

makes me such a good stenographer? Technique. What makes me such a bum office flunkey? The lack of technique — no voice — no form — no self-confidence. I am a young-man-afraid-of-himself — that's who I am.

"Technique first and then — gravitation! That's the idea!"

By gravitation, however, Hampstead did not mean that law which keeps the heavenly bodies from getting on the wrong side of the street, but that process, which in his short life he had already observed, by means of which the man in the crowd who takes advantage of his opportunities and, by the dig of an elbow here, the insert of a shoulder there, and the stiff thrust of a foot and leg yonder, sooner or later arrives opposite the gateway of his particular desires.

Mere opportunism? That and a little more; a sort of conviction that fortune herself is something of an opportunist, that what a man wants to do, fortune, sooner or later, will help him to do, if he only wills himself in the direction of the want early enough and long enough to give the fickle jade her chance.

By way of proceeding immediately to hammer, Hampstead reached for a heavy calf-bound volume, bearing the imprint of the Los Angeles Public Library, and settled himself to read.

Most people in the railroad office were tired when they finished their day's work. They were done with effort. John, however, was just ready to begin. They thought of recreation; John thought only of hammering.

Since his scholastic education had been broken off in the middle by economic necessities, he had formed the plan of reading at night the entire written history of the world, from the first cuneiform inscription down to the last edition of the last newspaper. In pursuance of this plan, he had already traveled far down the centuries, and