

HOW DID YOU GET YOUR FIRST JOB?

BY GARNET WARREN.

It would be quite unpardonable to refer once again to the land of opportunity were it not for the fact that the land of opportunity is not only a land of opportunity, but it is a land of opportunity. It is our very chiefest asset. It lurks in dark places seeking to waylay us. It lingers at corners with every kidnapping intent. It raises its arms and beckons.

It is a few qualities, doubtless, solid but unshakable—courage, perseverance, and it is exhibited in the least suggestion of intelligence. It is its silent work in the paths of finance and professions, in the fields of construction or education, where minds or houses are built. Its path leads to the theatre, which is a law unto itself.

It is the first "job" of the most successful men. The things which men do were invariably small. They were usually jobs which in other countries would have been dooms. They were the crudest of jobs. They were jobs usually pursued by hand laborers.

In an instance consider the career of Max Steuer.

Max Steuer's Career. He was born in Homono, in Austria. His family—fashion of many immigrant families—arrived in fragments. The father came first. He sent his sister. Both sent for the balance of the family. The humble body of which came young Steuer in the steamer. This was in '77. They lived in the most crowded section of the east side. The bedroom was more than a bedroom for the family. It was also a dining and cooking and sleeping apartment. Max Steuer's father worked in a sweatshop, to which present young Steuer went after school hours. From nine to three he went to work. From three to nine he worked at the shop—an unmatched equilibrium of hours.

His particular activity was to pull stitches from made coats. His pay ranged from a dollar to half to a munificent three dollars a week. He supplemented this by bringing frankfurters and democratic food to the sweatshop workers and

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MEN Who Have Big Jobs Now Tell of the Modest Ones with Which They Began the Big Battle



MAX STEUER. Photo by Pirie MacDonald.

OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN. Photo by Matsuno.

From Three to Nine He Worked at the Sweatshop.

"Look here," said the acquaintance, "can you raise one hundred dollars?"

Steuer thought and imagined that perhaps he could. "You can get a little desk space here, then," said the acquaintance. "You can let some of the rest of it out. It won't cost you much. And perhaps there are some small matters here that I'll get the firm to turn over to you."

So Steuer engaged his small room for \$20 a month. He sublet it for \$10. Which seems to indicate that Homono, in Austria, was able to develop some commercial instinct. However, still Steuer waited for clients, but they would not come.

At half-past twelve he would walk out on the streets for an hour or so to pretend that he had been out to luncheon. He was beginning to think of looking for a job—any job. Then one fine morning a man walked into his room. He said he had been rec-



His First Job Was That of Errand Boy



He Was Put to Cleaning the Crude Tobacco Leaf.



Sweeping Out a Bank

ommended. Who recommended him Steuer does not know to this day. The man said that he had come to give him a case. The man had purchased foreign stocks and had received a fraudulent certificate. The man asked him what his fee would be. Steuer considered with great trepidation and asked if \$25 would be too much. The man produced \$25 and Steuer set to work. He recovered the man's \$3,300. When he paid his client the money the man asked what it was he owed him. "You paid me my fee," said Steuer. "I only asked \$25."

The man took \$500 from the \$3,300 which Steuer had just returned to him. "Will this satisfy you?" he said. "Amplify," said young Steuer, who thought that law might be a pretty good thing after all. That was the turning of the tide. From that day Steuer did not think of hunting jobs any more. Clients got into the habit of pursuing him. They are still at it.

Oscar Hammerstein's First Job. The picturesque Oscar Hammerstein is another brilliantly successful man with what one might term a past. He was born in Berlin in 1841. He came here also in that popular means of transportation, the steamer. He needed work with a peculiar need; he needed it very badly. But his training had been peculiar. His father had intended him to be a professor, and had accordingly taught him languages, which is, of course, the very foundation of professorship. He also taught him music, without the knowledge that he was afterward to apply it in the direction of making a million out of grand opera.

When Oscar Hammerstein arrived in New York, however, he found that there was no universal demand for professors. Indeed, he found no single person who wanted one. He stopped at an exceedingly cheap boarding house on the east side till his money was exhausted, and then, with trepidation, waited upon his landlady. He will tell you that it was the one more nervous moment than that which even preceded the engagement of Mme. Melba as his first prima donna. He represented that he had no more money, but a very certain appetite and much ability to work. He asked that something be done to match the three things up.

"Can't I work for my board some way?" he suggested. Now, the landlady was kindly and she thought she wanted coal carried and fires made and odd, mysterious things to be done about the kitchen. "If you want to do that for your board you can," said she. So Hammerstein carried the coal. Afterward he hesitated them, burning upon the heads of opera stars who attempted to "hold him up." But the carrying was his very first job. Then one day he saw an advertisement. "Wanted—A boy to learn the tobacco trade," it read. He preferred the promise of the tobacco trade to carrying coal. He felt that it offered a greater future. So he presented himself and the man hired him. He was put to cleaning the crude tobacco leaf and afterward to rolling it. He worked at the back of a little murky store for twelve hours a day. At the end of a week his back felt very tired and his fingers very sore. Then the man handed to him \$2, which was his wages.

His First Case. It is one thing to follow the law and another to get an opportunity of practicing at it. Steuer looked for a position as law clerk. But the law was drugged with law clerks—a habit it has not yet overcome. Young Steuer was just commencing to get discouraged when he called at the office of acquaintance.



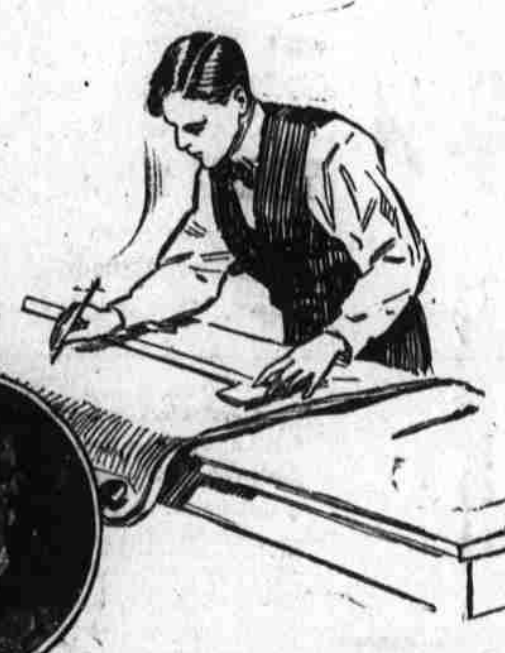
THEODORE P. SHONTS. Photo by Altman.

By the Next Evening He Had Taken in \$100

Photo by Marocco.



HENRY SIEGEL.



He Became a Tracer of Drawings

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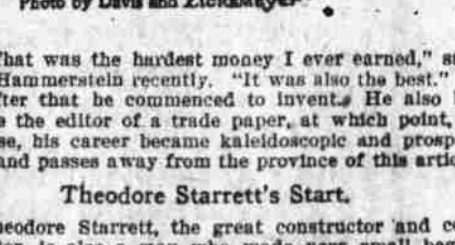
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FREDERIC THOMPSON. Photo by Davis and Zickmayer.



A Delivery Boy in a Grocery Store

Photo by Davis and Zickmayer.

here, Theodore, those posts look as if they were made for a cathedral. They look about the size of a minaret to suggest changes. Mr. Thompson entered enthusiastically into that discussion. He didn't hire any one to do that. However, when everything was concluded he announced his official position. "I'm janitor here," he said. Two weeks later he was manager. His career after that was a phantasmagoria of expositions and Luna Parks and Hippodromes and theatrical productions, one of which you are usually certain of seeing somewhere near Broadway.

Charles Thorley's Venture.

Charles Thorley, florist to the whole aristocratic world of America and its wife, has had a life of varied experiences, perhaps the most interesting of which was when he made a beginning after having been very thoroughly and creditably cleaned out by that one old institution, Wall street. He was only twenty-two at the time. He previously had made a success in Fourteenth street, but great successes don't count when Wall street is working the other way. Young Thorley owed the respectable sum of \$120,000, which seems convincing even for the period of 1880, and inconceivably left Fourteenth street. He not unnaturally wanted a clean leaf to start upon. That morning he walked Broadway without a dollar—with less than a dollar—and he thought, thought of what he could do.

"Then, all on a sudden, a sign seemed to flash out upon me," he said. "Store to let." It was. It seemed to detach itself from its surroundings. Well, I thought and thought, and went down next morning. There was that sign still. It directed me to the Gilsey estate, which was a little further along the way. I went in and a very gruff man told me that neither of the Mr. Gileys was in, so I waited and waited and finally went in again. A very harsh looking man met me—my, but he was a sour looking man! "You've got a store to let," I said. "What do you want that store for?" he asked. "Flowers," said I. "There was a florist in there just before and he made a failure of it," he said. "That's all right," I said. Well, then he commenced to ask me questions. What was my name? Was the place big enough? Was I sure I could handle it? I said "Yes" to everything. Then he half closed his eyes and sat looking. After a while he said, "You can have the place." I said "All right" slowly, wondering where I was going to get the money from.

Well, then the old Mr. Gilsey (for it was he) looked at Mr. Thorley and said, "But you haven't even asked the price." That was all right, that was all right, said Mr. Thorley. If he wanted the store the price wasn't an object. "Well, it's \$2,500 a year," said the older Gilsey, "and our terms are three months in advance."

A Clean Sweep.

Charles Thorley murmured the familiar "all right" once more. And they went to see the place. It was small and bare, and the paper was torn off. The unsuccessful florist had made a clean sweep before he had gone. Now, Mr. Thorley had a gem in his pocket. He had held it for sentimental reasons, and it was the only thing which he possessed. After viewing the little room he walked down the street looking for a pawnshop. He found one and said to the man, "How much will you give me for that? Give me as much as you can; I want every cent you can give me on it." "One hundred and twenty-five dollars," said the pawnbroker. Mr. Thorley took the \$125 and went to look at that little room again. The optician next door, ascending a neighbor, came out. "Going to take the store?" said he. "Yes," said Mr. Thorley. "You've got a bad landlord," said the optician. "He's a wolf."

Well, Mr. Thorley, thinking, thinking, went back to the Gilsey office. "I'm going to take that place," said he to Mr. Gilsey, "but they say you're a wolf. I'm going to give you \$50 on account of one month's rent. It's all I've got."

Mr. Gilsey looked at Mr. Thorley, then looked again. There was a twinkle about the furthest edges of his eyes. "To show you how much of a wolf I am," he said, "your rent will be \$2,000 instead of \$2,500, and I won't take your \$50 on account till the month's up."

Well, Mr. Thorley went to the place where the Marlborough Hotel now stands, where there was a second hand lumber yard. Near there he made his purchases—two chairs, a counter, a mirror, a chandelier. Then he repaired the store. He stocked it. When finished he had sixty cents. It was on Friday and he would not open that day. He stood at his door shuffling the sixty cents in his hands. Old Mr. Gilsey came up and chatted with him. There was an old theatrical boarding house across the street. Suddenly Mr. Thorley took his sixty cents and threw it with all his force over the roof of the boarding house. Mr. Gilsey stared and said, "What are you doing?" "That's the last sixty cents I have," said Mr. Thorley. "If I haven't got more than that by to-morrow night you are going to have a bad tenant."

By the next evening he had taken in \$100. In five years he had paid every cent of the \$120,000 he had owed, with interest. Everything he touched turned into gold. In seven years he owned his store and property adjoining. He owned the house over which he had thrown the money. Mr. Gilsey consulted him about everything. The first crazy looking old man in the Gilsey offices was his private accountant for fifteen years.

Also Charles Thorley climbed up to the roof of that old theatrical boarding house which he had owned and he searched for the sixty cents, but he never found it.

Henry Siegel's Success.

Henry Siegel, whose name is so associated with the development of the department store as we know it to-day, came originally from Tübingen, in Germany. He was only fifteen when he came here, and his first job was that of errand boy in Washington. Here he stayed four years, running errands and keeping his eyes open. He had definitely decided that \$3 a week was capable of improvement, so at nineteen he went to a little town in Pennsylvania and started a store. It was a very little store, for young Henry Siegel wasn't a millionaire at that time, but the habit of keeping his eyes open commenced to be useful.

"I did things in that little place," he said recently, "as I had noticed them doing in Washington. It possible. I would think out some little improvement, and I would improve upon it. Don't let anybody tell you not to copy. Copy—and better; that's the successful rule in business."

It proved so at all events in young Henry Siegel's case. In a few years he had a large store, which he sold out. From there he went to Chicago, where his sensational success is a matter of record; and when he left, in 1896, he was one of the biggest merchants in the city. His experiences in New York and Boston have been but a duplication of this. "I ascribe all my success," he says, "to the habits I formed when an office boy. I have never forgotten them, and find them equally good now."

Frederic Thompson's Janitorship.

Frederic Thompson started at twelve. He became a delivery boy in a grocery store at that popular sum of \$3 a week. He delivered groceries with great success. In these days he delivers theatrical goods. The most vital time in his career, however, arrived at the time of the Chicago Exposition. This found him with just sufficient money to go to Chicago, where he presented himself at the offices of Manning, Maxwell & Moore, who were one of the largest exhibitors. "There's a janitor's job open," said the person in charge. So Frederic Thompson accepted the janitor's job. He was expected to sweep out a job at which his young blood rebelled. So he hired another man to do this and proceeded to make himself useful among the exhibits. So much so indeed that at the end of the week he sent in a bill for the man he had hired—and it was paid. A few weeks after Mr. Moore, one of the partners, came to the place of exhibit, and thinking Mr. Thompson the company's representative, commenced to suggest changes. Mr. Thompson entered enthusiastically into that discussion. He didn't hire any one to do that. However, when everything was concluded he announced his official position. "I'm janitor here," he said. Two weeks later he was manager. His career after that was a phantasmagoria of expositions and Luna Parks and Hippodromes and theatrical productions, one of which you are usually certain of seeing somewhere near Broadway.

Theodore P. Shonts Explodes a Tale.

"It is a matter of some regret," says Theodore P. Shonts, "that in telling how I procured my first job I am obliged to explode the old story which have been in print that I worked my way up from the position of 'water tender,' for that sounds romantic, whereas my first work was anything but fanciful. "When I was graduated from Monmouth College, in 1876, I owed my brother-in-law, D. C. Campbell, \$100, which I had borrowed to complete my education. He owned a bank at Centerville, Iowa, where I lived, and it happened that just then he needed a man of all work around the establishment. The job paid \$50 a month. There was no better position open in the little town, so I applied for the place and got it. Sweeping out a bank was not quite up to what my college course had fitted me for, and some of my friends thought it did not fit in well with the degree of B. A., which I had studied hard for, but I did not mind that. I was anxious to get to work and pay off my indebtedness.

"I never have taken quite so much satisfaction in any money I have earned since then as I did in my first month's pay. The amount was not large, even as salaries went in those days, but it represented the result of my own efforts. It gave me an entirely new sense of independence and self-reliance—qualities which every boy should cultivate. I made up my mind that if my untrained hands could earn that much my trained mind could earn more, and I redoubled my efforts to master the business I was in, for I considered myself a part of the concern. I was around early in the morning and had the bank cleaned out and ready for business well before the opening hour. During the day I helped and watched my brother-in-law, who did practically all of the banking work, as it was a small institution. Gradually I familiarized myself with the details of the business and in a short time I was virtually running the bank, while Mr. Campbell gave his attention to other matters. But I still continued to sweep out in the morning and close up at night. It was hard work, but I felt that I was accomplishing something and advancing, and that satisfaction more than compensated for the effort.

"The knowledge of accounting which I acquired gained me a reputation through Southern Iowa as an expert bookkeeper, and I made considerable money on the outside, after hours, as an auditor. I knew, however, that the opportunities in that direction were limited, and it was still my ambition, as it had been when I left college, to become a lawyer. "I studied law at night, and after a year or two the bank I went with the law firm of Baker & Drake, at first as a clerk, and three years later as a partner. There I became interested in following through the purchase of rights of way for the old Missouri, Iowa and Nebraska Railroad, and it was not long until I abandoned the law for the new and more attractive work, in which I believed there were still greater opportunities."