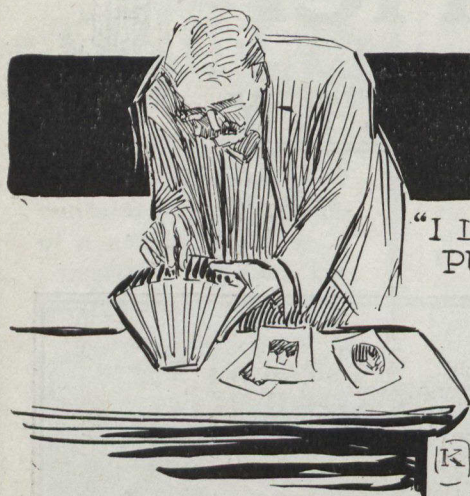


THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER



"I DON'T LIKE
PUBLICITY"

3. Some Special Features of His Work

By W. A. CLARKE

IN the middle of a matinee performance at the Princess Theatre, Toronto, a reporter of a Toronto evening paper was told that he was wanted in the lobby. As he had been occupying one of the seats regularly reserved for his paper he was not surprised to find that it was his city editor who had called him out, but he was surprised when the city editor said, "The train for London leaves in fifteen minutes, and you're to catch it and cover the London election case."

"Fifteen minutes—why I haven't my grip," protested the reporter.

"Buy whatever you need when you get there,"



Pulled out of a Theatre and Hustled Out of Town.

said the city editor. "Here's money for the trip."

"But I don't know anything about the case except that it has been in the police court here."

"Grab the evening papers and read up about it on the train."

"But—"

"You've only ten minutes now to get your train."

The reporter caught the train. He was one of the best men on the staff, otherwise the city editor wouldn't have pulled him out of the theatre. He dug up much interesting matter, and when he returned to Toronto the city editor promptly put his "O. K." on items in an expense account covering "one night shirt" and other things that ordinarily wouldn't be charged up to the office.

Probably few reporters have been taken out of theatres like that, but many have been hustled out of town with no longer notice. At his home—especially if he is unfortunate enough to have the city

editor know that he has a telephone—on his beat or when sitting about in the office deciding to leave for the day, a reporter may get sudden notice to catch a train that leaves in a few minutes. The telegraph wire has hurried into the office "a flash" about a railway wreck, a murder or some other sensation in another city or in an out of the way place, and the sooner the reporter can get there the better are his chances to get a good story and "a good bunch of photographs."

Whether the out of town assignment concerns a sudden happening or a meeting or trial of which announcement was given days or even weeks before, the first duty of a reporter on getting to the end of his train trip is to make arrangements for getting his "stuff" to the newspaper office. Sometimes the story is of such a nature that it can be mailed, thus saving telegraph tolls, but usually the news must be sent by wire. So the reporter hunts up the telegraph operator, learns what are the latter's hours and arranges to have the operator work outside his usual hours if necessary. Then it's a case of getting to the scene of the story, getting the story written and "hanging it on the wire," so that it will reach the paper in good time for handling and being put into type. Sometimes the end of the train trip means reaching the scene of the story, but in many cases the reporter has to drive or even walk a considerable distance.

If several papers are represented on the out of town story and if there is only one telegraph wire, there's a great race to get the story to the operator. Reporters have been known to try not only to get their own story on the wire first, but also to try to hold the wire till it's too late for the other fellows to send a good story. A reporter, who worked on that idea, once had his story wired and then, in order to prevent the other reporters using the wire, handed the operator a copy of the Bible and had him wire part of the book of Genesis before the other reporters managed to convince him and the operator that they should be allowed to get the wire.

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WRITING specials is a line of work that on some papers takes up quite a little of a reporter's time. Specials are stories that won't spoil by holding for days, weeks, or even months. Most new stories must be used just as soon as possible, but, within certain limits and with a few exceptions, specials can be used at any time.

Specials may be written on a great number and variety of subjects, and their value depends upon the "human interest" in them. Many specials deal with how various articles are manufactured, the different departments of municipal or government service, successful men and outstanding features of a city or the country surrounding it. Freak occupations furnish material for good specials and so do changes in people's way of living, in doing their work and seeking their pleasures.

Sometimes a city editor gets unusual ideas for

specials. For instance, in following the instructions given by a Toronto paper one reporter slept in a police station and wrote up his experiences, and another interviewed the statue of the late Sir John A. Macdonald.

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GETTING photographs of people who figure in the news sounds like easy work, and often it is. Often it isn't. There's a terrifying amount of modesty in this old world if the reticence of people concerning having their "picture in the paper" is a correct indication. And unless he has had considerable experience a reporter is going to be somewhat surprised when a man doesn't look by any means the personification of modesty remarks, with almost a suggestion of Uriah Heep's manner, "I don't care to have my picture in the paper. I don't like publicity. I just want to go along quietly and do my work without attracting attention."

Unless they can get legislation to accomplish it, people who are much in the public eye can't prevent their pictures being used. Prominent people have been snapped so often and have had their pictures in so many booklets, programmes and so forth that getting a picture of them is a simple matter. But with people who have suddenly come into the limelight through their connection with some happening it is different. Sometimes the only picture of such a person is the one in the family photograph album or the one in the picnic or lodge group in the parlour, and if they refuse to loan either of those to the newspaper—well, a reporter isn't a sheriff, and sometimes he has to go back to his city editor and acknowledge that there's "nothing doing."

But a good reporter doesn't come away without a photograph unless all his powers of persuasion have been exhausted. A good example of overcoming what looks like a hopeless situation is that which a reporter on a Montreal evening paper had a few years ago. Early in the newspaper day he was sent to get the photograph of a minister who had died the day before. The minister's daughter came to the door and said, "I'm sure that father wouldn't have liked to have his picture in the paper." That looked final, and it looked even "more final" when the minister's widow said almost exactly the same thing. The reporter apologized for bothering them and said, "I would like very much to get a photograph. Our paper circulates among the places where you say Mr. — was stationed, and when the people in those places see our account of his death they would like to see his picture with it." Elaborating on that idea the reporter convinced mother and daughter that allowing the picture to be used would be no disrespect to the dead man. He obtained a good photograph, and when he saw a picture of the minister in each of the other evening papers of that day, he felt glad that he had brought his best ability to bear in order to not come away without the photograph.

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MOST reporters firmly believe that the people who are not engaged in newspaper work "don't know news." Why they come to that conclusion is well illustrated by an experience a Toronto reporter had. A friend who was quick as lightning in business promised to give whatever news tips he ran across to the reporter. One day the business man telephoned the reporter about a sleigh load of bricks having been stuck on a railway crossing the day before. The reporter questioned his friend thoroughly in order to find out whether there was any "human interest" feature to the story, but he was assured that the man and horses had gotten away safely.

"I didn't know whether it would be any good to you," said the friend, as he was about to end the conversation, "but the thing that struck me as funny was the speed of the man in getting his horses unhitched when he heard the train coming around the curve."

"So there was a train figuring in this story?" said the reporter. "I thought you said that there was no special incident." Tell me the story again."

From the reporter's point of view, the part of the story that his friend had almost forgotten to tell was the important feature, and instead of "giving it a paragraph" he wrote a quarter of a column about it and gave it a good-sized heading.



SOMETIMES DRIVE OR WALK.