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STORIES FOR IDLE HOURS



How the Gazette Lost a Beat

By ALLEN L. CHURCHILL

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It was a dull midsummer day in the city room. Standish, the city editor, after vainly seeking for assignments to keep busy the half dozen idle reporters...

It may be guessed that the Gazette was not a metropolitan newspaper. But, while our little city did not give itself airs, she boasted three daily papers...

A newcomer on the staff of the Gazette and a beginner in newspaper work. I had thus far found the life singularly lacking in that excitement which is popularly supposed to be the accompaniment of the reporter's career.

It was a tiresome business, and I was glad when Billy Moulton, our "star" reporter, came in just after the general exodus.

"What's the matter? Has anything broken loose?" Moulton, without replying, handed the receiver to him as he came forward.

"Anything in it?" asked Moulton. "Yes, a lot, if we can get it. It's from Morgansen. He has found out by accident that Thompson, the cashier of the Fifth National bank, has gone with \$50,000 of the bank's money.

"You'll do the bank end," he glanced around the room and growled. "Of course it had to happen when everybody is out," he said. I felt his eyes upon my work over my shoulder.

for a couple of years the folks up there think I'm a future Bennett or Dunn. When I got this place on the star they had a great jubilation. I think the Eagle got out a special edition.

"I felt very uncomfortable and altogether at odds with myself. Of course I was not responsible for the success or failure of this youth, but I was too fresh from the same struggle not to have a fellow feeling for him and a keen regret for the discomfort that would be delayed only long enough for his city editor to find out how he had fared in this case.

"What are you at headquarters for?" I asked abruptly, more from a need of saying something than because I cared. "The city editor sent me to 'cover' the place, whatever that may mean."

"You can't always tell by appearances," I said lightly. It was dangerous ground, and I wanted to get off as soon as I could. "Do you think I ought to go into the office and find out?"

"Oh, no, it's probably nothing," I answered. Fortunately he was looking at the door of the office and not at me. In my agitation I had leaned forward and almost seized him. I might have spared myself the stress of mind.

To me a fresh and tormenting aspect of the affair presented itself. If I had been glimpsed before having anything to do directly with the boy's approaching downfall, I was no longer. I had become a passive agent to it.

"Wait a minute," I said. "Get one to spare." "Just a second," I pleaded. He stopped. "Now, then, what is it?"

"Moulton, you must tell that boy what you found in the office," said I. He stared at me in amazement. "Are you crazy?" he asked. "No, but he simply must be told."

"That's really no hurry." An effort he pulled himself together. "Why, William?" he said. "I didn't know it was you."

ment of my little finger could have brought down the great stone building on my head I would have moved it. I made some unobtainable sound, but Billy stopped me with a gesture.

"I'll own up to feeling rather a sneak," he said, "but we get paid to slush the innocent as well as the guilty. You'll get drunk with me yet."

Puritans Burned Poisoners. A writer in the Boston Transcript says that the Puritans in burning "witches" and poisoners only followed the modes of punishment then enforced throughout the realm.

He Was a Wise One. A certain gentleman in a country town owns a row of houses, and in one of them lives a married son of his who is noted for his miserly habits.

Sure Sinks. "The late Ethel Allen Hitchcock," said a diplomat, "had a trenchant, outspoken way with him. Once at a reception to honor an inventor describing in his presence a new kind of warship."

Decreasing Weight in Summer. To the many persons who desire to reduce their avoirdupois the good old summer time offers a ready and simple solution to their problem.

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