumor about the Union Pacific was true, he dreaded the task. He knew he would be kept waiting in a long line of people, and he knew he would get angry if he found that he was looked down upon for being a reporter by cocky clerks of Wall Street, most of whom he considered unrefined and so pitifully ignorant—for what did *they* know of Aryan Roots or The Congestion of Labor! And when his turn came he would

The New Reporter

hate to walk into the private office and bother a busy man about something which seemed so eminently none of his or his paper's business, that he wondered why this thought never happened to occur to the city editor. The busy man would look up scowling, and growl "I've nothing to say," which hurt, and then it would be the reporter's business to try to make him say something, and, if unsuccessful, he would be scowled at again when he returned to the office, and that hurt still more.

When, however, he did succeed in running down all the facts, there was a satisfaction in hurrying back to the office with them and marching up to the desk and telling them in a few quick sentences, and hearing the editor say, "That's good—write it."

Sometimes it turned out to be a good story and they let him make several sticks of it; then the fine glow of creation that followed the quick writing seemed worth all kinds of trouble, and he ran light-hearted out to dinner at some queer, newspaper-man's joint, mingling with the eager, hurrying throng on the way, and then with the clanging of cable-

The New Reporter

cars in his ears and the shrill newsboys' cries and all the concentrated roar of the metropolis, he felt that he, too, was part of it all and that this was living, and he was a legitimate factor in the great economic machine; no longer an incumbrance but a wage-earner in the huge, struggling, pushing, shrieking thing they call the world, which is sordid and selfish but very interesting, and where he was jostled up against ever so many other workers, and would have been thrown down and trodden under foot if not able to cope with them. But he *could* cope with them and keep his head above, and was earning fifteen dollars a week, and lived in a hall-bedroom, top floor, back, with cats outside when he wanted to go to sleep at night, and a young actor in the next room who practised his lines in a would-be English accent, when Linton did not want to wake up in the morning.

And as for the uncle who had offered him a place in his office, not far from Park Row, and who complacently took it for granted that a chance for his own kind of success ought to be respectfully worshipped by Lin-

The New Reporter

ton or any other young man; and as for his aunt, who had said, "Oh, but to be a reporter is so beneath you," all that had only made him more anxious to try it; and now that their only dinner invitations were the "We'll be glad to have you come any time" sort, he was all the more determined to stick to reporting. He had no respect at all, he wished them to know, for the opinion of those who respected him less for doing the work he had chosen to do; and he enjoyed the situation. He found himself pitying their nice little New York sons, with the well-beaten, perfectly proper path of life they would have to follow after college, with its office at nine o'clock, home at six, dress for dinner, then, nice little New York girls to see in the evening. And the same set of New York people to spend the summer with, and always when they went abroad the same hotels that other nice New Yorkers go to, and thus the same thing over and over and over in exactly the same way as ever so many other nice little dapper New Yorkers—unless, indeed, they had blood enough in them to sicken of it, in which case they would prob-

The New Reporter

ably get bad for awhile, and make their mother cry at night and their father wonder at what was not at all wonderful. Then, later on, after they had been put up for certain clubs by papa's partner and seconded by Uncle John, who knew everybody, they would marry nice little New York girls who pronounce certain woids like nobody else in the woild—nice, well-dressed, little American products—approved by mamma (only, he doubted that), and, by and by, get a house as near as possible to the houses of other wealthier New Yorkers, and part of a box at the opera perhaps—with their names engraved on the silver door-plate—and be prominent in church-work, possibly, and finally die respectable, and the club flag would be put at half-mast, and some reporter would have a half-column "obit" to write. "Uhh," Linton shuddered, "how do they stand such a life." He thought he would like to be a satirist, if it weren't better to be a sociologist.

They had given him the Tombs Police Court now as a regular department.

The New Reporter

Usually they gave him a night assignment or two as well. So he spent his days in jail from nine until four, and his evenings in whatever part of Manhattan or Staten or Long Islands or of the wilds of the Jersey suburbs the editor decreed. As a rule, his night assignments did not amount to much in type. They were to give the cub reporter exercise and experience in approaching people and seeking news. Sometimes a five-line story, which most of you did not even see—and Linton himself had trouble to find—would cost five hours' work and as many dollars in railroad and carriage fares, not to speak of sensibilities and fatigue in mind and body. More often the young reporter looked through and through the paper, letting his coffee get cold, to find nothing printed at all.

The Tombs was horrible, but at first it was also interesting because it satisfied the natural morbid curiosity that goes with a number of better tastes in every human being. But very soon this was more than satisfied, it was glutted, and he found he could not digest it all, and the Tombs became hor-

The New Reporter

rible without being at all interesting—so horrible indeed that sometimes after he got into bed, if he had worked too hard or smoked too much, some of the faces and facts he had met during the day would not keep out of the way long enough for him to get to sleep, and he had to sleep because he was obliged to begin work again at nine o'clock in the morning.

He had studied sociology and he had travelled a little, and so he had supposed he knew about how bad human nature could get; but it is one thing to read in big books, by a comfortable study-table, with a pipe in your mouth, about degeneracy and crime and the per cent. of criminals, and quite another to be daily brought face to face with the scum of humanity and be obliged to mingle with it and ask questions and have it turn its eyes upon you, and let you see inside; worst of all, to realize that these are fellow human beings, and that there is very little to be done about it.

One day a big, burly policeman was showing an aged, bellowing female into the pen. She had been sentenced to ten days on the

The New Reporter

Island. Linton got red in the face and ran behind the railing. "Let up on that, officer," he exclaimed. "It isn't necessary to handle them so roughly."

The policeman grinned. "Young feller, you go and sit down. I know my business; you go tend to yours. This old lady's drunk. Let's see you handle her."

Linton could only say, "Oh, shut up," boyishly, but he stepped up to the Justice, who was idle just then, to see what could be done about it. The Justice seemed a pretty decent fellow, but he only shook his head and smiled at the young reporter. "She only cries because she's a woman," he said, re-dipping his pen. "She knows the Island's the best place for her. She'd freeze on the streets this weather."

So, after awhile he found himself becoming accustomed to it. He was powerless to prevent what he saw, so why let it get on his nerves? It was his business to watch all this, so, like a doctor, he was learning to observe suffering and disease from a purely professional point of view. Soon he was able to drum listlessly on the reporters' table with

The New Reporter

his feet cocked up, while screaming children were being led away to the Gerry Society.

Away up-town, far from the noise of Newspaper Row, far up, nearly to the end of the green park, where the streets are clean and asphalted, and so quiet that horses' feet make a pleasant patter, where there is bright blue sky and sunshine and open, clear spaciousness, with clean-capped nurse-maids wheeling baby-carriages along by the park-wall, where the sparrows twitter—away up there lived a girl that Linton liked to talk to when he was thinking of giving up human nature.

She didn't know much about human nature, but she had a gentle voice and believed in everybody, and some day she was to be a lovely woman. Linton could tell that, and it helped a good deal to know that there were people like this in New York. It helped him to keep his respect for things respectable; it helped him to believe in a good God and fairly good people, and nice, clean sunniness somewhere.

She did not know she was to be a lovely woman nor that she helped anybody. She

The New Reporter

had an idea that she was a pretty bad lot, and warned him once that he really oughtn't to believe in her, because she was very insincere. At that he laughed a little, which hurt her feelings; and then he was so sorry, and told her so.

She had known him at college and had a high opinion of his abilities. She thought him very plucky and independent to go into newspaper-work against everybody's advice, and she would have liked it if he talked more about himself, which most of the men she knew did too much.

Linton knew that most young men talked about themselves too much. But it wasn't altogether from a dread of self-ridicule that he excluded the topic of himself and his work. It was good to see what life looked like to this girl. It was so different from the way his work sometimes made it look. She went to teas and dances and did the usual girl-things; probably she shopped, too, and doubtless glanced in that quick way at other girls to see how they were dressed, and she said "perfectly lovely" sometimes, but he did not object to that in her. It all seemed

The New Reporter

so sunny and right and normal, and it was grateful and soothing to hear her tell how hard she worked all morning at her painting, which he took as seriously as she wanted him to. Only she wished he wouldn't make her forget and talk so much about herself; she thought it must bore him a good deal. It did not bore him. And after he left she sometimes wondered what he must think of her. He thought well of her.

But it was such a contrast, listening to this gentle-voiced girl, who believed in him, to mingling and talking with the sorts and conditions of humanity he met in his work, who hated him, that it somehow seemed wrong to have been in her presence and to touch her hand when he said good-by. Then the L road plunged him into the dark vortex of the metropolis once more, and soon he was out upon the busy, crowded streets again, after more of the stuff called news, for New Yorkers to devour and complain about with their breakfast. . . . Or else this was wrong.

He had been at it long enough now, he

The New Reporter

thought, to be adjusted. He told himself that news was a commodity and that there was just as much dignity in the getting, handling, selling of it as of woollens or professional opinion or any other article of merchandise.

At least it was so on a paper like *The Day*, which was neither prurient nor prudish, but clean and clever, with a staff of reporters made up of alert, self-respecting young Americans, for the most part of good education and some breeding, who did not find it necessary to lie or get themselves or others drunk in order to obtain news, which they wrote in very good English.

To be sure there were unpleasant features in worming out news, but so also were there in running about in Wall Street for a bank and being patronized by arrogant cashiers, or getting up at four o'clock in the morning and riding on the back of an ambulance, or serving papers for a small firm of toadying young lawyers, as he knew from his classmates. And there was variety in his disagreeableness and some artistic satisfaction.

In business relations, he argued, one

The New Reporter

should not expect the same courtesy to prevail as in social intercourse. Business was a struggle, it involved straining and matching one's talents against someone else's; and that was where the fun came in. A foot-ball player did not lose respect, or self-respect, by not stopping to beg pardon every time he bumped into an opponent; he was playing foot-ball. Indeed they were quite like great games, these various pursuits in active life, and he was in one of them, perhaps the most active of the lot. He was sorry for all who were in none. He had had his taste of lazily watching and criticising from the grand stand; and he did not want any more of that. He wanted to work and sweat and be alive. . . .

The city editor said: "Linton, did you see this divorce story in the afternoon papers? Go look up that lawyer, and get all you can out of him."

The clipping was a despatch from Georgia, stating, in a paragraph, that a certain young woman there had filed suit for divorce. Her husband was a well-known New Yorker, and so it was news for New York

The New Reporter

papers, and worth more than the few facts given in the Georgia end of it.

It wasn't very pleasant, this kind of an assignment; he would prefer another, but he did not allow himself to expend emotion over it, as formerly. He told himself that he could do anything now.

It was the press's function, he argued, to hold up the punishment of publicity before those who were regardless of the marriage tie. The family is the unit of the state—he had not forgotten his sociology—and without the family the whole social fabric would go to smash. He should do his part toward holding together the social fabric.

A young law-student clerk looked up when Linton asked for Mr. Tarry, and demanded, "What name shall I say?"

"Tell Mr. Tarry," said Linton, "that a reporter is here from *The Day*, and ask if he cares to see me."

The young law-student said: "What do you want to see him about?"

"My business is with your employer," said Linton, who was learning to deal with all sorts of people.

The New Reporter

The lawyer sent out word to come in, and then, without looking up, kept the reporter standing before him for a minute, which was intended to be impressive, until, still scratching with his pen, he emitted a disagreeable "Well, sir?"

The reporter bowed low in mock deference. "*The Day*," he said, "wants to know if you have anything to add to that."

The lawyer read it through and then scowled at the reporter, who looked blandly back at him.

He was one of those self-important little lawyers with a feeble constitution and a high voice. The reporter did not quail before his glance, as did his office-clerks.

"Now," he said, in a crackly voice, "you took it for granted that you could come in here and make me talk about this strictly private—this very delicate affair, didn't you? You want to write a sensational article with big head-lines, don't you?"

Linton, who was bigger and healthier, looked down at the little man and smiled urbanely. "No," he said, thoughtfully. "No, you're mistaken. I didn't take any-

The New Reporter

thing for granted. If you didn't want to see me, all you had to do was to say so. It would not have made the slightest difference to me, I assure you. I am not in the least interested in this thing; in fact, it is rather offensive to me. But, you see, *The Day* wants to know, for this happens to be news, and news which some people would profit by reading." The lawyer looked at him; the reporter looked back; then went on, wondering why the little lawyer did not terminate the interview. "So I sent in word that there was a reporter here and asked if you cared to talk to me; not that I wanted to talk to you, because I don't. Now, if you want to put *The Day* straight about this thing, I shall be glad to hear what you have to say, and your client will be represented fairly. But please to bear in mind that you aren't doing me a favor in talking to me, and that I don't care *very* much either way."

Then the little lawyer surprised Linton. He jumped down from his dignity and talked. He talked amiably enough; he said nothing he ought not to have said, but Linton got five sticks out of it (a half column)

The New Reporter

and told himself he was upholding the social fabric.

After he had written and filed his story, he told Billy Woods, *The Day's* star man, about it. Woods despised cub reporters theoretically, but he was always kind to those who came to him for advice.

"There's a great deal in throwing out a good bluff, isn't there?" said Linton.

"Yes," said Woods, "only that was not the reason you bagged that fellow."

"How do you mean?"

"The reason he didn't turn you down was that he wanted the advertising that would come from having his name in the paper as the lawyer to a prominent family," said Billy Woods, who knew his job.

The younger man laughed, and said "That's so."

It is not very pleasant to be interviewing people about divorces, especially when you know perfectly well that the newspaper's motive is not so much to uphold the unit of government as to supply reading-matter that will sell. "Oh, well, all this is good experience," he said to himself. You see he was a sociologist, and he was in this thing to get

The New Reporter

experience of men and motives, and he was getting it.

He was getting more than he had bargained for. Sometimes it was hard to realize that it was himself going about doing these things, son of so-and-so and grandson of so-and-so. Whether it was snobbish or not, it did seem very odd that he was the one, and sometimes he had a longing to break away from it all and never look at a newspaper again. "But it is not I doing all this," he told himself; "it's a newspaper reporter. I'm playing the part of a newspaper reporter for the experience. It's a very instructive experience."

He had an earnest sociological friend, who, to learn some truth at first-hand, had worked his way across the country as a day-laborer, doing everything that came in his way, from cleaning cuspidors to binding wheat. For a similar motive, Linton told himself, he too was digging out and gathering together more or less interesting truths about men and their wives, from lawyers and others who wanted advertising.

All the same he kept away from the neigh-

The New Reporter

borhood of the park the next day, which was his day off, and for several more days. He told himself that it was because it was so hard to come down again. But when he did go once more he began to talk about himself and his work.

She seemed pleased at the opportunity to return a little sympathy.

“Yes,” she said, missing the point entirely, “it must be awfully hard work.”

“It isn’t the hours and all that, I’m talking about,” said Linton; “but don’t you think it’s sort of hard on one’s self-respect, some of the things reporters have to do?”

Then he laughed, though there wasn’t anything to laugh at, and wanted to change the subject.

“You don’t care what people think of you—so long as you believe in yourself. That’s what’s so fine about it,” she said. “Is that what you mean?”

It wasn’t what he meant, exactly.

“Thank you,” he said. “Look at those people on the four-in-hand. Why do they toot their horn here in the city? We’d all look at them anyway.”

The New Reporter

But the girl, who had a nice look in her eyes, was sorry for him and would have liked him to know that *she* would always believe in him, no matter what happened, if that would help any.

He did know she believed in him; not because he was he, but because she was she. He wasn't sure that she ought to. That was what he meant to tell her. Besides it did *not* help him—in his work.

But he had the disquieting sense of being ridiculous, and the only thing to do at such times was to change the subject.

“I shall be talking earnestly about My Soul next, if I don't look out,” he laughed to himself on the way down-town, “and Conscientious-ness and Self-abnega-tion, like a blamed self-conscious New Englander, and say ‘After all, how lonely is each one's soul!’ and things like that.”

Then he ran up the stairs to the office. “Oh, well, I got the half-column out of the little lawyer, anyway,” he said to himself.

Linton had been with the paper for a year now, and he had seen all sorts of things,

The New Reporter

and had rubbed up against all sorts of interests, and talked to all sorts of human beings. He had worked at all hours of the day and night, in all kinds of weather, in all parts of the city and adjacent country. He had worked on Christmas and the Fourth of July, like policemen. It was, perhaps, the hardest work known to civilized man, and he had not once broken down in health; which is very good for a new reporter. On *The Day* they used to reckon on cubs breaking down at some stage of the first year or so; then, if they don't die, they are supposed to have their second wind after that, and to keep in fairly good health if they leave whiskey alone.

Linton felt himself to be a part of the office. He had a writing-table of his own, with as many cockroaches in the drawers as any of the tables, and a letter-box down by the door, which he turned and looked at automatically when he entered the room.

He took off his coat on the way down the aisle to his table, just like the rest of the staff, and he could tell at a glance that Rice had written the political interview in

The New Reporter

the first column, and Billy Woods the humorous Women's Convention story, and that Stone had built the spread-head on it.

Also, some of the younger crowd could tell which was Linton's stuff, and what kind of a story he was best at. Other cub reporters had been taken on since Linton, a great many others, and most of them had been dropped after the first month, as was usual in *The Day* office, which required only the best men. But most of those who remained were rapidly surpassing Linton in usefulness. Linton was not a very good reporter. He was learning to write, and he knew something about handling news, but sometimes he was not so good at getting it as he ought to have been by this time. This was put down to laziness.

It was late in the afternoon. White, the city editor, would soon be going home, and Stone, the night city editor, would take the desk. Down the room sat Linton with his feet cocked up on his table.

"Mr. Linton," called the city editor.

The reporter took down his feet, picked up some copy-paper, and walked to the desk,

The New Reporter

where the city editor held out a clipping from an afternoon paper. "This isn't for this evening," he said, smiling suavely. "The story is coming up in court to-morrow morning. Will you get up early and cover it?" Early meant 10 A.M.

"But to-morrow is my day off," said Linton.

"Well, do just as you like. There's a good story in it, if you care to do a little extra work. I think you could write this story—about a prominent society woman who's having some trouble with her bootmaker. Claims he didn't send round the shoes she ordered, so she won't take them. He sent her the bill several times, but she's got her back up now and won't pay. It's the same old thing, you know, but there may be some new and picturesque points in it."

The reporter was listening more attentively now. The city editor went on talking. White liked to talk as much as Stone did not. "The shoemaker says he isn't going to let anybody run over him, and all that sort of thing. She says the shoes are ready-made."

"That's good," said Linton, smiling. He

The New Reporter

had begun to feel the story. He saw the determined little shoemaker coming into court looking vindictive. Probably he would bring the shoes with him. Perhaps both sides would bring shoes, old and new, to put in evidence. He could have fun with the shoes. Then the clamoring lawyers; they would make a lot of noise, and be unconscious of the humor of their earnestness over shoes. The society person would try to keep her dignity and look haughty. Then she would get excited and lose it, if she had to testify. These society people, so called, were always amusing, and *The Day* was a paper that did not take them quite as seriously as they did themselves; and Linton decided, as the city editor went on, that this was a chance he had often wanted. He knew he could do it well and yet not hurt the paper.

The city editor noted the look on Linton's face, and, being a city editor, approved of it. "There's good humorous stuff in it," he said, handing Linton the clipping, "dialogue and all that, just your line. Do you care to cover it?"

The New Reporter

Linton had taken the clipping, and the first words he saw made him feel as if he had been caught doing something he was ashamed of. "Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's shoes," was the head. Everyone knew who Mrs. H. Harrison Wells was, but she happened to be one of the few people in all New York Linton knew personally. That was bad enough in itself, but that was not the worst. She was a first cousin to the girl uptown who stood for everything that newspaper work was not. For a moment he recoiled. He did not like to think of coming, in his newspaper capacity, in contact with anybody or anything even remotely connected with her. So he was asking himself if he could deliberately go to work and make a relative of hers the subject of "an article in the newspaper" for people to talk and gossip about?

"What's the matter," asked White; "don't you want it?"

Linton hesitated.

"Oh, here," interposed the city editor, impatiently; "if you've made some other plan for your day off, say so, and I'll give it to someone else."

The New Reporter

“I did make another plan,” said Linton, “but I think I’ll do this instead.” Then, blushing a little at the thought of the other plan, the new reporter added, “This is too good a story to miss,” quite like an old reporter, and hurried out of the room.

Perhaps he would not have appreciated this assignment six months ago. But, you see, he was no longer a new reporter. . . . It is called the News Instinct.

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's
Shoes

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes

LINTON had written a very pretty accidental drowning story (a father and two young children), a half-column about a suicide-for-love, and part of the big story on the first page about the absconding-bank-cashier-Sunday-school-superintendent. So having done his full day's share of uplifting and moulding the public mind, he should have been well pleased with himself the next morning when the paper came out, but he was not.

He was up early this morning, on his way to the Seventh Judicial District Court, at Third Avenue and Fifty-seventh Street, and he was very glum and discontented. It was bad enough to get out of bed at nine o'clock—for a morning-paper man. But he wasn't thinking about that; it was what he had to do when he arrived there: watch a woman—whom he considered a very nice woman—

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes

in a lawsuit with a shoemaker; have a talk with each of them, get both sides of the matter, and write a good story, with facetious, satirical touches in it, for New York to smile over the next morning at breakfast. He knew the woman. She knew him. She would see him there. She would know that he was watching her. She would know that he had written what *The Day* published about her and her shoes. He felt like resigning.

It had sounded like such a good story the afternoon before when the smiling city editor was talking that he had jumped at it. But the moment he left the hot, exciting atmosphere of the City Room, it all seemed a very different business. This morning he had cooled down still more; and he could not understand how he had agreed to take such an assignment.

He had been at this work long enough now not to mind going up into tenements and talking to people there about their souls or their family quarrels, or their daughters who had killed themselves, or the reason for it. But when it came to making unpleasant publicity for refined people, it seemed a dif-

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes

ferent thing. And yet, as he now reminded himself, it ought not to be considered a different thing. So he told himself it must be that he was afraid of being seen and known as a reporter by "refined people," and this made him hurry up the Elevated steps, two at a time, to show that it was a mistake.

But whether it was foolish or not, he did not like the idea of being seen on this assignment, and he made up his mind on the train to keep out of her way; he could cover the story well enough without having a talk with her.

But you see there was no dodging the great fact that this woman was a first cousin to the girl uptown, who seemed to him to be what a girl ought to be, and who believed in him. That was what had kept him awake during the night.

Whether the girl ever knew it or not, yet he would always know that he had deliberately . . . It would not be a pleasant thing to remember about himself.

All the old repugnance and loathing for this thing of reporting came upon him worse than ever, and he pictured himself, as he often had before, going back to the of-

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes

fice and telling the city editor what he unreservedly thought about the whole dirty business.

“ I'll go back and say, ‘ See here, White ’ (I won't call him ‘ mister ’). ‘ What do you take me for, White? What do you take me for? Do you think I am going to do this sort of thing? Well, you're mistaken. I'll tell you, once for all, I'll be damned if I do.’ ” And he became quite hot and excited telling himself how little he would care at being discharged, and how much better offers he had had to do better things, etc., until the “ L ” guard called out his station.

Then he got out and wiped his brow, and reminded himself that he had no intention of making any such fool of himself as that. He had often felt like resigning before, and had always been glad he hadn't.

“ All I shall have to do,” he remarked to himself, “ is to fall down on this assignment and one or two more as badly as I did last week, and I shall be allowed to resign fast enough without any grand-stand remarks.”

Meanwhile, he would have to get the facts of this story because he couldn't very well

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes

resign over the telephone, and, besides, there wasn't time to send up another man, and it wouldn't be square to let the paper get beaten on the story.

"But there are two chances," he said; "either the case has been settled out of court to avoid publicity—I should think it would be—or it will be adjourned; cases generally are. Very likely Mrs. Wells won't be there, anyhow."

He entered the court-room and found he was mistaken in all these suppositions, and there sat Mrs. H. Harrison Wells in the front row, with a lot of beautiful tailor-made clothes on, looking handsome and out of place in the stuffy little court-room, which was filled with bad air and hard faces.

"Well," thought Linton, backing out again, "I'll have to keep out of her sight somehow," and just then somebody slapped him on the back.

It was a young man named Harry Lawrence. He was an old class-mate, so he greeted Linton cordially, wanted to know what in thunder he was doing up there, and seemed excited about something.

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes

Linton said he was a reporter for *The Day*.

"That's so; I forgot," said the young lawyer. "Are you going to write an article up here—What about?"

"They want me to find out about Mrs. Wells's shoes or something."

"You don't say so! Why, I'm her counsel," Lawrence said, sententiously. "I'll be glad to give you all the help I can, Jim. I'll introduce you to her, if you like."

"Oh, no, you won't, though," thought Linton. "Is she going to stay during the trial?" he asked.

"Yes, of course. It's a civil suit, you know. She'll have to testify." The young lawyer hadn't tried very many cases before, and he was feeling important. "Excuse me a minute," he said. "You wait here, Jim."

But Linton did not. He went out of the door before Lawrence reached his client's side, and he meant to stay out until he heard the clerk call out: "Hawkins against Wells." And then he was merely going to get the bare facts and go down to the office and resign. He was sick of this business.

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes

A few minutes later the door opened and Mrs. Wells came out of the court-room, unaccompanied, and started for the stairs, her skirts swishing sympathetically.

"She's probably stifled by that air," thought Linton, "and Harry's busy with briefs and things. But she oughtn't to walk about here alone; I suppose I should——" He had started to take off his hat, but stopped his hand midway and scratched his chin instead, for Mrs. Wells had looked into his face and out the other side, and then hurried on down the stairs, without knowing he was there.

"It wasn't necessary to do that," he said to himself. "Harry probably asked if she wanted to talk to me, and she probably decided that she did not. She had a right to, I suppose, but it wasn't at all necessary to do that." He felt hot all over.

He watched her stepping carefully down the dirty stairs, and said to her back, "You needn't think I want to talk to you." He had never experienced anything quite like this before and he tried to laugh, but it didn't seem very funny; so he stopped laughing

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes

and became angry instead, and cursed Harry Lawrence for a snob.

To be sure he had only seen Mrs. Wells twice since the Commencement Week when he had seen a good deal of her, and that was some time ago, and he was dressed in a flannel coat and duck trousers then. Besides, she was to be a defendant in a lawsuit in a few minutes, and that might have preoccupied her, but he did not stop to think of that. He was thinking of her cousin.

He was still standing by the window in the hall, hot with indignation at her and angry and sneering at himself for minding it, when Lawrence suddenly appeared and took him by the arm. "Come on, old man, you can talk to Mrs. Wells. Mr. Wells is here, too, now, and——"

"No, no," said Linton, backing off and bristling all over.

"Come on, man, what's the matter with you? Thought you'd quit being a woman-hater." Then he whispered, "Turn around; here they come."

Linton turned around and there they came. Mrs. H. Harrison Wells was smil-

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes

ing at him. It was her regular smile, the one she used every evening. Whether she had cut him before or not she meant to allow him to speak to her now. She held out her hand, condescendingly, it seemed to Linton, who was hating her, hating Lawrence, and hating himself.

The husband did not shake hands; he merely said, "How do," and looked like a prosperous, well-nurtured New Yorker. Linton hated him, too, and took out his handkerchief to wipe his brow, which was wet; and Mrs. Wells said, "I did not know that you had taken up journalism. What paper do you write for? It must be very exciting. Do you like it?"

She was an interesting-looking young New York chaperone, but Linton saw that she had the hard, sharp look about the eyes that is bound to come, he guessed, when a woman thinks a good deal about being "a leader;"—and she was automatically putting the young man at his ease.

Linton did not like people to put him at his ease, but he answered that he enjoyed some things about his work, and that *he*

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes

called it reporting, and laughed foolishly and perspired some more because she thought he was embarrassed at talking to her.

But she was smiling quite kindly and not paying attention to what he said. He had a notion to make her, and at the same time show that he was not rattled, by telling her that he had already taken mental note of her dark green street-dress and the Paris hat with the dash of red in it which was becoming, and even of the small calf-skin shoes, a pair which surely were made expressly for her; but Lawrence had begun to talk.

“You see,” he said, officiously, “Mrs. Wells is tired of having these shop-keepers bunco her all the time, and she thought she'd make an example of this shoemaker.”

Mrs. Wells laughed and looked more womanly when she laughed than when she smiled. Linton wanted to say, “I don't care to hear about your old shoes.”

Then her husband spoke up, looking at Linton in a way he did not fancy, “You may say she thought she owed it to our friends to expose these people's methods—yes, you say that; say it wasn't the money, but she

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes

considers it her duty, as a matter of principle, you understand?"

Linton smiled amiably but was thinking, "Uhh, how smug you are."

The husband went on: "Now, my wife's very fond of shoes, and gets a great many of them. It's one of her hobbies."

"Well, I do know a ready-made boot when I see one," said Mrs. Wells, looking at her husband.

"Of course you do," said the husband, looking at her.

"You bet she does," said the young lawyer to Linton.

"That would make a good opening sentence," said the reporter to himself.

"At any rate," interrupted Mrs. Wells, shutting her eyes and opening them again, "those were *not* the boots I ordered, and as they had done this same thing before, and as I did not want to have so much space taken up with things I can't wear, why I returned them and, then, they sent them back to me once more, and enclosed the bill, too, the aggravating things; so I returned them again, and again they sent them back to me, and—

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes

oh, we had a fine time sending them back and forth." She laughed and looked at her husband.

It occurred to Linton that if he had not made up his mind not to cover this story there was a good paragraph or two showing the bootmaker's boy whistling and carrying the innocent shoes to Mrs. Wells, and the Wells's servant marching stiffly back with them again—altogether the unworn shoes would travel several miles. "Why, here comes that confounded footman again!" the bootmaker would say, and "Oh, here's the boy with those boots again!" the Wells's servants would exclaim. That is the way it could be put in the story which he was not to write.

"Now dear," interrupted the husband, "Harry says we must go in and sign this thing." Then, in a different tone of voice, to the reporter, "Anything else you want?"

Linton said, "I thank you, no," and hoped it sounded dignified and icy. The three hurried off, leaving him putting away his handkerchief.

Some of the other reporters who had been

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes

hovering round at a distance now hurried over to Linton and asked, "What did you get out of them, old man?"

"Nothing much," said Linton, as reporters nearly always do, and then he began to tell them as much as he thought Mrs. Wells would not object to their knowing. Mrs. Wells seemed to be watching him from across the room.

Just then the clerk called "Hawkins *vs.* Wells," and the other reporters hurried up to the press-table in front of the judge.

Linton hesitated a moment, looked across the room at the woman who had a cousin, then at the other reporters hurriedly sharpening their pencils. He kept on looking at the reporters. They would write the story. He took some copy paper out of his pocket—from force of habit. Those fellows did not know how to cover this story. He tore off a bit of copy paper and began to chew it. Then he said, "Oh, well, he thinks I'm writing it anyway," and walked up to the table.

The case did not last very long. Each side had brought shoes to court and held

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes

them up for the judge to examine. The defence first tried to show that the shoes in question were ready-made shoes, but the shoemaker had an employee to testify to having made them himself by hand.

“But, Your Honor,” young Lawrence exclaimed, getting worked up, “we do not care whether these shoes are made to order or not. Granted that they are. That is not the point at issue. Our contention is that they were not made for our client. The witness does not swear that they were. He cannot. He dares not. But, Your Honor, we will show conclusively that they are not the shoes we ordered. Now we have shown you by exhibit ‘B’ that Mrs. Wells always orders eight buttons, why should she on this occasion order seven buttons?” etc., all of which would make a good story, as Linton well knew, and the humorous values were arranging themselves in his head in spite of himself.

But the best part, of course, was when Mrs. H. Harrison Wells was called to the stand to testify and had to try on several pairs of shoes. This was one of the chief

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes

points in the story, and the head-line in an afternoon yellow paper later in the day was,

MRS. WELLS'S FEET.

SOCIETY WOMAN TAKES OFF HER SHOES IN COURT.

Linton thought he was fastidious about such things, but he could not help admiring her for the way she carried it off. She knew that some of the papers (not his paper, thank Heavens!) had "artists" there making rapid sketches, but she kept her self-possession all through the ordeal. She blushed and smiled, but she did not smile too much. He thought she was just about right. "This has to be done," she seemed to say, "so I may as well do it with dignity and grace," and she did.

Also, she won the case, and young Lawrence and "Mr. and Mrs. H. Harrison Wells," with swishing skirts, hurried out of the room excited and delighted together, and the next case was called.

Linton waited until he heard their carriage-door slam and then he hurried to the

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes

office, sat down and dashed off the best story he had ever written.

He had the glow of creation, and he felt reckless and brilliant. He had a good humorous story in his head—it had formed itself there automatically—and he did not let himself stop to think whether he was giving anybody unpleasant publicity or not.

Besides, he had undertaken the job, so it was his duty to his paper to carry it through to the best of his ability, no matter who was the woman's cousin, was it not?

The story began, "Mrs. H. Harrison Wells knows a ready-made shoe when she sees it. Hereafter a certain fashionable boot-maker will remember this. He has reason to." Then he referred to her dainty demonstration, and ended his opening paragraph, as was then the vogue in *The Day* office, with a little short sentence. Like this.

Then he made a terse exposition of the facts of the trouble, and told about Mrs. Wells's interesting shoe hobby, and described, in detail, the shoes the defence brought to court, and the shoes the serious-faced shoemaker brought also. He told

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes

where, as shown by the old shoes, the defendant was accustomed to wear them out first, and on which side she ran the heels down, which had nothing to do with the case, but would make interesting reading. He told how fine and soft the material was, and ended that paragraph with, "However, most New York women would not want these shoes. They could not use them;" which was true.

"What rot!" thought Linton as he wrote it, but it was the sort of thing *The Day* liked, just as *The Earth's* story was not; the latter said, "Of course a member of the 400 could not wear ready-made shoes. Mercy, no!" And things of that silly sort.

Then Linton showed, with interpolated dialogue, written in short paragraphs which are apt to look readable glancing down the column, how the earnest little shoemaker became easily tangled up in cross-examination by the young lawyer, whom Linton could not help patronizing a little by the way, then concluded with the carriage-door slamming and the horses clattering off, while the shoemaker went back to his shop, and

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes

“under his arm were the soft little shoes that caused all the trouble.”

Then he filed his copy, put on his hat, and went out and took a drink all by himself.

The next morning when Linton came down to the office he found he had written the story of the day. He was congratulated by all the men who knew him, and by some who did not, and, best of all, he overheard Billy Woods say, in a loud voice, “Who wrote that shoe story? It’s good.” “Linton,” replied another older man, who the young reporter had supposed did not know his name.

Just then the city editor called him up to the desk and after complimenting him on the way he had handled the story, told him that at the end of the week his salary would be increased. Linton thanked him, but said he was not sure that he was going to stay with the paper; he would let him know in a few days. The reporter did not feel so pleased over his story as he thought he ought to.

But later in the day he heard down-stairs

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes

—to his complete amazement—that Mrs. H. Harrison Wells had ordered twenty extra copies of the paper from the counting-rooms. No one could tell, of course, how many others she had bought at the news-stands. She could not have been very indignant.

The reporter told himself he ought to be glad; he did not quite see why he felt so disgusted. Ought he not to be pleased? For she had not cut him purposely, as he afterwards learned, and wanted to be interviewed all along, and she thought his writing very clever. Doubtless, her friends were pleased, too, for they smiled and said: "What won't the woman do next to show off those feet?"

Linton heard this from Lawrence at a class smoker the following evening. The young lawyer thanked him sincerely for the kind mention of him as Mrs. Wells's counsel, and asked if Linton did not think it ought to help bring in some more business from her set. Linton said he thought so.

Even the shoemaker, Linton discovered, was rather pleased at seeing his name in the paper, although it did show him in a bad

Mrs. H. Harrison Wells's Shoes

light. "That will tell people what class of customers I have, anyway," he said to himself. "It's a good ad."

"I see," thought young Linton, "that I am more of a kid than I supposed. So far as I have cared to inquire, everyone seems to be pleased, from the city editor to Mrs. Wells. Now, I am the cause of it. So I think I may as well be pleased, too." Then he added, after a pause, "I believe I can stop thinking about unnecessary things now—and become a good reporter." And that was what he decided to do.

The Great Secretary-of-State
Interview

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

THIS was the first important assignment they had given him since he had become a newspaper man.

The Star was the name of the paper, a bright afternoon paper that printed very few pictures and a great deal of news. The name of the reporter was Rufus Carrington, and most of the time they seemed to forget his existence and made him sit idle in the middle of the busy room, getting in people's way, just as they do with all cubs, letting them soak in the atmosphere of the place. This seemed all wrong to Rufus, who thought that a newspaper man, of all men in the busy city, ought to be the busiest.

He had supposed that reporters went out upon the street and prowled about blindly on the lookout for news, like policemen after arrests, and he had wondered what part of the

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

town he would have to patrol, and whether to wear his reporter's badge on the breast of the waistcoat or at the bottom, like his Harlem literary-club pin. But he soon found that each reporter was sent for a particular piece of news, the existence of which was determined in some mysterious way by the city editor, who had his fingers on the pulse of the strenuous metropolis and scowled most of the time.

His few assignments were, for the most part, to get up minor obituaries—"obits" they were called—or to run down stories which the news-bureaus sent in (on type-written tissue-paper, called "flimsy") to see if they were correct; and no one said anything about badges, which he had discovered were seldom worn, except at fires. Of late they had taken to sending him to the Weather Bureau occasionally to find out what kind of a day it was going to be, or to a police court to look out for picturesque cases, which a cub doesn't always recognize when he sees them; and of those he does cover he may forget to find out the age, address, initials, or occupation of someone in the story, or the name

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

or precinct of the policeman, or the place or time of the occurrence, or the time or place of the arrest; if so, "Run, get back and get your facts!" growled the city editor. And the chances were good that not a line of it would be printed in the paper after all.

Reporting was a very different job from "Journalism," as he had pictured it from a romantic distance. He did not breathe a word concerning his high ideals about the Power of the Press—except possibly on Sundays, to his mother up in Harlem—and his worthy ambition to cleanse it he had postponed indefinitely. His present ambition, though he did not confide *this* to anybody, was to keep from being sworn at by the city editor, who sometimes made him feel that he had missed his calling. It is at this stage that most of them (who go into newspaper work, calling it Journalism) quit and try something else, and shudder ever afterward at the mention of reporting.

Rufus did not quit, because, if you care to know it, he intended to become a great writer some day, and he believed that this was the way to go about it. He thought a little dis-

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

agreeableness for a couple of years would not hurt him; and it would be very pleasant afterward to read that "From the year so-and-so till the year so-and-so the author engaged in newspaper work; then, with the appearance of his first book, Rufus Carrington"—that would make a fine sonorous mouthful, "Rufus Carrington, author"— . . .

This was a responsible assignment, and he meant to do well with it. It was right that he should, because they were thinking of dropping him at the end of the week, along with a couple of other cubs who were not catching on rapidly enough. The only reason they had sent him up to get the interview was that a good part of the staff, which was small, was up across the Harlem this afternoon on the big railroad catastrophe, and the rest of the good reporters were down the bay on a grounded-steamer story, and the regular political men were off on more important interviews.

At least they thought they were going to be more important. The interview with the Secretary of State turned out to be the story

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

of the day, the biggest story of many days, in some respects; but this would not have been the case if young Carrington had not been sent to cover it.

“He probably won’t say much,” Van Cise, the city editor, had said, “but watch him if he gets to talking about the Convention. You understand? That’s the story to-day, of course.”

“Of course,” said Carrington, the cub, putting on his hat excitedly. He did not understand at all. He was not interested in conventions and seldom read the political columns. All he understood was that they were sending him to interview the Secretary of State of these United States, and it felt good. So he hurried down the stairs with his brows knit like the older reporters starting out on their big stories.

He felt considerably awed when he arrived at the Fifth Avenue Hotel and was led into the small parlor where the other reporters were waiting, because here he found himself face to face with some of the best-known newspaper men on Park Row, and a number of prominent correspondents for out-of-town

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

papers. A couple of them smiled as though they thought he was pretty young to cover the story. Rufus took a seat all alone in the corner by the door and tried not to appear conscious, and when they stopped looking at him he looked at them. Donaldson had once been a foreign correspondent. The man beside him sometimes wrote editorials. They were all older than he was. Some of them had beards, some wives, and some political aspirations. At that point the Secretary of State entered.

He was smiling his public-occasion smile, looking scholarly in a frock-coat which fitted better than most public men's frock-coats, and he was followed by his stenographer, who seemed tired and had an offensive blond beard, and was to take down every word said from the moment the Secretary of State took his seat until he left the room.

The important one said, "How do you do, gentlemen?" very cordially, and began shaking hands with them all; with Carrington, too, who did not know whether or not to say he was glad to meet him.

The Secretary of State told his stenog-

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

rapher to call a waiter, and the waiter to take the gentlemen's orders. Rufus thought it odd for the Secretary of State of these United States to set up the drinks, but the older men did not seem to mind it. They gave their orders and forgot to say thank you. Then the interview began.

Rufus did not know the interview was beginning; because reading an interview and making one are so different. He thought they were just talking and would begin to formally interview, in long, grave questions with participles in them, as soon as they had finished their drinks, carefully writing down what was said in note-books (which most reporters do not carry), by shorthand (which few reporters understand). One of the men, the ancient-looking reporter from *The Post*, merely inquired in a casual and personal tone, as though to fill up a pause, although he expected to print the answer and the Secretary knew it, "What brings you to New York to-day, sir?"

"Oh, merely personal business; just a flying trip. I expect to go back to-night."

Then someone edged up toward what

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

they all wanted to know, by asking if the Secretary thought the Convention now assembled in the Western State would nominate Holliday for Governor. They had an idea, and it was correct, that this Convention and his sudden trip to New York had something to do with each other. That was why they had besieged the hotel until he capitulated and sent out word that he would be pleased to meet the reporters all together at this hour. Only, the Secretary called them "Representatives of the Press."

The scholarly looking Secretary smiled pleasantly and said he would not venture an opinion as to that, and then (though nobody just knew how the transition was made) he began talking copiously about party affairs in New York, and the possibility of reconciling the two factions—something that would make very interesting copy if said next fall, but hardly worth a paragraph to-day.

But Rufus made two observations. First, that when the question about Holliday was asked, one of the reporters, who was about to finish his drink, held his glass poised until the answer came. And he noticed that the

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

scholarly looking Secretary seemed to be less the scholar now and more the shrewd-eyed but smiling politician. Somehow Rufus was rather sorry about that.

But he could not keep up with the rapid current of the talk at all. He did not know which was the current and which were the eddies. All the others seemed to know, and some of them began to jot down occasional notes on copy-paper or on the margins of their newspapers while he looked at them and wondered what they wrote, and wished he knew something about politics. The others knew a great deal about politics. Most of them could tell all the initials and ambitions of all the minor politicians in the State, and of all the big politicians in every State. They understood the national significance of this State Convention.

The Secretary understood a good deal about reporters. He knew that among those to whom he was giving audience there were two or three of the best interviewers in the country, and they knew he knew this. So the merry game of lead-up and dodge-away had been carried on for nearly twenty min-

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

utes, and the Secretary of State seemed to have the merriest time of them all. He was smiling serenely. Baffling interviewers was one of his recreations.

Donaldson was sharpening his lead-pencil. "What is the cause," he said, boldly, "of the administration's antagonism toward Holliday?" He went on whittling his pencil.

General Holliday had chin-whiskers and was the best type of Western statesman. Wolf, the machine man, was no type of statesman; he was a politician. Everyone knew, including the Secretary of State, that Holliday was a better man than Wolf. What decent reason could the administration give for being opposed to the better man? And if the Secretary of State said there was no opposition, he knew, none better, what might be the result. But he had reasons for not wanting to express a preference for either wing of the party. Whatever was said would, in half an hour, be flashed into every big newspaper-office in the country and, what was of more consequence, into the Convention Hall of the Western city. If he refused to answer, that, too, would be news,

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

and news that he did not care to have disseminated. It required some thinking to reply, but the reply came without any of the delay that has been made here: "I am not aware that any antagonism has been manifested toward General Holliday on the part of the administration."

It came out very easily apparently, and it was an answer that could be published without embarrassment to the administration. There had been no manifestation of antagonism; that was true.

A momentary lull followed. The reporters were not stopping to admire the Secretary's skilful answer, but they were so anxious to follow it up before he changed the subject that everyone waited for everyone else to do it.

Young Carrington had carefully put down the question and answer, although he did not appreciate the significance of either. He was sitting next to the Secretary of State, and he was the only one who had not said a word. He wanted to show that he was not so green as they thought he was. His heart began to thump, but he stopped chewing his

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

pencil and said to the big man, in a brave voice, "What I should like to know sir, is, will Holliday have the support of the administration if he is nominated? Will he?"

That was what they all wanted to know. But it came out so naïvely, as if the idea had just occurred to him (and so it had), that some of them burst out laughing. The secretary laughed a little, too, and, turning kindly toward the boy, who had dropped his eyes, said, with a queer, ironical smile, in an amused tone, "He would have the heartiest support the administration *could* give." Then turned and smiled around at the rest of the room as much as to say, "You know what I mean by that;" and the others thought they did know what he meant by that and smiled at his ironical evasion, and smiled, too, at the ignorance of the cub. But they were too hot upon the scent of news to delay the interview long and were soon busy asking other questions.

Meanwhile, the cub reporter, wondering why they laughed, sucked in his lower lip and wrote: "He would have the heartiest support the administration could give," but

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

without the queer smile which he had not seen and without the subtle emphasis which he had not appreciated.

“How did you make out?” snapped Van Cise, as Carrington came into the room.

It was getting on toward time to go to press with the last edition, and the city editor was in a hurry to get things cleared up.

Refus returned, jocularly, “Oh, he’s the same old fox.” He had heard one of the other reporters say that on the way out of the hotel. “Just as we were beginning to get at what we wanted, he jumped up, said he had an engagement and left the room with his stenographer.”

The city editor walked on down to the telephone, saying, “Two sticks will do.” But on the way back he asked, “Didn’t he say *anything* about Holliday and the Convention?”

“Hardly anything. Said Holliday would have the backing of the administration, but——”

The city editor stopped short. “That Holliday would have *what*? Say that again.” He looked sharply at the boy.

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

“Why, he merely said that if Holliday was nominated the administration would back him.”

“Are you sure about that? Why didn't you say so. Are you sure he said the administration would support Holliday?”

“If nominated,” returned Carrington.

“That's *news*,” said Van Cise, getting excited internally. “Write all you've got.” He glanced at the clock and then began talking very rapidly. “Write as fast as you can. Start over again. Begin your story ‘The administration has come out at the eleventh hour in favor of Holliday. The Secretary of State in an interview this afternoon said, that if Holliday were nominated he would have the heartiest support the administration could give’—quote his exact words. Add that this statement is a great surprise to everybody. Point out the probable effect on the Convention when this news gets there. Then go back and tell of the time of his arrival in town, write the interview chronologically, lead up to this statement again, and—oh, here comes Hopper. Good! See here, Hopper, you take this story with Carring-

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

ton. Rewrite it and fill in. He doesn't know anything about politics. Never mind your other story. This is more important."

Hopper bristled up with interest. He reached for some copy-paper. The cub mopped his brow. He gasped to himself, "At the hotel they said the story was no good!"

"Come on now," said Hopper. Carrington began a sentence, scratched it out, began it over again. "Hurry," said Hopper, "there's not much time."

The city editor had rushed into the private office, and now Reed, the managing editor, ran out exclaiming, joyously, "Flat-footed for the General!" and tore down to the end of the room. They were making the forms ready. He began shouting new orders. This was to be the story of the day. It was going in the first column. That involved a new make-up of the first page. The office-boys were asking each other what was the big news that had just come in. The copy-readers knew all about it already. Carrington, the cub, was writing faster than he ever wrote before. Hopper was grabbing

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

his sheets almost before he reached the bottom of them, running his pencil through some words, filling in others, calling "copy" to the boys who carried the sheets to the compositors, who were making the type-setting machines hum. Carrington was now writing on page 5. Page 3 was already in type. "I suppose," he whispered to himself, "they were bluffing at the hotel. Just like me to get fooled."

A few minutes later there was a sudden burst of cheers in the Convention Hall of the Western city. Upon a bulletin-board had been written a message sent by Reed, the managing editor, to *The Evening Star's* correspondent.

For three minutes there was much cheering and throwing up of hats from the Holiday men all over the hall. *The Evening Star* was always popping out with exclusive news, and it was a clean, reliable paper.

It had come just in time. Other dispatches already arrived had reported "the administration continues its past policy of silence." And in a few minutes more the

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

balloting might have begun and the machine would have rushed its man in.

Now several honest Holliday men tried to take the floor at once, and shouted, "Mr. Chairman." The chairman hammered with his gavel and shouted, "Order! order!" And there was no order, because the machine men were clamoring also. Finally someone beckoned to the band, which played vigorously and soon drowned out the turmoil. Then the voices stopped. Then the band stopped. Then the Holliday men popped up and tried to get the floor. Again the machine men rose to points of order and disorder.

Meanwhile, over in the press corner of the platform, the Convention's correspondents also were excited—for correspondents. "How in thunder did they get a beat on that?" one of the New Yorkers was asking. Another said, "You'd think he'd give a private interview to any other paper in town before *The Star*."

"But I can't understand," said the *Boston Advertiser* man, "why he gave this news privately to anyone. If the administration

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

were coming out for Holliday, you'd think they'd tell everyone."

"Of course," said a Westerner, "they'd take pains to give it out as a public statement, wouldn't they?"

"If it were anyone but Reed," said one of the New Yorkers, "I would say it was clearly a fake to secure his own promised fat office through Holliday next fall."

"Reed wouldn't dare fake on a thing like that, even if he were that sort," said *The Baltimore Sun* man. "It would simply kill him, kill his political chances, and kill him as a newspaper man."

But *The Evening Star* correspondent wore a confident smile, and only said, "It's a beat on the whole country, and will nominate Holliday as soon as these Western jays regain their heads." But he turned around, relaxed his confident smile, and swiftly wrote this dispatch to the home office, like a good newspaper man: "How about interview? all others say non-committal. Did you have a private interview? I say so here. Better verify before you go to press."

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

But this did not get through to New York for many precious seconds.

When the dispatch came in, Reed, the managing editor, was leaning against the make-up stone, fanning himself and feeling relaxed; excited, but joyous. The older members of the staff, who knew him well enough, were half-jokingly congratulating him on his prospective office. If Holliday received the nomination to-day, as the better element of the party all over the country had been praying, his election in the fall was practically certain. And it took only this added straw for Reed to get the consulship he wanted from Washington. The younger men looked on and grinned, and wished they dared congratulate him. He was a managing editor who was liked as well as feared.

“I’d feel better, though,” they heard him say, “if we could hear from the Convention. I’ve tried three times to get them on the long-distance ’phone; but the Convention wire is still busy. They ought to get to balloting pretty soon.”

“Who got this story?” asked another re-

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

porter, just down from Harlem. "Carrington," answered someone. Carrington, pretending not to hear, was leaning back in his chair with his feet on the table, very much as the older men sit after writing their big stories. Others had written *The Story of other days*, but few of them had ever felt the managing editor lean over them while writing, and say, "Good work, my boy!" and pat them on the back. It was at this point that Van Cise, the city editor, looking excited, came running down the room toward Carrington. Close behind him came Mr. Reed with a scared look on his face, a telegram in his hand. "Mr. Carrington," the latter began, "did you ask him that question alone? Did you?"

Carrington looked up puzzled. The managing editor's voice was more nervous than he had ever heard it before.

Van Cise interrupted vigorously: "Quick! did you? The Secretary of State—Damn it, say something!"

Young Carrington was wondering what there was to be excited about. "Alone? Oh, why—yes, sir; I asked that question all by myself." He smiled up good-naturedly.

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

“ Good! ” exclaimed the city editor, slapping the desk. “ Why didn’t you say so before? Then, Mr. Reed, it must be a beat, sir.”

But Reed, looking closely at Carrington, only said, “ This is all pat, then? Read that.” His tone was gentle, as though talking to a scared child. “ Quick; this is important.” Carrington saw his hand tremble as he held out the telegram.

The cub reporter took his feet down from the table. “ Why—why, no sir,” he said, getting up, “ I didn’t have any private interview.”

Reed simply stared at him, but Van Cise exclaimed, “ What! you just now said——”

“ No, I said I asked that question by myself—on my own hook, that is. Why, the others were all right there. I thought——”

“ All right there! ” exclaimed Van Cise. Reed dropped his hand to his side, and began to blink and smile weakly.

“ Good Lord! ” groaned Hopper. The rest of the room were gathering round the group, and looked from Reed to Carrington. Van Cise shouted at the cub, two feet

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

away from him: "Young man, see here, did you or did you not quote the Secretary of State correctly? This means a good deal to us."

"Well, look at my notes." He held them up for everybody, looking round for sympathy; but there was none.

"Oh, damn your notes! Did you, or did you not, quote him correctly?"

"Why, I thought you——"

"Never mind what you thought."

"Well, all I can say is——"

"Did you, or did you not, quote him correctly?" thundered Van Cise.

"Well, all I can say——" returned Carrington, his voice breaking in the middle, "is that I sat right next to him and wrote exactly what he said to me, word for word, and if the other papers missed it, that's not my funeral. And you can't get me to acknowledge anything else, no matter what you say."

This was just what Reed, and Van Cise, and all the staff wanted to hear, although they did not look it. Reed was still smiling limply.

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

“If it isn't so, I'll resign,” added the cub, in a lower tone.

“We know that,” said Van Cise, and one man laughed and stopped abruptly.

“Wait a minute, Van,” said Reed, in a dreadful whisper, “it may come out all right. Now, Carrington”—everyone was listening intently—“did the other reporters hear you ask that question; were they paying attention?”

The cub reporter waited while the clock ticked three times. “Why, come to think of it, they were laughing at something just then; but I was not paying much attention to them. That was not what I was sent there——”

“Boys,” said Reed, gently, “it may come out all right.” The rest of the room looked at each other. “Now, Mr. Carrington, you run up to the hotel and get your interview confirmed. Here's the proof. Ask whether it's right or wrong. Hopper, you go with him; run.” Then, turning to the Make-up Editor, “Stop the presses until we hear from them.” This showed how badly rattled was the calm-looking managing editor. The

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

Make-up Editor looked at him and said, "They are running now, sir; we're out on the street already." The newsboys' voices could be heard through the open windows.

"Here's the flimsy story," said a copy-reader, ripping open an envelope which a boy had just brought in. "Late, of course."

"What does it say?" asked Reed. The copy-reader shook his head. "It does not back us up," he said, handing it to Reed, who skimmed over the type-written words, rumbled up the tissue-paper and dropped it on the floor. "If this had only come just five minutes ago," he moaned. "Van Cise," he whispered, very gravely, "do you realize that if our story is not confirmed——"

"Why, we've lost our beat," said the City Editor, "and your office."

"Some of us will lose a great deal more than that," said Mr. Reed, sinking into a chair. He meant his reputation as an honest man.

Up at the Polo Grounds the New Yorks had tied the Baltimores in the ninth inning. Down in the Street, Chicago Gas had closed three points higher than it was before

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

luncheon. Over in the criminal part of the Supreme Court the jury had come in at last and said solemnly, "Murder in the first degree." But along the Row *The Evening Star* had quietly appeared with a big beat in its last edition, and all the other afternoon papers were sad and excited about it. But none of them was half so sad at being beaten as *The Star* was at beating them. And of *The Star* staff no one felt worse than the young author of the beat. Unless it was Reed.

A long half-hour had passed. Every newspaper along the Row had sent men up to the hotel to get the Secretary of State to affirm or deny *The Star's* beat. Holliday might be nominated at any moment. So might Wolf. Telegrams were flying back and forth. The Secretary of State had received a bushel.

Although the last edition of *The Star* was out long ago, no one in the office had gone home, not even the women.

"Any word from Hopper yet?" asked Reed. He had stopped making jagged

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

marks on copy-paper now and was pacing up and down the room instead.

"No," replied Van Cise, ringing off and leaving the telephone closet open behind him. "They haven't been able to get anywhere near the old man."

"Well, why not?"

"Sends out word that he gave one interview to-day with the express understanding that he would be left alone the rest of the time."

"What's he doing?"

"Still closeted with Judge Devery and Colonel Hancock."

"Well, can't they get him to say *something* about our interview? He has surely seen it by this time."

"Hopper says they've tried to bribe the Secretary's stenographer; tried sending American District Telegraph boys with sealed messages; tried every scheme they can think of. The place is full of reporters. The morning papers are taking it up too, now——"

"Yes," said Reed, his foolish smile reappearing, "and they'll make a big story of it if our news proves to be wrong."

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

“Hopper says most of them think that we had an exclusive interview some time to-day and sent Carrington up for the general interview as a blind. It was just like the kid to let us in for this.”

“What does the kid say?”

“Still sticks to it, Hopper says, and keeps showing him his ragged-edge notes.”

“Say, come here, Van,” said Reed.

A boy had just come in bearing copies of an extra edition of *The Evening Earth*. In the first column, corresponding to the position of Carrington's beat, was a head-line made up of the single word “CANARD,” and the gist of the story beneath it was that *The Star* was a liar, and that *The Earth* could prove it. Everyone gathered around the several copies.

Van Cise whistled. “They must have hustled this through in a hurry,” he said.

“Say, there's an editorial inside,” the telegraph editor remarked.

“Shut up!” said Van Cise. Then to Reed, “Never mind looking at that now, please, old man.”

Reed, who had turned his back to them,

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

said, "Oh, I've seen it," and turned around. "There's no mistaking what they want people to think of me. It's quite explicit." He was wondering how many people would read it. A good many. Carrington up at the Fifth Avenue read it. Hopper made him read it twice.

One of the copy-readers whispered, "It looks like a private tip from head-quarters; they wouldn't dare risk a libel suit by such accusations against Reed, if they didn't have a denial from the Secretary of State himself."

"Nonsense," said Van Cise. "There hasn't been time since we came out."

"No, but someone at the Convention may have got him on the long-distance wire half an hour ago and then have rung up *The Earth* and given them the tip exclusively."

The telephone bell whirred and Van Cise ran into the box before the boy could reach it, and a moment later his loud voice came echoing out: "For Heaven's sake, Reed, come here—there, you take this one; I'll switch on by the other one."

"Hello," called Reed, "Yes, hello, hello, Hopper—(keep out, Central)—go on, Hop-

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

per.—You say he is going to give—oh, *has* given another interview; well, quick, what did he say?—gathered all the reporters in his room, eh? well, go on—yes—had the interview read? Oh, I understand, from stenographer's notes. Go on—what? what's that last? No, before that—oh,—yes—yes—no, really?—what!—Good Heavens! go on—(Say, Van Cise, do you hear that?)”

Van Cise, five feet away, in the other telephone box, answered by way of several miles of wire, “Yes, yes, yes (go on, Hopper).”

Hopper went on: “Well, first, you understand, Young, the stenographer, got down to the question, ‘*What is the cause of the administration's antagonism toward Holliday?*’ and the answer was ‘*I'm not aware that any antagonism has been manifested toward General Hol*’—Hello? Hello there? Can you hear?”

“Yes, shut up, go on.”

—“‘*toward General Holliday on the part of the administration.*’ Then several of the fellows who were there at the first interview nodded their heads and said, ‘There! what did I tell you? That's the cause of the young

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

fellow's misunderstanding.' But up jumps that *Earth* man, Munson—you know Munson—and shouts, 'Misunderstanding? Hell! it was misrepresentation, malicious misrepresentation, the worst trick ever perpetrated in Park Row'—something of that sort, and was starting out to telephone down to *The Earth* about it. But just then the boy here jumps up, 'Hold on there, Munson—wait a minute, you fellows (his voice got awfully shrill), the next question, sir! Have him read the next question—the very next question.' The Secretary of State waves his hand for silence and smiles a little. He had a piece of paper in his hand all the time, but I didn't know what it was then. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'that seems reasonable; let us finish the interview. Young will read the next question, and, gentlemen, we are all likely to make mistakes; but my stenographer was never known to do so; I agree to stand by——'

"Go on! go on!" Reed interrupted. "Give us the facts."

"Well, Young cleared his throat, and everybody quieted down. 'Question,' he

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

reads, *'What I should like to know, sir, is, Will Holliday have the support of the administration if he is nominated? Will he? Answer: 'He would have the heartiest support the administration could give——'*"

"What!" cried Van Cise. Then from Reed, "Ah, say that over again, Hopper."

Hopper repeated it and then continued, "Well, then, the boy jumps up, and shouts, 'There, there, there! What did I tell you! Now, will you stop jumping on me, Hopper!' How about it, eh? Well, you ought to've seen that sick-looking crowd. They hadn't anything to say. They only looked at the kid and then at each other, while Carington and I put on our hats to go, grinning back at them. The Secretary of State was guying them, too, on the folly of being too certain. What?"

"Say," interrupted Reed, "didn't either of you get the Convention on the long-distance telephone?" The managing editor's instincts were coming back.

"No, but——"

"Well, why——"

"Wait a minute. Then the Secretary

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

waves the piece of paper in his hand, and says, 'One moment, gentlemen, before you go, allow me to read you this message just received from the Convention.' Then he read, '*Holliday*, 175; *Wolf*, 132. I bid you all good afternoon,' he said, and bowed us out. So, you see his game, don't you? the old fox has been holding off confirming or denying our interview until——”

“Hopper,” interrupted Reed, “report here at once; we'll get out a special edition on this—Begin your copy on the way down in the train—A good detailed story about the interview, and how it was confirmed and all that. We'll write the politics end of it down here. The Convention story is coming in over the wire now. Make your best time—and say, bring Carrington along with you; we want to see him. Good-by.” And they both rang off.

In Hopper's story he referred interestingly to what *The Earth* had published (which, by the way, meant a big job for some lawyers next month), quoted all the Secretary's words, dramatically described

The Great Secretary-of-State Interview

the reading of the stenographer's notes and had a lot of fun with the old reporters, who let a mere boy flick a big beat out from under their very noses.

Just after the paper went to press, Mr. Reed came down to where the cub was standing with a wide grin on his face. In one hand the editor held a telegram. He put the other on Rufus's shoulder and said, "Mr. Carrington, this is the second telegram from the Convention I have shown you to-day."

It read, "Please accept my heartfelt thanks for bringing me the nomination. John H. Holliday."

"I don't know," the Managing Editor added, "but that it ought to have been sent to you in the first place." However, Rufus got something at the end of the week which he appreciated just as much.

The City Editor's Conscience

The City Editor's Conscience

THE telegraph editor with the bald head was hanging his umbrella on the gas-jet over his desk, so that no one would walk away with it by mistake or otherwise. The copy-readers were taking off their coats and cuffs and sitting down to their day's work. Nearly all the reporters had arrived; and one of them had already been sent down to the weather bureau to find out when the rain would stop, while another was on his way uptown on the elevated railroad to the home of a prominent citizen who had died during the night, just too late for the morning papers. Others were seated along the rows of tables waiting for assignments, and finishing the perusal of the morning papers, which was part of their business. Murdock, arriving late, came into the room quietly, taking off his coat, but the city editor, on

The City Editor's Conscience

the way from the telephone-closet, dashed down upon him:

“If you can't get down here before 8.30, you'd better not come at all. This is no morning paper. Don't take off your coat. Run up to the Tombs Police Court and see if you can't get something good for the first edition.”

That was what the city editor said all in one breath, faster than you can read half of it, then hurried up to the desk and hammered the bell six times in rapid succession with the open palm of his hand, each stroke coming down quicker and harder than the one before it, until the last was but a dead, ringless “thump.” And when Tommy or Johnny came running to the desk, the city editor snarled in his quick, tense voice:

“Here, if you boys can't answer this bell quicker, you'll all be fired. Run upstairs with this copy.”

Johnny took it meekly but quickly, and ran (until out of the editor's sight) up to the composing-room, put the copy on the foreman's desk, then walked over to the inky-armed galley-boy and confided, “Maguire's



“Maguire’s chewing the Rag again.”

The City Editor's Conscience

chewing the rag again." That was the way the day began, a little after eight o'clock.

It usually began in some such way. But this one was not to end as usual.

Maguire had no business to be so sarcastic with Murdock for being a few minutes late, especially as Murdock was usually one of the first men down in the morning, and Maguire knew it. So a few minutes later when he turned to Brown, one of the other reporters, he said, in a very gentle tone, as if asking a great favor of him:

"Say, Brown, take that story off the 'phone for me, will you please?—'bout a bull that's broken loose on the way to a slaughter-house uptown—been terrorizing people in Fifty-ninth Street, near the river—make half a column of it—vivid and exciting; you know how we want it."

Brown hurried into the telephone-closet saying, "Yes, sir."

That was very pleasant for Brown, but did not sooth Murdock, who, by this time, was several blocks away, hurrying up Centre Street. However, he did not need much

The City Editor's Conscience

sympathy, because he was lucky enough to get a beautiful story of an Italian-quarter stabbing, which turned out to be a murder, and so proved to be worth three-quarters of a column, and that is a very good amount of space to get into the first edition of an afternoon paper that is out on the street at 10.30 A.M.

But Maguire, the city editor, flared up and then had remorse again half a dozen times before the first edition came out. The telephone-boy had shouted up to the desk, "Wintringer's on the 'phone, Mr. Maguire."

Wintringer was the police head-quarters man. He had a lot of small fire and accident stories of the early morning and that part of the night not covered by the morning papers.

The weather was damp, and the connection was bad. "Aw! for Heaven's sake, Wintringer," screamed Maguire, "why don't you open your mouth when you talk?" Then a moment later, "Don't yell so loud. I'm not deaf." And finally in a wail, "Oh, I can't make that out. Write your stories

The City Editor's Conscience

and send 'em down by a messenger!" Then he rang off, dashed out of the telephone-closet, tearing up the notes he had tried to take, hurried up, scowling, to the desk, where he began ringing his bell again and calling to one of the boys for a certain set of proofs, and sent two men out on assignments while waiting for the proofs to come.

A little later Henderson, the copy-reader, who was handling Murdock's murder story, wrote a head-line for it with twelve letters when, in that style of head, there were but eleven spaces, as everyone in the office should know, as Maguire reminded him, and also told him what he thought of him for such a blunder.

Then the new reporter, who had been sent down to Cortlandt Street Ferry a half hour before to find out about the collision of a yacht with a ferry-boat in the fog, ran up to the desk with an air of great importance and began to inform Maguire that "several women fainted, children screamed, a big-crowd gathered," etc., as usual.

The city editor, who had heard details of that sort all his newspaper life, and who

The City Editor's Conscience

wanted the news, interrupted with a question, snapped out like the crack of a whip:

“Whose steam-yacht was it?”

“The steam-yacht belongs to—the name of the owner of the steam-yacht—why, let's see, er——”

“Aw! Run back and find out.” Then turning to another man, and forgetting all about the yacht, the city editor said, smiling eagerly, “Well, would she talk?” This was to the reporter who had gone uptown to try to get an interview with the woman who had been a widow for four hours, and whose husband had been important enough to require a column and a half “obit.” The obituary itself was already in type, having been written months before the prominent citizen became ill.

The reporter answered Mr. Maguire's question, mournfully. “Nope, wouldn't talk. Still prostrated.”

“Too bad,” said the city editor, scowling, for it would have been good stuff. “Wait a minute,” he added, “take a run down to Wall Street. She has a brother down there some place. If he isn't in his

The City Editor's Conscience

office, find out where some of the other relatives are. We've got to have something about the funeral arrangements, at least. Make your best time, please." The "please" was added, perhaps, because he now remembered what he had said to the new young reporter, who was hurrying wildly down to the ferry, wondering how in the world he was expected to find out the name of the owner of a yacht which was now three miles down the bay.

Then it came Brown's turn to catch it. Brown was the one who had been asked so politely to take the bull story off the 'phone. When you take a story off the telephone you are not paid at space rates but by time, that is, so much—or rather so little—for an hour or a fraction of it. Of course Brown could not take more than half an hour if he wanted to, because the story was to go in the first edition with a spread head, but he did not want to. In fact he was anxious to finish it quickly, so that he might be sent out on some other story before all the good ones were assigned. So he hurried through the work, stepped up to the desk, and

The City Editor's Conscience

tossed the story down on a pile of other copy.

Maguire snatched it up, ran his experienced eye over it, and then rushed down the aisle after Brown. His voice went up an octave or two: "You haven't more than three sticks here! I told you distinctly to write a half column of vivid description—how the bull broke away, ran down the street, terrorized everybody—and look at this thing—write it all over again—just as if you had seen it yourself."

"But I thought——"

"Oh, you thought!" snapped back the city editor, as he wheeled toward the desk again.

"Yes, sir," said Brown, meekly, and began rewriting the story.

A little later Maguire came down and said, gently: "Say, old man, suppose you wind that thing up right there, will you? I guess that covers it. I've a big story waiting for you."

And when Brown brought his copy up to the desk, Maguire bowed and said "Thanks," before beginning instructions as to the big story.

The City Editor's Conscience

Now all this was early in the day, before the first edition went to press. The busy, nervous minutes rushed by, the electric fans buzzed, the reporters hurried in and out, the copy-readers' blue pencils wriggled, the typesetting machines clicked, the various editions were run off, the papers were hustled away in wagons and cried on the street, and the strain on Maguire's nerves and temper kept increasing. It was not until the last story was set up, the last head written, the last batch of proofs sent back O. K'd., and the forms were locked up, the plates cast, and the big presses put in motion, with the great rolls of paper revolving, and the printed, folded sheets of the welcome last edition came fluttering down upon the "delivery" at the rate of six hundred a minute, that the city editor had time to take a calm, full breath. Then he stopped looking annoyed, and cooled off from a city editor to a human being. He leaned back in his chair, put his feet on the desk, and smoked luxuriously.

He always leaned back in this way with his feet on the desk when the last edition went to press. Since waking and reaching

The City Editor's Conscience

out of his bedroom-door for the morning paper (which he propped up on the bureau and read in eager snatches while hurriedly dressing), this was his first moment of freedom from strain and anxiety; and the sense of relaxation and relief was delicious. For his day's work was over, and there it was, all before him, a finished result in black and white. Even if he wanted to change it he could not, so there was nothing for him to worry over.

But he often did worry, and it was very seldom by reason of finding that some other afternoon paper had beaten him on important news, because such things seldom happened with Maguire. It was simply because he was a good deal of a brute in the way he treated his men and knew it. Some city editors are brutes and don't know it. They don't worry.

This afternoon the first thing he saw was that head-line of Murdock's murder story, and then he remembered what he had said to old, patient Henderson, his most faithful copy-reader, who never made any excuses, and had lots of feelings. That started Maguire to thinking.

The City Editor's Conscience

He remembered how it was in his younger days; he could not stand being treated in that arrogant fashion by city editors, and once he had lost his place on a certain paper because he could not stand it. He could recall the scene very vividly, and how he had enjoyed telling the bullying city editor just what he unreservedly thought of him. The tale is still handed down in that office. And now he was very much the same sort of bully himself. He had not expected to turn out that way. It seemed too bad.

He wondered what his men unreservedly thought of him. To be sure he was always liberal about letting them have days off, and when they had been ill told them, in a blushing, self-conscious manner, that he was glad to see them back. Also he was obliging about lending money in the office, and those who were slow pay he never dunned—which in newspaper men is a rare trait. And whenever any of the men died, which is not a rare occurrence in a newspaper office, he was the one to get up the subscription list for the flowers, or, as it more often happened, for the widow's rent. But he had an idea that

The City Editor's Conscience

the men considered all these acts as merely conscience-salve. Indeed, he sometimes thought so, himself, and felt quite ashamed about it—after the paper went to press.

But after the paper went to press he had little or nothing to do with the other men in the office. The editors of the other departments all had their intimate friends, and none of them was jovial and familiar with him. They did not say, "Hurry up and put on your coat, I'll wait for you down-stairs," to him; they treated him with a great deal of polite respect, and said "Good-morning, Maguire," and "Good-night, Maguire," and but little else. Maguire did not know how to make advances himself. He did not know how to do anything except get out a rattling good newspaper, and he lived all alone, now that his wife was dead, and the paper was all he had to care about. Perhaps that was the reason he cared for it so much.

He looked around at the men. But as he looked around, two of the reporters at a near-by table suddenly stopped talking. One of them looked up at the ceiling; the other

The City Editor's Conscience

began to read something. Maguire felt the color come into his face, and he asked himself something that he had asked himself several times of late; but this he decided was absurd.

He looked at the clock. It was later than he had thought, and yet the room was quite full of men. Usually it was nearly empty by this time. One of the copy-readers was passing by. "What are they all waiting around so late for?" Maguire asked, in his quick manner.

The copy-reader turned round and looked. "Why, so they are. Well, I suppose they're waiting around till it stops raining."

The city editor knew of other places along Park Row more congenial to newspaper men to wait in till the rain stopped, but he said nothing. He turned his back to the room and spread out the paper and read for two minutes. Then he said to himself, "Well, I may as well go home." He arose, pulled down his desk-top, reached up for his coat, turned around and found himself face to face with the whole staff, who stood in a semicircle.

The City Editor's Conscience

For a moment no one said anything. Then there was some whispering in the line, and Henderson, the old copy-reader, stepped forward toward the city editor. He looked very grave. So did the rest.

For a newspaper man, Henderson was very deliberate. He cleared his throat.

Instantly Maguire cleared his throat, too, and said: "Well, what's this?" He was even more amazed than he looked.

"Mr. Maguire," Henderson began, looking him straight in the face, "it becomes my duty to tell you that a committee has been appointed to see to your case."

Again Maguire snapped out, "What's this?" and his face was livid. He half arose from his chair, then sat down again as if he wanted to show them he was cool.

"A committee," Henderson went on, carefully, "and as chairman, I am now addressing you on behalf of it, and in the presence of those who appointed it." He looked around at the others as if asking, "Isn't that right?" He took another step forward. He was playing with his watch-chain with one hand, and held the other behind his back,

The City Editor's Conscience

Henderson seemed to feel assured that he was right. "You may not be aware of it, but you have been watched for the past few weeks—systematically watched. I regret to say that the committee cannot report that they altogether approve of your conduct."

Maguire sprang out of his chair. "See here! That'll do. I've had enough of this. If you have anything to say to me personally you can call at my home or meet me on the street; but here, in this office, I want you to understand——"

Henderson waved his hand. Those behind him began to whisper something to him. "One moment please, Mr. Maguire," he said. "It's in your official capacity that we are addressing you, sir. There are several things that we have to find fault with you about. One of these, as I was about to say, is the altogether unreasonable, the—what shall I say—yes, unreasonable way in which you guard the desk, stay by the desk, all the time, as though you thought somebody was going to hurt it." Henderson was talking more rapidly now. "You are the first to come in the morning and you stay

The City Editor's Conscience

here all day, and you're the last to leave at night. You don't even go out to lunch. Why don't you go out to lunch?" Henderson began to grin. "The staff wants to know why in thunder you don't go out to lunch?" He now brought his right hand out from behind his back, "And they want me to ask you to wear this thing" (there was a watch in Henderson's hand with a chain dangling from it). "They have come to the conclusion that it's because you don't keep track of the time. They say you are about the squarest city editor in Park Row, even though you do flare up occasionally and get red in the face. And you see" (he was sticking the watch up under Maguire's face) "we were afraid that unless you went out to lunch your health would go to pieces and you'd lose your job, and then we'd get a city editor that we couldn't work so easily for days off and—and, well, I had a lot more to say only I'm rattled now—Here, Maguire, take it; and after this, see that you don't forget your lunch when the time comes. Pardon me, boys, for falling down on that speech."

The City Editor's Conscience

But the others were not looking at Henderson.

Maguire's face had worn several sorts of expressions, and now it had none. He had reached out and grasped the chain in the middle. Now he stood there with the perspiration pouring down his face and looking like a little boy who had been caught doing something bad.

He knew the whole staff was looking at him, and some of the editors, who had lingered to see the fun. The office-boys were there too. But he only opened the back of the watch and exposed the shining golden inside case, as if he wanted to see the karat mark. Then, realizing what a foolish thing he was doing, he abruptly laid it down on his desk on some copy-paper. He knew he had to say something. "Well, boys," he began, looking up and then down again, "I don't believe I have anything to say." He stood still a moment looking helpless. Somebody coughed. He suddenly realized that he must seem very ungrateful, and he opened his mouth and said:

"Gentlemen." Everyone was silent.

The City Editor's Conscience

"This is a very pretty watch." Inwardly he was calling himself a fool for that remark. They knew that. He knew they did. He mopped his brow. "I thank you, boys. I thank you all. I'm much obliged." He looked as if he hated watches.

Some of those in the line made a move as if to wind matters up, but Maguire had just begun:

"I tell you, boys," he said with his head on one side, "I don't deserve it at all. When I think of the way I treat you fellows sometimes—you know what I mean."

"That's all right," one of the men said, aloud.

"I just want to say to you though," Maguire went on, "that one gets it as bad as the next in *this* office." He grinned a little.

"That's so," several of the staff said, and again there was the movement to conclude, but the city editor evidently thought it would be anticlimaxical to stop there, and he always hated a story to fizzle out at the end. Besides, he had more to say. "But I tell you, boys (his voice was low and solemn now), if it offends you sometimes it's noth-

The City Editor's Conscience

ing to the way it hurts me. Every time I jump on one of you fellows it rebounds on me with redoubled force. Why, sometimes, I tell you what it is, I can't get to sleep at night thinking about things I've said during the day."

Everyone of the staff that could had turned red, and a number that thought they could not.

Newspaper men can't stand much of this sort of thing, but none of them had sense enough to stop him. They just stood there looking silly and feeling foolish, and they might have allowed him to go on until he had made them wish they had not given him a watch, if an impudent office-boy had not broken in at that point. "T'ree cheers for Mr. Maguire," cried the shrill voice. "Hurrah!"

No one joined in, but all began to laugh, and Maguire laughed too, and that broke the strain.

Henderson set an example for the rest by going up and offering his hand to Maguire.

The city editor shook it, and then saying, "Tell the boys for me, will you, Henderson,

The City Editor's Conscience

please," he picked up his overcoat and anticlimaxically skipped out of the room and down the stairs without daring to look at one of them.

The next day things went on in the same way as ever, apparently.

The Cub Reporter and the
King of Spain

The Cub Reporter and the King of Spain

A MR. KNOX sat swinging a pair of good legs over the end of the dock at the foot of East Twenty-sixth Street, smoking vile cigarettes and wishing something would happen. Small monotonous waves slapped the green-coated piles below, which smelled oozy. Out in the channel ferry-boats and tugs tooted in a self-important manner, but Mr. Knox yawned and would not look up at them; and that is the way he spent most of his time.

He had learned that when it was flood-tide the incoming Thirty-fourth Street ferry-boats headed away down the river as if for his dock, just as the patient Twenty-third Streeters pretended to want to land above him when the tide was pulling out. He knew who were the owners of the steam-yachts

The Cub Reporter and

anchoring there in Kip's Bay; and he could tell many of the harbor tugs and all the Sound steamers by their whistles. That was why he would not look up unless he heard a new voice come across the water. All this bored him exceedingly.

Hamilton J. Knox had been one of the great men of his day, which was a year or two ago, when in college. He was in the World now. Therefore he was not even a man, it seemed, but a boy learning things about the relative importance of the inhabitants of this planet which all American youths should learn, for those who do not usually live to regret it.

But the contrast in this boy's case was more dramatic, because he had been Hammie Knox, the wondrous half-back of the best foot-ball team in the Western Hemisphere, and had made the winning run of the final game before 20,000 excited people; and this was the greatest romantic glory given to man—at that time, which was shortly before the Spanish war. He had been fondled and fussed over by his friends, and pointed out and stared at by everyone

the King of Spain

else, and his picture was printed, four-columns wide, in the newspaper on whose staff he was now one of the least important reporters, where he had to say Sir to the man who had respectfully sought the favor of an interview with him on the day the championship was won, and who now riddled and ridiculed his copy and seemed not to appreciate the significance of a gold foot-ball worn on the watch-chain.

Instead of letting his hair grow long and travelling around the country in a special car to play beautiful foot-ball, he had to stay still most of the day in a remote corner of the dreary edge of the city and look at dead bodies. These were brought to a low, ugly building in a black wagon, which unloaded quickly and then trotted off up Twenty-sixth Street, past the gray gates of Bellevue Hospital, after more.

When they first gave him the Morgue and Coroner's Office—they told him it was an advance to have a regular department—he used to stand inside the receiving room and watch. But even his interest in dead bodies had died now that they had become part of

The Cub Reporter and

his business. So usually he only yawned and called out from his seat in the sun, "Anything good, Tom," without stopping his legs. Tom, the driver, generally said, "Naw, only a floater from North River," with some contempt, for Tom was *blasé*; a good murder was what he appreciated, an Italian murder, with much cutting.

Murders were what Knox wanted, too, murders or suicides with romantic interest; but when it was a good story the police head-quarters man had already been sent out on it, or else some of the crack general-work reporters, while Knox was left to follow up the dull routine part of it, with the other Morgue and Coroner's Office men, to find out when the inquest was to be held, by which more-or-less-Americanized coroner, etc.; then to come back to the monotonous Morgue and observe the people who came to look at the dead face. "Watch their eyes when the cover is first taken off—maybe you can catch the murderer yourself," said the crack reporter, striding off impressively with the Central Office detectives. But such delights never came to Hamilton Knox,

the King of Spain

who sighed and went back to his seat on the string-piece of the Morgue dock, snapped cigarette butts with yellow-stained fingers at the foolish, futile waves, and wished there were a war, so he could go as a correspondent and do big things and get decorated for bravery.

In reporting, as in everything else, to learn your job you have to begin at a dreary bottom. Even if there had been a war just then, no paper would have sent Knox, because he was not good enough. Besides, he was not modelled for a newspaper man in the first place, as will be made clear.

I

On one day in every seven he was not a newspaper man. Wednesday was his day off. He always arose early and dressed excitedly, instead of sleeping late, as most working people do on a holiday; then putting a pipe in his pocket, he took the L train for Cortlandt Street, jumped on the ferry, and when in the middle of the stream carefully doubled up his newspaper, gravely

The Cub Reporter and

threw it far from him into the boiling wake of the screws, and stuck his hands in his pockets, smiling vindictively. Then, turning his back on New York, he stepped gayly off the ferry, jumped into a familiar train, went down to a certain rural university, and strutted for twenty-four hours.

Here he was not a Mr. Knox, one of the young reporters, but Hattie Knox, the old star half-back; he was not sworn at over the telephone for falling down on news, but joyously grabbed and welcomed by those who knew him well enough, and stared at and worshipped by those who did not dare, and it felt very good. But on a certain Wednesday morning he left his pipe in another coat.

He had, as usual, cast himself comfortably into a whole seat in the smoking-car; but when he felt in his pockets he only found some copy-paper, which had been there for weeks.

He could not smoke, nor were there any other "old" graduates to talk to on the way down. No novels or newspapers are sold on these trains after leaving, and his own paper was floating down the bay, un-

the King of Spain

read (and that alone shows he would never make a newspaper man); so, as he could not even read, he took out the copy-paper, and decided to write something, with a view to passing away the time and earning his expenses. He was far enough away from the depressing influence of the City Room to feel confidence in his own powers once more, and he made up his mind to show them what he could do with an open field and no one to hinder him. He might not be a war correspondent; but this is what he wrote while Newark, Elizabeth, Rahway, Metuchen, and New Brunswick scurried by the window:

PRINCETON, N. J., 8.30 P.M. [Special].—The King of Spain was burned in effigy here to-night, amid great excitement on the part of the entire student body. The demonstration began with a mass meeting, held on the campus around the historic cannon, a relic of the American Revolution and a fit emblem for the sentiment of the occasion, which was "Cuba Libre."

The brutal policy of Spain and her farcical reforms were vehemently denounced, and the cause of Cuba's independence was enthusiastically extolled. The gathering then formed itself into a large procession, which paraded the town, bearing transparencies on which were inscribed various anti-Spanish and pro-Cuban sentiments. At

The Cub Reporter and

one point in the proceedings the Spanish colors were deliberately dragged in the streets. This act was cheered vociferously.

The procession then returned to the college grounds, where a huge bonfire had been prepared. The leaders of the movement, assisted by a prominent alumnus, who does not wish his name used, then produced an effigy of Alfonso XIII. in royal apparel, which was hurled upon the flames amidst numerous hisses and yells.

He continued in this vein as far as Monmouth Junction, repeating himself occasionally, and enjoying it all very much because he was not hampered by any fool facts. This was a much nicer way: write your facts first and make them afterward. He had no doubt of his ability to do this latter; that was merely incidental. There was about a half-column so far, he estimated; and this, at \$6 per column, would more than cover the \$2.40 spent for the round-trip ticket. As for food and bed, he considered it beneath him to pay for such things on these visits. Still, he would have written more, but just then the old familiar sky-line of towers and distant trees swung out, making his heart jump as it always did. So he wound up quickly with, "At a late hour to-night the

the King of Spain

embers of the fire were still glowing brightly," which he considered an artistic ending, and signed his name.

"It'll do 'em good," he said to himself, as he stepped off the train at Princeton Junction. "They need stirring up down here. They are getting too well-behaved. They are not the real thing as we were when I was in college, these boys," he indulgently added; for, being only three miles away, he was beginning to feel his years.

He folded up the MS., stuck it into his pocket, and thought no more about it for awhile, because here was an American Express boy reverently touching his hat and the conductor of the junction train delightfully saluting him by his first name; and in a few minutes more Knox was swaggering up across the campus, with chest puffed out and a scowl on his face, no longer a reporter, but a hero, whose arrival would soon be announced throughout the under-graduate world, for a group of underclassmen, passing along a near-by street had sighted his shoulders from a distance of two hundred yards and said, "That's Hammie Knox."

The Cub Reporter and

It was always a little sudden, this transition from what he was in town to what he was in college; and Knox, passing by a couple of awed little town-boys who turned and gazed after him until he was out of sight, had his usual dizzy sensation. But he knew he would get the old campus feeling and would snap back into his proper place again as soon as he could shed his derby hat for a cap and could stick a pipe in his mouth.

So, absent-mindedly knocking a tutor off the walk in his haste, he proceeded to what was formerly his room, and threw his suitcase at the bedroom *portière* and reached down a cap from the antlers and picked out a congenial-looking pipe from the mantel-piece. The room had again changed hands recently, and he did not know the name of the present occupant, but that did not matter; the latter would see the initials on the suitcase and boast about it afterward. Emitting a loud "wow!" which had been accumulating for six days, Hamilton Knox darted down the noisy entry-stairs and out upon the campus, himself again.

First he strode across the quadrangle—it

the King of Spain

was an entirely different gait from that of the young man who went from the Criminal Court Building to Newspaper Row—and on down to the University Athletic Field; drifting into the cage to look over the base-ball candidates, who, by the way, found time to look at him.

The trainer spied him first, and came running over to shake his hand. "It does me good to see you," he said. Meanwhile the captain dropped his bat and strode across to welcome him, and stood beside him awhile to ask his opinion of the material, which Knox gave; and at the close of the practice, "You are going to lunch with us, aren't you, Hammie?" the captain asked. Hammie said he would.

"Yes, you are right—he's taking on weight," whispered one of the candidates to another, as they followed the ex-half-back out of the dressing-room.

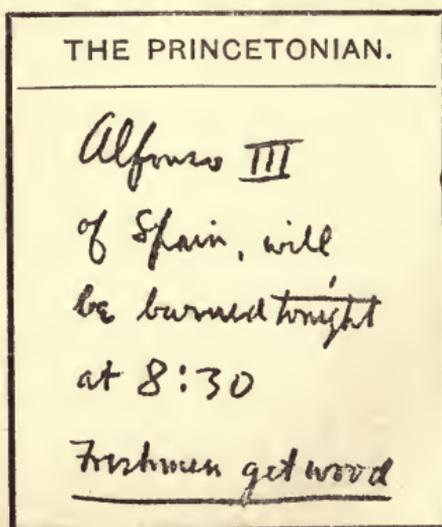
After luncheon he leisurely floated up to the campus again, with a bunch of upper-classmen about him. When he reached the corner of Reunion Hall, he suddenly snapped his fingers, and said, "That's so; I

The Cub Reporter and

forgot," and, leaving his friends for a moment, stepped into the office of the college daily. "Give me some chalk, will you, please?" he said.

Two under-classmen editors started for it, and nearly tripped over each other; but perceiving that the managing editor, a senior, was also hurrying, they sat humbly down, and hoped the managing editor would not store their presumption up against them.

The mighty one took the chalk, said "Thanks, old man," and strode out to where the bulletin-board hangs outside the office-window. Then he wrote:



the King of Spain

He blew the chalk-dust off his fingers, and rejoined the group by the lamp-post, who were now smiling admiringly. Then, throwing his arms over some of their shoulders, he said, "Come on, let's push over to the inn."

Those who had the time to spare followed along in the wake, and several who did not. "He was always a great horse-player, you know," whispered those in the rear.

Knox knew what to expect of the crowd he would find at the inn, so when several "Yea! Hammie!"s and then a long cheer, with "Ham. Knox" on the end, greeted his entrance to the grill-room, he merely smiled kindly, and as soon as he had said hello to some of them by their first names, hit others on their shoulders or heads, and "How are you, old man"-ed the rest, he remarked, causally, in the silence he had known would come:

"Great scheme you fellows have for to-night." He had winked at his companions.

Those at the tables looked at each other vaguely, and then at him. "What scheme's that, Hammie?"

"I mean the big bonfire, of course, and

The Cub Reporter and

burning Blanco in effigy, and all that—or is it Alfonso? It seems a reasonable idea. You can count me in. It is all right. But if I were you I'd have a mass meeting first, with horse speeches and all the old Fresh-fire stunts, then a parade. I remember way back in my freshman year, when—why, what's the matter? Haven't you fellows heard about it?"

They had not heard about it.

"This gang is dead slow!" pronounced the prominent alumnus, cruelly. "There's a great big notice on the *Princetonian* bulletin-board. Why, up on the campus everybody is talking about it" (they were by this time), "while you fellows are sitting here wasting away your glorious half-holiday. You don't appreciate the opportunities of a college course. Just wait till you get out into the wide world and hustle for yourselves. You're getting effete. You're losing the old Princeton spirit. You don't do things the way we did when we were in college. Good-by. I think I'll have to be going——"

"Wait, wait a minute, you old graduate,"

the King of Spain

said one of the gang, somewhat familiarly. "We want to be in it, of course, if there's going to be any fun. Tell us all about it."

Knox did. In half an hour they were lettering transparencies and painting flags and making an inflammable king, while Knox, who said he was sorry he didn't have time to do any of the work, went on over to a room in Witherspoon, where he knew he would find a certain gang playing a game of whist, which he broke up. . . . Now, with these two crowds interested, and the news having gone forth that he approved of the idea, the enterprise was safe, so he spent the rest of the afternoon drifting about the place, basking.

II

It began soon after dinner. First a window in West College was lowered, and a big voice bellowed, "Heads out! Fresh Fire."

Every college community has an unpublished signal-code book. In this one these words no longer refer to a certain custom,

The Cub Reporter and

now defunct, nor to any sort of fire necessarily; they merely signify abstractly that there is about to be some noise and disorder, usually called horse.

Another voice, across the quadrangle—a shrill one this time—yelled, “Fresh Fi-er-r! Heads out! Everybody, heads out!!”

Other windows opened, and other voices echoed the cry earnestly. A megaphone was poked out of one of the back campus rooms. Coach-horns and bicycle bugles had already begun their work. Shotguns were banging. All this by way of prelude.

Now the various dormitory stairs began to rattle and entry doors to slam. Dark forms shot across the bars of light on the way to the cannon, the centre of the quadrangle and of campus activity. Most of the voices were out-door voices now. “Everybody come—yea-a,” shouted many; and suddenly there sounded, “Ray! ray! ray! tiger, siss, boom, ah, Cuba Libre.” It was greeted with many prolonged yea-as and yells. Transparencies, flags, and banners began to appear. Each of these was welcomed.

Within five minutes the bulk of the under-

the King of Spain

graduate body was there. Bowles, the young man whose duty it was to be funny on glee-club trips, mounted the cannon; he commenced an oration beginning, "The war must go on," which referred originally to the Revolutionary war. But that did not make enough noise. A couple of hundred of the others joined hands and began to dance in a circle around him, making him dizzy and drowning out his words. They were shouting "Cuba Libre." Also they yelled, "To hell with Spain."

Then a hoarse authoritative voice, which all recognized as the old half-back's, produced a moderate hush. "Now, fellows," it commanded, "let's pee-rade!" Accordingly, everybody shouted "Yea-a" and paraded. Knox had intended to have some more speeches, but he had forgotten that part. He loved parades. The procession formed itself automatically. They proceeded in lock-step to Nassau Street, where they spread out in open rank, put their hands on each other's shoulders, and chasséd four abreast zigzag up the street, yelling pleasantly and unintermittently as they did so.

The Cub Reporter and

They marched over very much the same route that class reunions take in June, only, instead of singing, "Nassau, Nassau, sing out the chorus free," they sang, "Cubaw, Cubaw, sing out for Cuba Libre;" and instead of cheering for class numerals, they shouted, "What's the matter with Alfonso? He's all right—nit," and other "anti-Spanish sentiments."

The townspeople, the same old patient townspeople, came to the doors and windows and looked on with the same expressions they have been wearing, from generation to generation, ever since Washington led his victorious men into old North.

Knox, dressed in a 'Varsity sweater and somebody's stolen duck trousers, was, of course, in the lead. His head was thrown back, and he was having a serene, contented time, oblivious of the Morgue and everything urban, until suddenly, on the way back to the campus, the office of the Western Union Telegraph Company came within his horizon. Then he remembered the despatch in his pocket. Don't you see he was never meant for a newspaper man?

the King of Spain

He snatched out his MS., and hastily glanced down the pages by the electric light of the street. "By Jove, I forgot all about the Spanish flag," he exclaimed, clapping his hand to the wad under his sweater. They had reached the campus gate now, and he felt that it was the psychological moment; he ought to lead them in and light the fire, but he did not like to cross out that part about the Spanish flag. Besides, it might make it less than \$2.40 worth. "We'll march down to the School of Science and back first," shouted Knox, shoving his copy into his pocket.

"Hammie says down to the School of Science first. Down to the School of Science, fellows." It was repeated down the line.

Meanwhile Knox whipped out the yellow and red flag, and with a joyous yell ran over to the edge of the street and trailed it in the gutter, which happened just then to be occupied by water and notorious Jersey mud. The flag became so muddy that Knox dropped it. Then the whole procession marched over it delightedly.

The Cub Reporter and

“So far my stuff is all pat,” said Knox to himself, as the procession turned back; “and I can trust them to carry out the rest of it.” Excusing himself, he ran over to the telegraph-office, filed his despatch just as they were going to close up, and hurried back to the campus in time to light the goodly pile of timber which had been gathered by faithful Freshmen and soaked with kerosene.

It flared up beautifully and roared, and lighted up the bleak back campus in the rear of Witherspoon Hall; and the mad undergraduate mob began dancing and howling and throwing on more wood. A moment later, at a signal from Knox, a dozen fellows dashed around the corner of Witherspoon and down the terrace with a stuffed foot-ball suit. It had a yellow and red Lord Faunterloxy sash and a Tam o’Shanter cap on its wooden painted head, around which hung a placard reading, “Handle with care—one king of Spain!” This they carried three times around through the crowd, which yelled joyously when the king was dumped on the top of the flames. He was soaked with kerosene and crackled up cheerfully.

the King of Spain

So they yelled, "To hell with Spain." Ditto with Alfonso; ditto Weyler; ditto Blanco; ditto Spain, Weyler, and Alfonso—and gave three times three for Cuba and themselves.

At this point the university police charged down valiantly and dispersed the mob. Knox did not care; his story was now O. K. The police had seen the bulletin-board, and could doubtless have been more effective if they had torn down the pile before it was lighted; but in that case they would have missed the fun. The undergraduates did not mind being dispersed; the thirst for excitement was about satiated. They shouted, "All over, everybody," and departed, some for bed, some for books, and some for beer. All felt better.

It had given them a little helpful recreation, and a serious young professor, who looked on with note-book in hand, an illustration of "the Theory of the Mob," about which he had studied in Germany. As a matter of fact, there was very little patriotic emotion—or any other kind—"swaying" this gathering, except the desire to let themselves loose and expend the surplus energy

The Cub Reporter and

of youth, which in certain months of the year cannot express itself in athletics, and yet must come out somehow. But this wise young professor did not understand such primitive motives of action, because he came from a large New England university, where life is an old, old story at nineteen or twenty, and the youth of his set were wont to divert themselves by dissecting their souls and making Meredithian aphorisms and patronizing the universe. He was not accustomed to such boyish spontaneity.

When the time came, and it came soon after this, a goodly number of these same yawping lads went to the front to get shot at, and an equal proportion of the New Englanders likewise, and both did the thing equally well; but at this time, down there in their academic seclusion, they did not care so very much about Cuba, and knew less. They were too full of their own undergraduate interests to feel very strongly on such trivial matters as monarchical tyranny or international complications. When they had time to read the papers they generally turned over to the athletic column. But they had

the King of Spain

no objection to burning Alfonso or anybody else in effigy, if Hamilton Knox said so; and they pronounced it very good horse, and went to sleep prepared to forget all about it; and so did young Knox, who, next morning arose early, caught the 7.10 for New York, stepped yawningly upon a cross-town car for East Twenty-Sixth Street, and found the little monotonous waves still slapping and swashing against the piles of the dock, which had the same old smell.

The paper he had bought on the trip to New York, showed his story on the first page, leaded, and hardly changed at all. He was pleased, but it had about worn off by this time. So he went out to his old place, lighted a cigarette, swung his legs, and wished he could do something. But he had done something.

III.

Hamilton Knox's paper knew, as all the newspapers knew, that a crisis was impending. The despatch was an interesting commentary on the most momentous topic of the

The Cub Reporter and

hour. In other words, it was pronounced "good news" by the night editor, who had immediately telegraphed, "*Send half-col. more details, what was on transparencies, etc., stay down there until further notice.*" That was about the time Hamilton and his young friends were appreciating well-earned rest and refreshment in the grill-room, which was long after the telegraph-office windows became dark. The telegram was returned to the editor. So they cursed young Knox, and decided to ask him what he meant by not writing more in the first place.

Now his real reason, it will be remembered, was that the trip from New York to Princeton was not longer; but they forgot all about asking him, because they found the next morning that none of the other papers had a line about it. Young Knox had scored his first beat.

That was something to have done, better than smoking a pipe on the cars at least; but that was not the end of his story.

First, in the offices of every other morning paper in town there were scowls, and unfair remarks about college correspondents;

the King of Spain

while the afternoon papers were all quietly stealing the despatch for their first editions.

Next, all the big papers, both afternoon and morning editions, began sending men down to Princeton for the good second-day story they thought was there—too good for young Knox, thought his city editor, who unsympathetically let him stay at the Morgue while the best available man was instructed to “get all the details, names of the speakers, and what they said; secure interviews with the president and dean and the prominent professors, especially the Jingoës. There’s a good second-day story in it. These college correspondents don’t know anything.” The yellow journals despatched artists to make pictures of the fire, whose ashes were now cold, and fac-similes of transparencies. So much for the first few hours of the day after Hamilton’s holiday.

Meanwhile the New York papers had gone out to the other cities, and the story was clipped and copied, and a hundred clever men all over the East were now writing paragraphs about it. Some praised Princeton’s patriotism and some condemned her

The Cub Reporter and

bad taste, according to the political opinions of the men who paid the writers' salaries. The New York correspondents for Western cities and Western news agencies were flashing the story out to the sections beyond the immediate reach of the fast newspaper trains. But it did not stop there.

The American correspondents for foreign newspapers and news agencies had raised their eyebrows as soon as they saw the headline. Immediately they began sending deep down under the many miles of waves and water brief accounts of the holiday doings of Hammie Knox, who sat out on the string-piece of the dock, idly kicking his legs and wishing something would happen.

It will not take long to tell what happened. First the Madrid papers pounced upon it, then the other important Spanish papers published it with exclamation marks, and cabled to London clamoring for more, the *Impar-*
cial meanwhile writing an inflamed editorial about Yankee pigs, which ran sputtering and exploding like a string of fire-crackers out through the provinces. Spread heads popped out in the morning, like mushrooms,

the King of Spain

on sleepy old papers in the interior of which no one ever heard before.

That night the students at the University of Madrid held an indignation meeting. There were speeches which began like the rolling of potatoes out of barrels, which ended with the sound of many saw-mills fighting. All the American flags in the place were torn into shreds, ground into the earth, spat upon. American citizens were jostled on the streets. There was a small-sized riot at the Café Sebastian. Minister Woodford stayed indoors all day, by request. Sagasta's hair bristled.

Meanwhile in London the ponderous *Times* had published a portentous leader. Labouchere had written something characteristic and caustic in the first person. The Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain in the Cabinet meeting said something suave about Anglo-American alliance. In Berlin, Emperor William twisted up his mustache. On the Paris Bourse, American consols dropped ten points, and in New York Hamilton Knox bought a fresh box of cigarettes.

Now the "second-day" stories were pub-

The Cub Reporter and

lished. From a news point of view they fizzled out. "The university faculty," cabled the foreign correspondents, "profess surprise, and even amusement, that so much has been made of so small a matter. They seem to be trying to show that it was only a boyish prank, not an official university expression. They say it meant nothing."

Now, the Latin races are notoriously unappreciative of our humor. This last bulletin was all that was needed to make Spain froth at the mouth. "Meant nothing! Does our sacred honor mean nothing? Ah, ha! The Yankee pigs are now afraid. They would belittle this unforgettable insult. They now tremble with fear," etc.

At this point the affair came into diplomatic existence. The correspondents had to wait for the cable. "Government business," they were informed. Something in cipher was cabled from Madrid to Señor De Lome's successor at Washington. He rang for his carriage, told the coachman with yellow and red facings on his livery to drive to the French ambassador's—"pronto!—quickly!"

the King of Spain

The ponderous jaws of international conversation had begun to work. They worked all that day and most of the night.

The next day in the Cortes Señor Somebody-or-Other made that now historic speech, the one ending: "And if it is thus the youth in their universities of learning are taught, the time has now come when it is necessary for us as a nation of honor to teach yonder insolent nation of pigs what Spanish honor means, and what it means to insult it! . . . Our forefathers . . . ! Honor to the death! . . . B-r-r-r," etc.; and they all screamed, gnashed their teeth, and shook themselves to pieces in their interesting Southern way. Then came the long-delayed action in regard to the demands of the United States. The vote was taken; the measure was defeated. The rest is history, as well known as the cub reporter's part in it is little known.

At 9.40 P.M. on February 15th, the Maine was blown up. On April 20th came our ultimatum. On April 21st the managing editor said, "Mr. Knox, you are to join the despatch-boat at Tampa in forty-eight hours;

The Cub Reporter

get vaccinated and start this evening." But Hamilton declined. There was something better to do now.

Out upon the taffrail of a crowded transport, sat Trooper Knox swinging a pair of hardened legs and smoking a dirty pipe. He was about to have a chance at what he was best suited for, and he was chatting happily with another Rough Rider, his bunkie. "Newspaper work is no good," he confided; "they don't give you a chance to run with the ball."

The Old Reporter

The Old Reporter

TAKE a walk along Park Row with an old newspaper-man and make him talk about the fellow-craftsmen he meets along the way. Some of his comments may be like this:

“There goes Colonel Sanderson; used to be managing editor of *The Globe*. Remember how he covered the famous Hattie Harris murder-trial years ago? That was literature. All gone to pieces now; does the Centre Street Magistrates’ Court, or some other small department, for a ‘flimsy’ bureau. . . . See that fellow in the broad-brimmed hat? Used to be a big man in the Scripps-McRae league out West, where they call a beat a ‘scoop.’ Wanted to come to New York, like so many of them, you know; left a good place, high up on a St. Louis paper—and now look at him; out of a job, too proud to go home—out there they think he’s a big

The Old Reporter

man. He sees me; let's hurry a little, if you don't mind; he owes me more than he'll ever pay back as it is. . . . Here comes young Doc. Jamison, son of ex-Governor Jamison; he's a hustler, too, becoming the star reporter of his paper, they tell me. Now if he'll just leave whiskey alone— Hello, there's Billy Woods. Haven't seen him for a long time. You've heard of him. The great Billy Woods. . . .”

If it were the right time of day, and he were the right kind of newspaper-man, you might pass a score of them between Broadway and the Bridge. Perhaps a half-dozen would have left a hard-luck story trailing behind them. There would be one main cause assigned for it by your experienced companion. In your walk you would have passed just about that number of places where the staple article of merchandise was dispensed in glasses. And yet these places alone are not to blame.

There are so many different sorts of men in this strange business, hurrying up and down and in and out of the big, teeming

The Old Reporter

town and through the country and over the globe, gathering the history of to-day (while you are absorbed by your own more or less important part in it), printing it to-night while you sleep, and handing it to you, for a ridiculous price, fresh and inky-smelling, as soon as you awake in the morning. More varieties of mankind perhaps than in any of the other arts of peace, and they come from more parts of the world and more strata of society.

Besides those who grow up in the life, from office-boys (through the press- or composing-room, or both, to become, very likely, good, old-fashioned "all-round newspaper-men"), and besides those who come with more book-education to seek literary careers in the metropolis, there are older men, who, having made a failure of something else, are "engaged in newspaper-work temporarily," as they continue to say (unless they fail here, too), because it pays so much better than clerkships; and there are younger men, drawn into the life chiefly by the spirit of adventure, which a few generations ago would have taken them to sea, being sick-

The Old Reporter

ened by the prospect of many monotonous days at a desk. There are cadet brothers of foreign nobility; young men from neighboring cities who have suddenly lost their incomes, or their social positions, or else their enjoyment in such possessions. There are teachers who have grown tired of academic monotony, and naval officers who have waited and waited; quick-tongued Irish editors who have burned their bridges behind them, and English lieutenants who talk interestingly of army life in India and tell different stories at different times of why they left it. There are Arizona miners and Australian sheep-raisers; country poets, country parsons, gamblers, Jesuits, European nihilists, men in the employ of foreign secret-service bureaus—all sorts of men, except the bovine male, with lethargic mind and lack-lustre eye. For more than its just share of the best of brains are drawn into the feeders of this great noisy, all-devouring machine that turns out the stuff called news. It is a fascinating machine, and has a way of getting more than its share of good blood also. It is a relentless

The Old Reporter

machine, and is apt to squeeze the best out of strong men, throwing them forth again, when least expected, old and useless before they reach what should be the prime of life.

Occasionally you hear of a well-known correspondent who signs his initials, or of an editor who wins fame or else notoriety. No one tells of these others who, while they live, fill most of the paper, and are broken down before forty, having written on every sort of interest and every sort of person in the great seething city—except the one they know the most about.

I

There were several stories of why brilliant Billy Woods came North to become a newspaper man, and one of them was a love-story. The younger men on the staff used to say that the only reason he went into this work was that his father forbade it. The women in the office were inclined to believe the love-story. However, he would eventually have drifted into it; inevitably, because he was a born reporter.

The Old Reporter

No one would have thought him a born reporter from the way he handled his first assignment. It was to cover a monthly smoker of a university alumni association. "Being a college man, you may be interested in it," said the young city editor, smiling benignly at the bright-eyed boy, who bowed in a very grave way he had and marched down the office with the energetic walk which was to become a characteristic of that room—chin in the air, glasses sliding down his nose while pounding the floor with his walking-stick.

Now, young Woods was not a college man, and he had an exaggerated notion of the erudition of those who were. It was almost awe, and it persisted even after he had become the great Billy Woods. It amazed him afresh every time a new reporter that had an academic degree fell down on a story. "And that fellow's a college graduate," Billy would say, shaking his head.

The cubs of course were more or less in awe of the dashing star reporter of the paper, and turned to gaze after him when he stalked out of the room on his big stories,

The Old Reporter

but he did not realize that; he suspected them of looking down upon him as an ignoramus, so he scowled arrogantly if he caught them glancing his way, unless, indeed, they got up courage to borrow his mucilage or ask him some question about the office rules for spelling.

Then he would open up, put them at their ease, discourse interestingly about the traditions of the office, and fascinate them, as he could anyone, man or woman, who came in his way. "No wonder Senators at the Fifth Avenue Hotel like to have Mr. Woods come up and slap them on the back!" "No wonder he can make anybody talk about everything," thought the new reporters, while the old one went on in his rapid style, "You'll soon assimilate the idea. Now, for instance, 'A dog bites a man'—that's a story; 'A man bites a dog'—that's a *good* story," etc., until in a lull there came the question—inevitable from very recent graduates:

"What college are you from, Mr. Woods?"

Billy always felt better when this was over.

The Old Reporter

“I received my schooling abroad,” he always took pains to add. “Spent most of my boyhood over there with relatives. Have to rely upon my forebears for my general culture, I reckon; though your Alma Mater’s biological department holds that acquired characteristics are not transmitted, I believe. My family were nearly all lawyers and clergymen, or professors at the University—the University of Virginia, that is. That’s where they wanted me to go, too, but—” and then he would quote a line of Horace. Billy always quoted Latin in his first conversation with “college men.” Let us hope the collegians always understood him. . . .

The collegians in the young Billy Woods’s first assignment looked like, for the most part, rather pleasant-looking down-town types. Some of them seemed to the older reporters to have smug faces with fat on their necks, and others to be of the narrow-shouldered, neurasthenic New York sort, who couldn’t lean back and smoke calmly, and many were very good fellows. They were all mysterious and awful to the new reporter who sat in the back of the room

The Old Reporter

with big eyes gazing at their greatness while he felt their degrees sticking out like halos.

The feature of this particular club smoker was a paper upon "The Decline of the Novel," by a rather immature alumnus of the university, who was now a complacent young professor of literature, with incipient side-whiskers and a *pseudo*-English accent which tripped and fell over "idea" and "law," which, he thought, ended in "r." He was the author of two anæmic novels which teemed with literary allusions, French phrases, and preternaturally precocious conversations. They bespoke an easy familiarity with various streets and scenes of the European capitals—or else with Baedeker—went skin-deep into life, and were greatly admired by a certain type of female, to whom they furnished an illusion of literature and did no more harm than playing an æolian.

The lecture was symmetrically composed and gracefully delivered, with many fine periods, filled with plump literary words—just as his text-book says they ought to be written. He spoke of "determining influ-

The Old Reporter

enc-es” and “up-lift” and “envi-rone-ment” and used other interesting phrases, fashionable in literary circles at that time. He sprinkled in his usual number of quotations, which showed how well-read he was and that he considered his audience well-read too, so it made pleasant feeling all around.

And it was all impressing the boy with the bright eyes, who thought it must be fine to know so much, and applauded heartily until the professor began to pronounce the reason for the sad condition of our modern literature. “The unbridled, licentious newspaper press—with its ignorant hordes of hack-writers, charlatans . . . the morbid curiosity of the modern ubiquitous reporter,” etc., as usual.

Young Woods wondered how the other reporters stood it so calmly. They were used to such things, and yawned occasionally. They were quite as willing to write about this man’s views of the press as anything else—and the more words they got in the bigger would be their space-bills. And some of them asked a few questions when they

The Old Reporter

went up after the address to get the type-written selections of it which had carefully been manifolded for the licentious press by the young professor who thought he was a celebrity getting interviewed and tried to appear accustomed to it. But young Woods, red in the face, and indignant with everybody, wanted to tell them all that *he* was a newspaper man and glad, proud of it, hated them all for insulting his high and noble "calling" and strode out of the room with chin high. "Who is this man—what's his family, I'd like to know?" he exclaimed to his Southern self—though that would not seem to have much to do with it.

At the office he told the night city editor all about it with eloquence, while the near-by copy editor's shoulders shook.

It was the office's first introduction to the boy's full-grown vocabulary. The night city editor, Stone, listened to most of it, and then said, kindly, "I see. Write it."

Write it! The young Southerner "declared" he would not lose his self-respect. "You just ought to have heard him. He insulted all of us."

The Old Reporter

Then Stone looked distrait, and so the copy-readers poised pencils to listen; but, as if changing his mind, Stone asked, "What else did the professor say?" And now the office had its first exhibition of Woods's wondrous, sponge-like memory. . . . "Anything else? . . . Thank you. Go home to bed."

The next morning young Woods, whose sense of humor was as embryonic as his sense of news, had to read it twice before the thing took hold of him; then he saw some of the beauty of the story which Stone had written.

It was not sarcastic. It was a calm, dispassionate account, apparently, with many quotations from the little professor's paper, and no comment at all, leaving all that to the reader—the orthodox, the artistic "aloofness" attitude, for lacking which the young professor in his class-room was wont to patronize, heartlessly, a man by the name of Thackeray.

It taught young Billy volumes about news—as Stone meant it to. Also it set Billy to thinking about the great opportunity of

The Old Reporter

“The Press” for pricking shams and presenting “The Truth,” and he prayed that he might be able to present it sincerely and dispassionate and to “always get both sides of the story,” as they told him he must, “and not to give a damn for what he thought or felt about it.”

That is a trivial story perhaps, but in the light of what is to be told later it seems worth while—just as the men in the office often related it (especially before Billy), because it seemed so odd to think of the keen Billy Woods who acquired such abnormal vision in seeing “fakes” in everybody and everything, the versatile Billy Woods, who tracked down Simpson the poisoner when all the detectives failed, and meanwhile continued, for a certain editorial page, his series of daily poems about children, which most of you must have read, though neither you nor many others knew who wrote them—the wonderful Billy Woods who “could do both Wall Street and politics”—and equally well—the adaptable, the convenient, the cynical Billy Woods, who held one kind of

The Old Reporter

political belief and wrote so ardently for another; who saw and despised the littleness of big people, and then made them sound bigger and more interesting—it does seem odd to think of him as the lad to blush and back out. But in those early days he had feelings, and they used to get in his way. He had so many of them. They were what he worked with. He did not realize that. Perhaps the office did not realize it.

It was his personal feelings that made him keep up his acquaintances so long in the Southern Colony of the up-town life of the city. It helped him through the week, like many an other lonely hall-bed roomer, if a warm-voiced compatriot seized his hand and said—or shouted, “What! son of my dear old friend, Dr. Woods? Well, ’pon my word. Yes, I declare, you look just like him. My lands! how that old man can pray!” And so on, ending with “So we’ll expect you Sunday evening. The girls ’ll be mighty glad to see you.”

He even went to dances and such things when he could get the night off, and the older generation gossiping around the edge

The Old Reporter

of the floor pointed him out as "One of the Virginia Woods. Yes, they're all fine-looking. It was this boy's aunt who eloped with the Austrian, don't you recollect, that winter in Washington? When old Dr. Woods surprised everybody by marrying again she was so sorry for this boy—mere child then—that she took him over there with her and kept him until now that she has too many children of her own to look after . . ." And all this made the young newspaper man more interesting to some sorts of people; only he hated to have them ask, as so many of them did, looking at him as if he were a curiosity, "what department" he was in.

He did not like to say he was a reporter because nearly every one's conception of the reporter seemed to be gained from those singular creatures who scurried around on the outskirts of social functions and wrote down more or less interesting names "among those present."

"Because you are so seldom the source of more important news," Billy wanted to say, cuttingly, for he did not consider it a

The Old Reporter

humorous situation at all. He always wanted to explain that there were two kinds, reporters and society reporters, that the latter were no more typical of the vigorous writers who took pride in their work of supplying over three-fourths of all that was read in Christendom, than those meek little lawyers across the room there, whom he frequently saw scudding in and out the court-house with papers in their hands, were the representative lights of the New York bar. And he wanted to explain that any how he had already had a chance to be a copy-editor, and that he had refused because he could not sit still at a desk for hours and read and tinker with other men's stuff and get impatient and nervous. Perhaps it was because he was an artist and must create "stuff" of his own, and would have done so even if he had kept out of newspaper work—a different sort of stuff, Southern verse, possibly, and then he would have won a different sort of fame.

But he became tired of explaining all this, before he became tired of wanting to explain it; while down in the other world

The Old Reporter

there was nothing to explain, and his stories were becoming the talk of Printing House Square, and they told him he had a great career before him, and Billy said, "Really, do you think so?" smiling delightedly, "Isn't that fine!"

Thus the bond attaching him to the up-town organism became more and more stretched as time and his success as a newspaper-reporter went on. He soon became too valuable for the city editor to spare often, and even when an engagement was made it sometimes had to be broken, which hostesses quite naturally failed to understand. And when Billy's one "day off" in seven came around it seemed such a waste of time to spend it upon stupid conventional people who did not know what was going on in the world, and took so long to think that it made him nervous. The Southern cotillions were no longer simple and Southern, for the committee were trying to put on New York lugs, said Billy, who thought this absurd. . . . Until finally the cord was snapped entirely, in this way:

He went up to dine with some old friends

The Old Reporter

of his family's who had some guests from Georgia; and Billy knew so many interesting things to tell about Bohemia, they said. He did not want to go, and though plenty of men and women, in New York, tried strenuously to be Bohemian, there was nothing very Bohemian in New York, as it seemed to Billy, who had had a glimpse of the real thing. However, when Bohemia was what they wanted, the young reporter would generally talk about it, improvising as he went along, and warming up to his art and enjoying it when he found the whole table-ful stopping to listen to him.

After this dinner, when they were smoking, Billy shut up and the other two men guests began to talk about the railroad deal for which they had come up to New York. Like many of these Southern fellows they talked too much. Woods, who with his training was becoming that agreeable thing, a good listener as well as talker, sat there looking impressed and impractical and said he thought it was all "mighty" interesting. The next morning *The Day* had some Wall Street news that no other paper

The Old Reporter

had, and that made things hum over in one corner of the Exchange for a half-hour after the opening, and spoiled a daring scheme for his host's two friends and his own friendship with his host and other friendships also, when the tale went around the Southern Society, out of which Billy now dropped altogether.

The young newspaper man was penitent, pitifully so, and bobbed his head, and agreed with all that a mutual friend said to him. "And don't you see now what an awful thing you've done, my boy?"

"Yes, yes; why didn't I look at it that way! Isn't it awful, but—my! what a good story!"

II

Now, this news instinct means broadly an abnormal keenness in appreciating what is contemporaneously interesting to the public—a habit of mind acquired by those who deal in news, just as various other habits of mind are acquired by those who deal in various other goods.

The Old Reporter

Each one of these is different, but all have this in common: Every one of them is acquired, according to the laws of compensation, at the expense of certain other senses or sensibilities.

Young Billy Woods, with his shirt-bosom shaking as he saw the bigness of "the story" in what he was hearing, did not stop to see what the publication of it would mean to his host's friends. He did not see, because, though he looked at the same facts, it was not from the same point of view. They were business men and it was their job to make deals.

He was a newspaper man and it was his job to make interesting reading. It was their right to make deals, even though they would thereby render certain securities of other worthy men and women almost worthless. So, was it not his right to make interesting reading even though it would hurt the schemes of eminently solvent men for getting richer?

But, of course, he realized now, as he stayed awake at night, that it was outrageous to print facts related, very unwisely, at a

The Old Reporter

friend's dinner-table, but he did not realize why he had not stopped to think of that.

It was because he was thinking so hard of the other thing. That shows the tendency of these acquired senses.

When, however, facts were seen by the reporter from the point of view of the reported, he could be as human, or as inhumane, as any other busy, ambitious young man. His experience, a year or two later, with the "white-mustached-high-living-lawyer" will show it.

Now Billy Woods by this time had learned something about everything in the big strenuous city, from Harlem to the Battery, and beyond and below. Perhaps he knew more than any youth of his age in it about the manifold interests of a metropolis and its various inhabitants; their personal characteristics and their office hours, their social positions and their business worth, their Christian beliefs and their heathen practices. That is the reason that nearly everybody he ran across fell into categories in the young man's mind. Whenever he found a new type it was a refreshing sur-

The Old Reporter

prise. After awhile there were no more new ones.

He was as guileless looking as ever, but he sometimes had considerable fun with them when they undertook to patronize him, especially the young, dapper ones, who softly slide into positions made or left for them in the down-town world by wealth or influence, and thus miss a valuable life-lesson or two.

He usually let them think they were impressing him, when he conveniently could, looking innocent and awed, because they enjoyed it so much, and he did not mind now, any more than he resented the pity of kind women who thought he had sad eyes and insisted on giving him cake and lemonade at their conventions, and then considered him very ill-bred next morning upon seeing themselves gently ridiculed in the "article," which was written as Billy Woods's employer told him to write it.

It was one of this younger down-town type that Billy had first to deal with now, teeming with importance, as Woods could tell from the way he said "Well, sir."

The Old Reporter

The reporter, bowing in his suave Southern way, respectfully asked to see the head of the firm, the young man's father.

"Engaged at present," was the reply.
"What do you want?"

"I'll wait, if I may make so bold," said Billy.

"I represent him," said the other, leaning back in his chair. "What is it?"

"Ah, I see," said Billy.

"What do you want—he has nothing to say to reporters anyway."

"Possibly; but if you don't mind I'd rather have his word for that."

"What's that! I tell you I represent him."

"Not very well, however."

"What do you mean!"

"He has better manners, for instance."

"See here——"

—"And a softer voice—and—really? Oh, please, don't do so much to me as all that. You see it would not do, really now, for me to leave, because your father has not yet talked to me. I think you'll find that he will come out and talk to me in a mo-

The Old Reporter

ment now. What's that? Oh, no, no, no, I wouldn't if I were you. In fact, if I were you I'd go back to my little desk, for really you're getting red in the face and making a scene, young man, before all your father's clerks. If you'd turn around suddenly you'd see them laughing at you. Ah, Colonel, how do you do"—for the father was now coming out of the inner office, saying, "What's this! what's this!"

"Your son was of the opinion that you did not care to talk to *The Day*. I have taken the liberty of differing with him," and then Billy stated his business, adding, emphatically, "But if you do not want to talk about this matter——" The Colonel did not want to talk, but he wanted to have some fun with the reporter, so he led him on.

He ought not to have done this, for reporters are apt to be as quick as lawyers even at thinking and speaking, and this particular reporter when he became excited, as he now was, could say off-hand what most people cannot think of until trying to go to sleep at night. "Well, Mr. Reporter,"

The Old Reporter

the white mustache was presently saying, sneeringly, "you seem to know so much about my brother and his affairs, why don't you go and ask *him*?"

The red-faced son was leering at Woods, who replied, "I don't know his address, do you?"

"Oh, ho! you can't lead me into telling you in that way. I'm a lawyer, young man," and the clerks laughed.

"You don't know where he is either," said Woods. "It's a matter of opinion now."

"You don't say so," remarked the other, scornfully; "and how is it a matter of opinion?"

"Your brother," said Billy, suddenly, "blew his brains out an hour ago, and that's the reason I'm down here." Then the lawyer flopped down flat upon the rug as Billy had never seen happen off the stage.

When he came to he wanted to know all that Woods knew; he was pitifully docile. Woods told him, but not without also extracting what he wanted to know.

It was not interesting to Woods—not as

The Old Reporter

interesting as it might be to many of you. He was sick of dead, dissipated brothers with "horrible lessons" to young men newly rich. But he considered it his business to get the news, even though he had to adopt means not dissimilar to those employed in cross-examinations by this same successful lawyer, who was now realizing what he had let out and what it would mean if made public.

"I am sorry," said Billy, shaking his head. "But the next time"—opening the door—"you'll have more respect for *The Day*. If you do not care to talk, you should always say so. Then you will not be liable to mention things which, as you say, will disgrace your family and your firm when published. Little boy, why don't you see to your father. He's almost hysterical. I wish you all good-day," and Billy slammed the door, feeling dramatic.

The next morning, after a sleepless night, the white-mustached lawyer crept downstairs in his bath-robe, opened the paper, which shook, and read that Colonel So-and-so when asked by a *Day* reporter to make

The Old Reporter

a statement, replied "That he had nothing to say." . . . But he did not know how much of a sacrifice that lie meant to the impudent young reporter, nor the kind of a sacrifice, obviously, for later in the day a check came from the white-mustached lawyer with a note, which Billy, angrily ringing for a messenger, did not read through. It was just as well this did not come before the paper went to press.

"I suppose it serves me right," said the reporter when he had cooled down, "for letting my personal feelings come into my business relations. This lawyer never does; therefore he could not understand it in anyone else."

That was not the sort of experience to curb the news instinct. Very few of the reporter's experiences were.

And as he became an older and better reporter he naturally was less given to thinking of how the other fellow felt about it. That was not the reporter's job; it was to get the news, and he generally got it when once he saw his "story in it."

The men often said that the city editor al-

The Old Reporter

ways watched Billy's eyes when giving instructions about an assignment, and if the eyes did not brighten then he knew that Woods did not see his story in it and usually gave him something else. Not all members of the staff were so favored.

But when Woods did see his story, and had excitedly grabbed some copy-paper, and the cane which he never forgot, no matter how many overcoats and gloves he shed about town, and had marched eagerly out of the room with the grinning office-boys watching to see whether he put his hat on or carried it in his hand this time—nobody knew quite how he was so successful in scenting and flushing and retrieving the news. Perhaps he did not either. He was always half crazy until he finished his job, and had returned, sometimes on the run, to the office, where he wrote furiously and filed the copy, smiling excitedly and sighing joyfully.

He had no rules about holding peoples' eyes or studying their weaknesses or addressing them frequently by name. He never planned beforehand how he was go-

The Old Reporter

ing to approach a man or woman; he knew how automatically, the men in the office said. It is true that he did it automatically, but it was not from what he knew but what he felt.

The city editor had discovered a way of making Billy's eyes brighten, whether the owner wanted them to or not. That is the reason Woods had been handling so many of the "hard to get" assignments of late instead of the "color" descriptions at which he had made his first hit. "In fact, there is no one in town," the suave city editor would say, "that could handle this story as you could, if you care to take it."

"Well, let me try. I'll do what I can," for Billy was only human.

Not that he spent all his days pulling words out of unwilling people; quite as many fawned upon him and tried to be hail-fellow-well-met with him as did the other thing; as many lied to get themselves in print as to stay out. And he had heard so many of them say, with more or less dignity, "Oh, no, we do not wish you to mention us in the paper," and so often he had seen

The Old Reporter

at the same time the sudden swelling of vanity at being approached by The Press that he seldom believed even the sincere ones any more, and idly speculated on how many extra copies they would buy—though you would never dream it from the way he said, “Certainly; I appreciate your situation.”

Nor were these latter experiences of a sort to discourage the growth of his professional instincts—which grow according to the laws of compensation.

Billy Woods was not the only boy in the big town who was getting his eyes opened.

The young son of the lawyer who attempted to reward the reporter was also learning considerable about the less admirable side of human nature—like everyone else in the active world—and possibly he was “losing his ideals,” as they sometimes sadly say. But in place of the false and pretty ideals of boyhood, he acquired, or ought to have, a grown man’s wholesome conception of approximate reality. For however much of the wrong, the abnormal

The Old Reporter

side of life he came in contact with, he also saw plenty of the normal side in his business, or after office-hours, at least.

But the reporter had little to do with anything normal, because his job was to hunt and handle *The News*, which means the interesting, the unusual, surprising, shocking, remarkable, wonderful, wicked, horrible—not the commonplace, the expected, the normal.

He had very little to do with the ninety-nine worthy ministers of the gospel who were neither spectacular preachers jumping at a chance to be interviewed and advertised, nor puppet-like little curates with absurd voices and lady-like manners. He had very little to do with their solid church pillars who did not fall. He had very little to do with the parish's ninety-nine nice little married couples that did not get tired of each other.

The Day was no yellow journal, but it was not conducted for fun. It published what the intelligent classes of a great city would buy. This did not include such items as "John Smith is still living in peace and

The Old Reporter

happiness with his wife and children at No. so-and-so-tieth Street," which is right and normal, but not news, nor very interesting reading to you.

Look at the head-lines of to-day's paper and you may see what sort of facts this bright-eyed boy was stuffing himself with all his long working day, which, also, was abnormal, extending far into the night intended for rest. When he had finished work it was time to go to bed, and when he got up next day it was time to go to work. And to-day's work was digging out, and feeling and handling more abnormality—with little chance to recuperate, like most of the other hard-workers of the city, by rubbing unprofessionally against fellow-humans with other ways of living and working and thinking.

How was he to guess at the mistake he was making? He saw in a week more bare reality, and more sorts of it, than most of you run across in a year. Therefore he thought he knew the truth about life and human nature, and smiled pityingly at the ignorance of dear old fools like his father.

The Old Reporter

What the reporter knew was true indeed, but there were other things equally true, and these he did not know—even when he saw them, which was so seldom that he called them “fakes.” He was not quite twenty-one.

He never told anyone about all this. There was no one to tell. What if there had been? You might remind a Cornwall lad in the bottom of a mine that there was a good, warm sun shining on the hill-side overhead. That would not cure his paleness.

When he got through working it was time to go to bed. He did not go immediately to bed. He would not have gone to sleep if he had. . . . And now I have told the true story of how young Billy got into the way of drinking more than was good for him. It was not to help him get news out of men, because conviviality, he thought, was too personal a thing to use it in business, where he dealt with people, few of whom he considered his social equals. It was not to make him write better copy, because he was an artist and strained with

The Old Reporter

all that was in him after the ideal—which no one ever reaches, but which kept him keyed up all day, and then let him down so hard when the paper went to press.

He had always been too busy with exterior sights and sounds to be troubled with in-growing thoughts, but when midnight came, and he had wound up his last story, and had nothing else to be intense over—with nerves stretched and hand trembling—there came disquieting sensations which sometimes made him feel—but he knew a way to get rid of these feelings.

Billy Woods not only drank, but he got drunk. It was not that he did not know when to stop; of course he knew when to stop. Nor did a "demon" get into him, as they say in the temperance tracts; he did not want to stop. He got drunk because he liked it. It was glorious. And everything swung around, soothingly straightened out, and became sunny and warm. The world was beautiful and lovable, as when he was a kid down home; and he believed you to be worthy of his liking once more, and even of his respect, and he glowed and was glad,

The Old Reporter

and gave his watch and pocket-book to the waiters.

He grew a little older. He digested some of his too suddenly acquired knowledge. As with other young men, his business became more of a business and less of a personal experience. It was an old story now, like death and disease to doctors.

Doctors can get an occasional respite. They dine out sometimes and meet healthy people and can, though not all do, keep normal and well-balanced.

Billy Woods also must have some sort of recreation, and his social instinct, too, was indestructible, like yours. By the time the theatres and music halls were dark, what kind of fun could he get and what sort of society had he to choose from? To go to a lonely club library and read while a loud clock ticked, after writing all day, was loathsome. He required something robust and exciting, like all the intense sort. There are only a few things to do after the paper goes to press. Billy did them.

The next day he reported—nearly always, at the office of the newspaper for which he

The Old Reporter

was doing perhaps the most brilliant work of his sort in the Western hemisphere. He kept a packed suit-case down there now, for he never knew when he took his bath in the morning where he would take off his clothes—if at all—the following night. He was the great Billy Woods.

III

Mr. Woods, the American reporter (or “correspondent” as that sounds more impressive), who had penetrated a part of India—from which all the English journalists, it is said, held back—in order to write those memorable letters to *The Day* about the Plague; who had discovered a new tribe—at least, as to local color—in Patagonia; who had described oil-well booms in Ohio, Indian-uprisings in the Bad Lands, mountain feuds in Kentucky, was back at general work again in New York. He couldn’t keep away. He said he liked the smell of *The Day* office, and had to look at Madison Square at least once in every twenty-four

The Old Reporter

hours. Also, his dyspepsia was not so bothersome as when he was travelling.

“I should think,” said one of his young friends, on Woods’s return from one of these trips, “that you would go in for magazine work now—or write books——”

“And sign all four of my names in full?” returned Woods, “and write in the first person and say I did this and I said that? Why? Aren’t newspapers and anonymity good enough for you? They are for me. So long as I can make people feel things—that’s all I want. Magazines are so slow. It took that one two months to turn around on the Hawaiian stuff I did for them—even then they thought they were beating a rival magazine—Oh, Lord!”

But the young friend meant why didn’t Woods write fiction, or try a play, “I think you could do it.”

Others in the office thought he could. Woods thought so, too, but he did not see why anyone should want to write fiction, he said, who could handle news; he said that facts were the great romantic material of this unsuperstitious age, and there was just

The Old Reporter

as much room for art in the proper portrayal of news as of imagined facts and, "It is as much more difficult as it is more useful," said Billy.

This was quoted by his little crowd of sycophants who flattered him and helped him spend his spacious space earnings, quite like the hangers-on of other great men.

But all that was a year or two ago. Of late older and wiser friends of Woods had been suggesting changes.

They urged him to get into some line of desk work, exchange, or telegraphic, or features. "It would be better for you," they said.

"Too slow," said Billy, "couldn't stand it a month."

"Why don't you take that offer of the Senator's?" the managing editor once asked him.

"Become a private secretary! be an underling and answer questions all day! Besides, I couldn't live on the salary."

"It's a good beginning for a political career."

The Old Reporter

Billy said he'd rather be a gentleman.

"It would be a good idea for you to get out of the newspaper life," said the managing editor at another time. "You've got a good all-around equipment now for——"

"I could no more settle down to a roll-top-desk life than Cherokee Indians can run farms," said Billy, thanking him.

The only thing they could get him interested in was a certain foreign correspondent's place, which was about to be vacant. "You can speak French and German so well," they said. "You've lots of friends over there, and you're just about cynical and superior enough for a correspondent." Billy became quite enthusiastic and excited, but forgot to keep his appointment with the chief in regard to it, and the chief said he was getting tired of doing so much for a man that did so little for himself. Billy was not so very sorry.

"Little, old New York is good enough for me," he said, "even though they do make me read copy occasionally. I wonder why they do." Formerly they said he was too good for it.

The Old Reporter

He still disliked reading copy as much as he loved to fly around the town, with his glasses sliding down his nose, after big news. "It's the only way to live," he said. "I expect to die out on a story."

It might seem strange that he enjoyed it all. He had seen so much that his personal zest in seeing things had worn out long ago. Every sort of occurrence, every sort of human situation, every sort of human character was as old and familiar to him as the streets of New York, which he knew so well that, looking out of an elevated window, between stations, no matter what part of the island it was or how long he might have been asleep and oblivious to the guard's voice, he could give you the name of the street "just by the feel of it," he said, and usually a reminiscence of some story he had worked up in that street, too.

Similarly, the manifestation of all human emotions seemed to him old, stale, and somewhat absurd.

Not that he was cynical. He was beyond that. Cynicism is more or less active. He had reached a sort of passive, premature

The Old Reporter

mellowness. He had a way of bestowing benignant attention upon men and women and affairs. But the only personal interest things held for him now was their news possibility, just as many good business men can appreciate only real estate values or industrial possibilities in scenery.

But while his eye for news—"nose for news" is the technical term—was so keen, his ability to make other people feel the story he saw was a different matter. As different as sympathy is from knowledge.

Every sort of passion and situation had so long ceased to mystify, charm, repel or awe him that now he was forgetting how other people who had not lived so fast were mystified, charmed, repelled, or awed. That is what one writes with. He knew too much. He had forgotten his ignorance.

He did not know what he had lost.

All he knew was that they kept repeating at the office that his stories somehow lacked their former sparkle and human interest. "For Heaven's sake," said the managing editor, one day, "let up on those old worn-out phrases. Get some new sten-

The Old Reporter

cils." Billy, whose pride had been stung much more than they imagined, had been trying to pour sparkle and human interest into his stuff by means of a few more drinks, hurriedly snatched on the way to the office, "just to get into the mood," he told himself. "My digestion is all off to-day, anyhow."

He knew the danger of this. He knew it as well as do some physicians. He could demonstrate with the technical terms very glibly just why it was especially to be avoided by a man with a temperament like his. He wrote a Sunday special upon this.

IV

The time had come for Billy Woods to learn something he had never believed in since a boy; something that was to wipe out many of the effects of his ill-assorted knowledge, replace belief in other good things, putting him in tune with Nature once more and keeping him warm and normal—for life, perhaps . . . But she died . . . Maybe it was just as well.

The Old Reporter

V

For several months after he "left *The Day*" Billy Woods did not take a regular job on any staff, though plenty of city editors tried to get him. Along the Row Billy's reason for this was smilingly said to be fear that he would forget and absent-mindedly walk into *The Day* office from force of habit, as he had done once before with another paper's beat, after *The Day* had tried to discharge him. There are many tales about Billy Woods along the Row. The real reason was a sentimental one, as his old friends knew, a boyish, grand-stand, "true to my first love" sort of loyalty, and Billy was rather pleased with himself for it.

Many of those who left *The Day*, as soon as they had discovered from the perspective point of view that there were also other ways of regarding facts and writing about them than *The Day's* way, learned straight-way to criticise their former paper, pointing out its complacent cock-sureness and

The Old Reporter

snarling vindictiveness, meanwhile keeping on reading it till they died.

Billy never said a disparaging word about it, and if anyone else tried to in his presence, he would stand up like a son for the family that has banished him. He was almost childish about it. "No wonder," some of the men said, "*The Day* indulged him more than any paper ever did anyone else."

So now the ex-star of *The Day* was doing specials. "I ought to be able to get along well as a free lance," he said. His friends thought so, too. But he did not get along very well.

Free lancing is precarious for the most industrious. Billy was not lazy, but he had for so long been writing what he was told to write, in the way he was told to write it, that he did not know how to work now without a boss over him. He had subordinated his own personality to that of the paper's for so long that now his own was afraid to speak.

"How are you getting along, Billy?"

"Oh, first-rate. It's great to be inde-

The Old Reporter

pendent," said Billy, assuming the jaunty manner of the prosperous and contented. To those who knew him well it was pathetically plain that he was not content, and they were soon made to learn that he was not prosperous. Billy was as likely to forget that he had borrowed as, in his affluent days, that he had loaned.

When he signified his willingness to do general work once more, he was seized and used by another paper, and he did some big things before he left it, but it was never with the spirit with which he worked for *The Day*. It was an eminently respectable sheet, but Billy had little respect for it. He patronized it, thought it was sleepy, told the desk they could not appreciate a *Day* story, and that they took all the life and sparkle out of his copy. They called it cheap flippancy.

He threatened to resign, but did not have a chance to. He came down to the office one morning and found a notice in his letter-box. Ten other men and a woman received similar notes. It was nothing unusual, just a little bi-monthly shake-up,

The Old Reporter

decided upon in ten minutes. That is the way it is done in many a newspaper office. Billy told the desk that that was not the way they discharged men from *The Day*. "You ought to know," said the city editor. And for once Billy had no reply to make.

To those who asked him what he was doing these days, Billy said he was still writing "that book," and to anyone that would stop to listen, he gave interesting accounts of how various publishers were fighting for it. "Look at this letter—oh, I find I left it at the room, on the mantel-piece, I think; no, in my other coat," but he would tell in detail what this one said and that one said. It was good, sprightly dialogue. "Look at some of the stuff that gets printed and bound and is called a book!" Billy would exclaim, excitedly, "I ought to be able to write a book. Don't you think so?" They thought he ought, and went on about their business. "Good-by," shouted Billy, "I'll send you a complimentary copy when it comes out."

Like many another newspaper man he

The Old Reporter

had two or three unfinished novels in an old trunk, and it was on these that some of his friends had been urging him, not altogether disinterestedly, to get to work, instead of loafing around, waiting for things to turn up. Billy used to say, "I don't feel like it to-day. Oh, they're no good, anyway."

When he had finally persuaded himself to write something, it seemed so poor and impossible as he looked up at the thing far above him at which he aimed and strained. He did not realize that it is not given to mere man to touch the thing he sighed for. He stared and stared, and then read and re-read what he had created until he loathed it. To run away from it was a necessity.

. . . Finally, when they said they could lend him no more money, they prevailed upon him to write and finish something. It was something quite different.

Did you ever hear who wrote those greasy little publications you have seen A. D. T. boys bending over in elevated trains—"Crack! and a rifle shot broke the Sabbath stillness of the air, and seven bronzed

The Old Reporter

warriors lay stiff at the feet of Deadly Dick?" Newspaper men write many of them. Billy wrote one—just for fun—and the publisher asked for more, complimenting Woods on the way he did it. So with the next Billy foolishly began to take pains. He had all the time he wanted, and again the artist in him began to assert itself; he took it seriously, even though it was a burlesque, consequently became dissatisfied, began it over again in a different way, got discouraged, tore the thing up, burned the pieces and went out and borrowed a quarter. The artistic sense is very persistent, more so than the moral, it seems. He forgot to return the quarter.

Then at night, if he could get enough to drink, he would talk brilliantly about the great, beautiful, new sort of writing he was going to begin in the morning, or, equally interestedly, about your writing. He would be as sympathetic and responsive as only he could be, getting your meaning before you could express it, and then expressing it better than you could. Later in the night, he sought and often got the attention

The Old Reporter

of the whole room, and would argue and hold forth on all sorts of topics of the town, as he loved to do, displaying an inner knowledge of men and things which, if it had been caught by a phonograph, could in some cases have been reeled off to stenographers and sold for enough to keep Billy Woods drunk for a week.

As it was, newspaper men of a certain sort used to get columns of Sunday space out of him, about all sorts of things, from Patagonian grasses to the social ambitions of the wife of the man who earned a living taking care of the bodies for the dissecting room of the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Then when the papers came out—Billy always read all of them—he would scratch his head and say, “That’s a good story. Say, do you know, I was going to do a special on that myself. Too late now.”

If some one had taken him in hand, and assumed guardian- and manager-ship over him, on a per cent. basis—for Billy would have agreed—they might both have made a good thing of it. There was nobody to do this. Many of his old friends had quit the

The Old Reporter

life entirely. Two of them were becoming well-known lawyers. One was editor of a country newspaper, raising chickens as a side issue. A number had died, and some had dropped out of sight. Others had gone into different lines of journalistic work. Others had remained newspaper men and more or less healthy, normal, balanced human beings, and were certainly good friends to Billy Woods. But these had children of their own to think about, or else staffs of reporters to control.

But he avoided most of his old associates of *The Day* now, even when drunk, for he had an idea that they would be ashamed to be seen with him; that they talked and laughed behind his back, and perhaps some of them did. He cherished no resentment; he thought it was quite natural and right, and that he deserved it. But he used to linger sometimes in an unobserved nook by the old familiar doorway, watching the younger, fresh-faced *Day* reporters as they came running out upon the street on assignments. He would beam a benediction on them.

The Old Reporter

No matter where he woke up, *The Day* was the first thing he asked for—before a glass of ice-water even. He knew—few better—how to criticise each story, but he would laugh aloud at the humorous ones, and say, “By Jove, that’s a pretty story,” of the pathetic ones, and slap the paper with his hand and get nervous and excited. Then he would stop short and think. Any one who knew him could tell what he was thinking.

“I saw old Dr. Woods’s son down on Broadway to-day. I wonder why his people don’t do something for him. There always was a wild streak in the Woodses. He’s looking pretty seedy.”

Billy did not mean to look seedy. He could not keep his neckties from fraying any more than the silk facing of his overcoat; and the latter he wore unbuttoned, just as he did the under coat, so he could put his hands in his trousers pockets. That was more comfortable. So was wearing his hat on the back of his head. And, when he could get it, there was a cigar in his mouth.

The Old Reporter

Billy drifted into regular work again in this way:

He was waiting one morning in the office of an afternoon paper to see a copy-reader he knew named Brown, probably to borrow some money from him. Brown was late. Billy waited at his seat. Twice the city editor, who was near-sighted, had been on the point of addressing Woods for the man that belonged there. The third time he snapped out, "Say, there, can you read copy?" He did not know who it was.

Billy said he thought he could. "Read these stories and keep the desk to-day."

Billy kept it for three months, and it is said that the headlines he wrote brought up the circulation of the paper.

He kept sober all that time. The indoor work was less of a strain on the nerves, and so there was less necessity to drink, and also he was not obliged to walk in front of places whence the peculiar smells called to him.

"Told you fellows," said Woods, "that I could quit it if I made up my mind to it. I am a gentleman. I'm not one of these

The Old Reporter

Park Row bums. My people . . .” He was often talking about his people now, and how distinguished their history had been, and it used to make some men laugh, and Billy had two or three fights on that score.

Then one morning he did not come down to the office (this was an afternoon paper), nor the next, nor until a week later, when he suddenly ran into the room and made a scene, trying to throw out the man who had succeeded him at the desk.

The next day, when he was sober, he came in and apologized ; he apologized profusely to the whole staff, and the office boys. He was almost abject. But there was no place for him there any longer.

He got occasional jobs here and there—often on some poor little paper of small importance, which many of you never read, which Billy, in the old days of his glory, used to feel sorry for. The other newspaper men along the Row who read all the papers (and seldom anything else) did not have to be told when and where Billy Woods was back at work again. They

The Old Reporter

could see it in the columns of the paper, as plainly as though it were a photograph, and then, suddenly, the touch that they recognized as his had dropped out again, and they would say: "Too bad that fellow can't leave whiskey alone," for they knew that Billy had lost another job.

He would disappear from the Row entirely, and no one seemed to know certainly where he was until a week or so later he would turn up again, looking like a wreck, drop into an office and beg the city editor for a job or the loan of a dollar. Sometimes he would get the dollar, sometimes the job—perhaps because the city editor expected to get the latter back sooner.

Meanwhile he lived nobody knew how—how do you live, you ghosts of Printing House Square, that walk up and down the Row and stand around in certain hallways and bar-rooms, talking of the story of the day and trouble with *The Times's* policy—and the Lord knows what—most intelligently; how do you manage it, I wonder?

The Old Reporter

VI

Some old friends of Billy Woods had decided to send him off to an alcoholism cure. They argued that it would not hurt him, and might prove less expensive for themselves. Woods was full of the idea, and said it would be just the thing.

Two of them went to the train with him, and he was as pleased and delighted as a boy starting off for a month's camping; he shook their hands effusively, even whimpered a little at how good they were to him, and then blinking his eyes said, solemnly, for the fifth time, that he sincerely believed he was going to be cured. "And if I'm not, you know," he suddenly called back, as the train started, "I'll write a special about the thing, showing it up for a fake and all that."

"I wonder," said one of his friends, as the rear car grew smaller, "if he would take the assignment to cover his father's funeral?"

"If he wasn't too drunk," said the other,

The Old Reporter

and they both went back to their daily work in the noisy vortex of the city.

Billy, in a quiet place in the good, green country, experienced regular meals, regular hours, and normal nights' sleep for the first time in years. And for the first time in years he had a perspective view of Newspaper Row and himself. They made him take long walks through the quiet country, and he saw, as plainly as his friends, the inevitable conclusion of his story—unless he took himself sharply in hand, without any more delay.

As he began regaining his physical exuberance he began telling himself what he had never acknowledged to anyone before—that he could have stopped all along if he only wanted to—the trouble had been to want to. He used to tell his friends, with tears in his eyes, "What makes it so hard is that, no matter how hard I fight, there is always the absolute certainty of failure in the end, sooner or later." But he now believed that he could have kept from it all the while, just as he could have held back his spectacular tears, if he had only made

The Old Reporter

up his mind. Even when she died he could have held off—but everybody said they did not blame him, and he did not blame himself, and there was so much satisfaction in letting go once more and getting recklessly, gloriously drunk.

Before he left the Sanitarium something else happened for the first time in years. His father came to see him; came all the way from Virginia to pray with him, as he told Billy, who almost blushed, and after the old gentleman had left, promising to return the next day, the reporter laughed, kindly. He laughed again the second day, and the third. The fourth time he cried. They weren't fake tears this time. They lasted so long. . . .

But Billy declined with very sincere thanks to go home and do the prodigal-son act. Once a newspaper man, always a newspaper man. But he was going to get some quiet indoor work, writing paragraphs on some mild afternoon paper, or something of that sort.

Woods came out, pronounced cured, and he hurried back to Park Row and showed

The Old Reporter

himself to the first one of his friends he could find. He was very quiet and serious now, and had a good, clean look about the eyes. "I believe I am a new man," he said, gravely. "Now I want to get to work."

The friend looked thoughtful, for, being a newspaper man, he was skeptical of many things, including gold cures, but he knew it was useless to advise, so he tried to help Woods get something to do.

But it was no longer easy to get even Billy Woods a job, notwithstanding his clean-shaven, grave face, backed up by a new suit of dark clothes and white linen. It had become the general belief along the Row that he could not be depended upon to keep sober till the paper went to press.

First they tried the big papers, but most of the city editors refused to even see Woods; one or two because they had been reporters with him in the old days, and it was easier to refuse Billy Woods if they did not see him, even though they were hardened city editors; but most of them because

The Old Reporter

they were very busy men and had no time to waste on drunkards.

"There's no sense in being discouraged," said Billy Woods, smiling; "I'll try again to-morrow. What are my legs for? Say, wasn't that a well-written story *The Day* had this morning about the Board of Education!" Then he talked fascinatingly for half an hour about politics in the Board of Education.

The next day he started with the less desirable papers and began to work down the list.

"But I've quit drinking entirely," he exclaimed, straightening his glasses and trying to look intent, like the old Billy Woods. "How about the night exchange desk? You know what I can do."

The city editors smiled indulgently. They did not seem to understand that he had quit drinking entirely.

"Very well," said Woods, cheerily, "Good-by," smiled, bowed politely, and marched off to try to make some other office think it was worth while giving him a trial.

The Old Reporter

Then as Woods's cane thumped on out of the room, those who were waiting for assignments gathered in a group on tables and chairs, and the old reporters told stories of Woods's past greatness, which made the new reporters' eyes grow big, and instances of his absent-mindedness and drunken freaks, at which they all laughed together. . . . In a week or two it was, "Anything I can get. You know my abilities. I've hocked everything I own except the clothes I have on. *Please* give me just one chance. No, I don't care to borrow money, thank you. I can't say when I could ever pay you back."

This last was surprising, but you see he remembered that the old Billy Woods had had a great deal of self-respect. He was recalling all he could of the old Billy Woods.

"Well, Billy, still looking for that job?" said grinning young reporters, familiarly, as they passed by. A year or two ago they would have called him Mr. Woods, if they had presumed to address him at all, for the star reporter of *The Day* was a very exclusive young person.

The Old Reporter

Billy Woods's great chance came in this way: A big piece of news had come into existence, and the morning papers each had at least two columns about it. But none of them had been able to cover a most important point in it. So there was a good "second day" story for the afternoon papers, just the sort of story Billy Woods, the old Billy Woods, could have run down. Now at rare intervals the old Billy Woods cropped out. It was on that chance that the city editor of a certain afternoon paper was saying: "Now, Woods, you are a drunkard. I want you to understand me; you are not a member of the staff unless you run down this story. If you get the story you get the job. If you can't find the story you'll have to look for another job. That's plain." Billy knew he was considered a drunkard, so he thanked the kind editor for giving him a chance.

"Have you any change?" asked the city editor. "Well, here's an order on the cashier. There, that'll pay car-fare and a telephone, if you have to telephone. Now skip out and make your best time. Oh, say,

The Old Reporter

Woods, don't forget this is an afternoon paper."

Billy did not like to be joked about his absent-mindedness, but he was too happy with the thought of going out on a story once more to feel any resentment. His eyes were glistening as he grabbed some copy-paper and dashed out of the room with something of his old vigorous stride, smiling to himself and humming a little tuneless tune of pleasure.

"I'll bet he gets drunk on that order you gave him, Mr. Hutchings," said a copy-reader, looking up.

"I have two other men out on the story, so it won't matter," said the city editor.

But Billy Woods had no thought of getting drinks with the money or even something to eat, which he would have relished much more just now. First he went to his old favorite barber-shop and got shaved. He remembered that the old Billy Woods was a well-dressed young man; besides it might be necessary to look like a gentleman, in order to work the story in the way he had instantly planned.

The Old Reporter

It was the sort of story Billy loved. A large mining and land company, well known and believed in by nearly everybody, had suddenly and quite unexpectedly come to grief. So much of the story, and very little else, by way of news, had been published that morning all over the globe. Why the company had met with disaster had not been published, because that could not be found out, as yet, not even by the cleverest reporters in the most enterprising newspaper centre of both hemispheres.

It was, indeed, just the sort of story the old Billy Woods could have handled. And as he walked energetically across City Hall Park, past the indigent and intoxicated on the benches, he was resolving again with all that was in him to be the old Billy Woods. As he ran up the L steps and boarded a train he swore never to drink again as long as he lived. This was where he usually swore never to drink again.

Nearly all the newspaper world—that is, men who represented the newspapers of the whole world—were buzzing around the office of the stranded firm. It was down in

The Old Reporter

Wall Street. That was the reason Billy Woods went uptown. He went to the home of the president of the company and asked, mysteriously, to see him alone. He was informed that he was out. Billy knew that; that was the reason he asked for him. Of course other reporters had come to the house; they had been there every few hours of the last twenty-four, including midnight and two o'clock; they had not asked to see the master of the house alone, and they had been anything but mysterious; they endeavored to be as pleasant and conciliatory as possible. But of course they had not succeeded in seeing the inside of the vestibule, much less a member of the family.

“Are you quite certain he's out?” exclaimed Billy Woods excitedly to the servant. “Did he not leave a message for me? What! Why, this is most extraordinary, I'm sure; most extraordinary! Did he not tell you I was coming?” His vowels had become broad and the intonation in his questions was not American.

The servant explained that he had been instructed to admit no one. But he said

The Old Reporter

so in an apologetic tone ; and so Billy went on : “ My good man, you’re quite right. Pray do not admit anyone—not even me, but did he not tell you I was expected? ”

The servant said he would inquire. “ What name, sir? ”

“ My name? Don’t you know me? If not it would hardly do to tell you my name. If he’s in tell him H. P. is here from the West—or tell his daughter.”

“ Very good, sir ; come into the reception-room, please.”

When Woods put on his English accent and arrogant manner, it always went straight to English servants’ hearts. He was the first reporter to get farther than the doorstep.

In a few minutes a young girl appeared at the portières. She had a great deal of brown hair and her hands were pretty. Billy did not notice the hands until afterward, but he had already taken in a great many more things than most persons would in fifteen minutes. Among them, that this young woman was romantic and emotional, and that she had been holding in tears and

The Old Reporter

excitement—and, probably, facts—until her young head was almost reeling.

Billy automatically formed his plan before she had crossed the room; then he came forward to meet her, but not too suddenly. "Isn't your father here?" He asked this in a low tone of suppressed excitement.

"He's down town. Are you a reporter——"

"But he left a letter for me, did he not? Surely, surely he told you to expect me. I sent a telegram when I started and another on my way yesterday, at Chicago, saying I would call at the house, you know."

"Papa got a number of telegrams from the West, saying various men would be on to-day" (as Woods had easily guessed), "but I suppose he thought they would go directly to the office. May I ask your name?"

"But I told him distinctly—oh, Palmer, Palmer's my name. You've heard of me, I dare say," Billy said, in a matter-of-fact way, and went on, "I told him I would call here, if he was not at the office—oh, this is terri-

The Old Reporter

ble! If you knew what it involves you would—ah—pardon the intrusion and—and the way I am behaving, I'm sure. You have heard of me, have you not? Mr. Harold Palmer?" Billy smiled modestly at her, while he fumbled, apparently, for a card, which apparently he forgot.

"Very likely I have," said the girl, more graciously now, "but I don't recall——"

"One of the English members?" asked Woods. "You've heard your father speak of them?"

"Oh, yes, of course; he always spoke of them as——"

"The English crowd," laughed Billy, who had read the morning papers carefully, and also knew something of the history and working of this corporation, as he did of most big firms down town.

The girl was now smiling at him agreeably. "I *thought* you were an Englishman when you first spoke," she said.

Billy now saw by the large, young eyes that there was a new and a personal interest in him, and he surmised that she was recalling what her father had doubtless often

The Old Reporter

told her about the group of well-born young Englishmen out there in the West, one or two of whom had left titles and stories in England, making them interesting to young girls. So now he began to talk. He talked well. He knew she would talk later on when he was ready for it.

First his talk was calm ; it was merely to establish his fictitious identity in her mind, and win her confidence. This was easy for Woods, who was now warming up to his part like an actor when he feels he has the attention and good-will of the house. Then he began to work upon her sympathies. Soon he had her under-lip trembling at the picture of ruin which the failure of the firm was about to bring upon him, the sole support of that old mother he had described to her—unless he found out whether or not her father . . . “ But, of course,” he interrupted himself, dropping his dark eyes, “ I would not for the world have you tell even me about it unless you yourself feel that under the circumstances, the peculiar circumstances, I have a full right to know. I trust I am not asking too much? If I

The Old Reporter

am you must frankly tell me so, but oh, Heavens, if I do not find out before the Stock Exchange closes—no! within half an hour——” He bit his lip.

Billy now had her talking, talking frankly and freely, with a nice little sympathetic look about the corners of her mouth, and wonder in her eyes, and some zest, for he seemed such a strange, romantic, fascinating foreigner, and the story he told was so pathetic, and he had such a sad, strong, distinguished face and bearing. She believed that he had had “a great sorrow” in his life, and all sorts of strange experiences, and that she was in the midst of a story.

“And what did your father say he would do in that case?” the interesting man was asking, beaming kindly at her, and adding: “You see, I don’t exactly understand. I’m all knocked up—all these sudden worries—but never mind that,” and he stopped himself with a grim smile, quite as they do in novels.

She repeated it all clearly, for she was an only daughter, and her father was a widower, and that was the reason Billy had

The Old Reporter

guessed the girl would know. When in trouble, Woods generally found, a man has to talk to some woman, and Billy had reckoned on the right one.

“Then after your father learned that the Western bank wanted the securities after all?”

“Well, then, Mr. Palmer, you know what the directors decided to do. Indeed, you ought to know.”

“Indeed, I ought,” said the stranger, with a very bitter laugh. “And your father?”

“Well, Mr. Palmer—my father—it was too late then; it was simply a necessity, under the circumstances. Don’t you see it was? How did papa know that the directors were not going to concur with him—they always had before—how was he to guess—oh, Mr. Palmer, isn’t it awful! This whole thing—papa’s nearly worried to death—but he thinks he will be able to tide it over by to-night—he’s positive if he can only continue to keep the papers off the right scent, you know. Of course you won’t talk to any reporters, will you, Mr. Palmer?”

The Old Reporter

"No," said Woods, rising from his seat, "I won't tell any of the reporters."

"They would like to know what you know," said the girl, earnestly, shaking her head.

"Yes," said Billy.

"You know it would ruin papa if the papers got hold of it—not only ruin him, but—well, you see how it would look to the public?"

"Yes," said Billy, who knew very well.

"Some of them are very clever, papa says. Are you sure you would understand how to deal with reporters?"

"Yes," said Billy, "I would understand. You're quite right," he added, picking up his hat; "don't let them inside the door; don't let *anyone* in—slam the door in their faces."

The girl even followed him to the door. She was holding out her hand now. It was a beautiful hand. "I have talked very freely to you," she said, her eyes looking frankly into his; "you are a comparative stranger to me, but I feel that I can trust you."

The Old Reporter

Woods looked at her a moment. "I'm glad you have," he said, and then he bowed low and quite gracefully, having been taught how many years ago by a mother who had a soft voice, and went down the steps, looking back once more at the girl with the brave, trustful look in her eyes. There was another once to whom he had made a promise long ago. She, too, had beautiful hands. He had written verses about them. He was starting off down the street now with facts which, if published, would ruin another man and make Billy Woods—just then another reporter came bustling up the steps. He had been waiting nearby, and had seen the door open and Woods come out.

The girl met him at the top of the stairs and shook her head decisively.

"I beg your pardon," insisted the newcomer, "but what one paper publishes you may as well let all publish," pointing down the street at Billy's disappearing back; "you talked a long time to that other reporter—" The door slammed in his face, and Billy, who had watched, went hurrying

The Old Reporter

down the street, shaking all over his body so that people on the street stared at him and smiled.

All day the girl kept saying to herself: "I believe in him anyway; even if he is a reporter, I believe in the look in his face."

She sent for the first editions of the afternoon papers. They all contained frequent mention of her father's name and a column or two about the affair, but little that had not been printed in the morning papers, and nothing of what she had told the dark stranger. She looked through the successive editions of all the papers and could not find what she did not want to find. The next morning she woke up early, tiptoed down-stairs, looked through all the papers. Then she crept up to bed again, saying, "I told you so; I just *knew* that reporter was a gentleman," mentally begged his pardon for having felt even uneasy about it, and got a little much-needed sleep before breakfast.

But that wasn't the way of it exactly.

Woods had not telephoned to the office because there was plenty of time for a rapid writer, like himself, to catch the first edi-

The Old Reporter

tion. Besides, this was too good a story to risk over the telephone. There was no one in the office, he thought, who could handle that story in the masterful way he could. All he had to do was to pull himself together now, for this last final spurt, and then he'd be the winner, and all the Row would be talking about him once more, and perhaps *The Day* . . . But the trembling old reporter couldn't pull himself together, somehow. He had used up all he had in him, as it was. He called upon his will. But there wasn't very much of that any longer.

"I have demonstrated it for three solid months," he whispered to himself, pushing open a bamboo door, "and now is a time when I need it, if there ever was. It's not the use but the abuse—" The little yielding door shut silently behind him.

"What! You again? I haven't seen you for a long time," said the brisk young hospital surgeon that night as he jumped off his seat in the rear of the ambulance. "Tumble in—that's all right—you'll have

The Old Reporter

time enough to tell me all about it before you get out of the hospital. Shut up now." Then to the big policeman: "They always have it worse when they haven't had proper nourishment for as long as this fellow. Sit on his legs, will you, please?"

The great corporation was on its feet once more and making money, and the great story was more or less of a blank to the old reporter by the time he was discharged from Bellevue, and came stumbling down toward Park Row again.

.

"Hello, there's Billy Woods. Every paper wanted that fellow once; none of 'em will have him now—look out, let's hurry by or he'll strike us for the price of a drink. Too bad he couldn't leave whiskey alone."



**THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE
STAMPED BELOW**

—————
**RENEWED BOOKS ARE SUBJECT TO IMMEDIATE
RECALL**

LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS

Book Slip-50m-9,'70 (N9877s8)458—A-31/5,6

Nº 808806

Williams, J.L.
The stolen story.

PS3545

I528

S8

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
DAVIS

