

OH, GIRLS, HERE COME THE TIRED BUSINESS MEN!

By ROBERT C. BENCHLEY

Illustrated by W. E. HILL

FOR about fifteen years producers have been able to make money out of shows the Big Line in which has been "Oh, girls, here come the soldiers!" and the Big Scene when the French count discovers that it's his own wife he's been kissing, all under the excuse that such entertainment is necessary to refresh the Tired Business Man so that the work of the nation may be carried on the next day.

The phrase has been accepted as accurate in its implication that the Business Man is tired. It has created a mental picture of lower Broadway at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, crowded with a throng of tottering Business Men, white-faced, dull-eyed, with heavy lines in their faces, supporting each other in their staggering march to a haven of rest, like so many peasant refugees.

We have even heard of the Tired Business Man's Tired Wife, and probably with a great deal of justice. It is not over her claim to the right to be tired that we would be disagreeable.

THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A TIRED BUSINESS MAN AND A BUSINESS MAN WHO IS TIRED.

But where, appealing to the Law of Cause and Effect, does the average business man of to-day earn the title "tired"? Is he tired because he is overworked, or because he is a business man?

The only possible answer to this question which occurs to any one who has gone into the matter at all is that he is tired because he is a business man, and that any one but a business man could do the same amount of work in a couple of hours and then feel in good form to tackle something really hard, such as the composition of a poem.

In order to make this investigation unbiased, a business man was interviewed in his office. He had just come in and was already somewhat tired, having attended an entertainment for tired business men the night before.

"Mr. W.," said the newspaper representative, "what is there about your day's work that should tire you?"

Now Mr. W. is a very successful business man. He has the keen blue eye (two, in fact) and the square, clean cut jaw that identify the captain of American industry. Furthermore, he has by his desk a large plate glass window looking out over the roofs of the neighborhood, such as masters of men always look out at in the clothing advertisements. There could be no question but that he was the typical business man. With this exception: he was perfectly frank.

A TIRED BUSINESS MAN GETS A FRANK CONFESSION OFF HIS CHEST.

"There is nothing about my work," said he, with an engaging smile, "that should make me tired. Next to dragging a toy train of cars across a rug my work, and the work of most business men, is the most elementary form of human occupation. I dictate a batch of letters which any trained writer could do while eating his grapefruit in the morning; I make a great deal of to-do about selling a line of goods which would sell itself if I would let it; about once a year the firm does some constructive work, involving an amount of creative brain power equivalent to that expended in writing the words to a popular song, and over which we must needs have conferences, blue prints and sandwiches sent up from downstairs."

"But business men are tired, are they not?" Mr. W. was asked.

"They are tired," he answered, "because to them the dictation of a letter, even when they have the formula beginning 'Yours of the 6th inst. received and contents noted' into which to fit the three or four words of their own, is a depleting process. They are tired because when they have rustled a handful of carbon copies of mill reports from one office to another and have chewed three long, black cigars over a conference as to whether the new tin container shall be dull or high finish they have expended as much energy and knitted as many brows as did the composers of the Constitution of the United States, and are twice as unstrung by it."

A TWENTY-MINUTE CONFERENCE WHICH LASTS TWO HOURS OR MORE.

"Personally," he continued, "I have refused to deceive myself any longer on the score that I am hard worked. I

come to the office on Tuesday for a conference with my partner, which could be finished in twenty minutes, including time out to offer, prepare and light two cigars, but which we manage to spread out over a couple of hours. On Wednesday and Thursday I potter 'round over several lines of goods which have managed to scrape along without me during the rest of the week, but which I like to see going and help along like Marceline. Then on Friday I go up to the mountains until the next Tuesday. At that, I waste two days and a half in the office."

"YOURS OF THE 6TH INST. REC'D AND IN REPLY WOULD STATE"

This sensational and startling confession on the part of one of our most successful leaders of men was a revelation, and was just what was needed to lend authority to what might otherwise be considered an inexperienced report. With this as a foundation, we have made out a little summary of some of the more strenuous efforts which go toward making the business man tired.

First, there is the dictation.

ceived, and in reply would state . . . that . . . (takes cigar out of box in drawer) . . . shipment number (consults letter) 48,563 . . . (bites off end of cigar and continues, holding cigar in his teeth) . . . wa' seh' pho' our phat'ory ih Bro'lyn . . . (lights cigar) . . . in good condition . . . cross that out, please, . . . was sent from our factory in Brooklyn in first class condition . . . COME IN . . . Hello, Mr. Mellish, be right with you; sit down . . . let's see, where were we? (Stenographer, translating: "—in first class condition") . . . Oh, yes, in first class condition. . . . In this connection . . . (three puffs, looking at moulding, and grunting between puffs) . . . would state . . . (three more puffs) . . . that our Mr.—er (consults company directory) . . . that our Mr. Gooch of the Lynn office will be glad . . . cross that out please . . . will be willing to confer with you . . . (Telephone bell rings) . . . Hello . . . Yes . . . Yes . . . You bet . . . You bet . . . That's right . . . You

Gooch of the Lynn office will be willing to confer with you . . . in re this matter . . . and oblige . . . yours truly. . . . Be right with you, Mr. Mellish . . . Take one to Blatch, Whee & Blatch, 77 Muffin Wharf . . . City . . . Yours of the 7th inst., etc., etc."

A LITTLE INSIDE INFORMATION ON THE SUBJECT OF BUSINESS SUBTLETY.

Half a dozen of these jewels of composition, and the business man is breathing hard. He follows them with a talk with Mr. Mellish, who wants him to put in a line of lamp wicks, and who takes half an hour to say it, the business man, in his turn, taking three-quarters of an hour to say that he doesn't think that, what with the war and all, he can put in a line of lamp wicks just now. It is always considered good business to talk baseball, politics and rainfall before approaching the subject in hand. You fool the other man. He thinks that you are his friend. The fact that he himself has been using the same tactics on other

lish have wasted an hour and a half of each other's time there is the period of carbon copy rushing, in which members of the office force each take a handful of carbon copies of anything that happens to be lying about, and rush from one room to another, rustling them busily. One man sits at a desk, and each of the contestants rustles the carbons up to him and says, "How about this, Mr. Sellars?" Mr. Sellars looks at each one and marks it "O. K." in blue pencil with his initials after it, and it is rustled back to the basket from which it was snatched.

FROM ONE TO THREE THE BUSINESS MAN EATS HIMSELF TIRED.

It is then time for lunch. But your business man has so much to do that he needs must work even at his lunch. He has an engagement with a Mr. Twombly, who has a proposition to eliminate the jobber's profits by direct selling coupled with the Twombly Service. From one until three the business man and Mr. Twombly talk markets, zones and con-

two filets mignon, green corn, iced coffee, blueberry pie, cigars, Mr. Twombly's ideas on Distribution and the business man's ideas on Mr. Twombly's ideas, none of which originated with them. The proposition of the Twombly Service is put over for consideration.

Then about once a year the firm starts Something Big. It may be the erection of a new boiler plant, all the work of which is done by architects and contractors, with the business man smoking cigars and scowling over blue-prints. Or it may be changing the form of Requisition Blank No. 386, so that it reads "within two weeks" instead of "within three weeks." Or, even bolder than this, they may decide to advertise.

MAKING DECISIONS ON THE SPUR OF TWO WEEKS WOULD TIRE ANYBODY.

In the case of advertising, the business man has his own ideas concerning what he calls "the punch," and it is over a matter like this that he burns up that precious energy which leaves him so fatigued at the end of the day. A conference over a mahogany table, attended by the president, vice-presidents and directors, with an advertising agent to supply technical terms, can work itself into a perfect fury over the question of the proper size of the halftone of the gasoline ash-sifter to appear in the full-page advertisement. Should it be larger than the line-drawing of the mother and little girl who are operating it, or should it be small enough to allow the insertion of two hundred words of copy describing the factory at Great Barrington? The business man feels that nothing should interfere with a proper picture of the article, even at the expense of making it twice as large as the house, but, on the other hand, a page jammed with type would certainly have "the punch" and would be getting more for the money invested. It is the necessity of making such decisions on the spur of two weeks that wears the business man down. And even after he has made it, the real work of making a good advertisement out of it falls on the agent.

But, you will say (or if you don't say it, some one else may), "How about the really big business men, who superintend the running of the nation's commerce—the brains of the national market? Surely they have a right to be called tired business men."

THE BIG FELLERS, BEHIND CLOSED DOORS, ARE JUST LIKE THE LITTLE FELLERS.

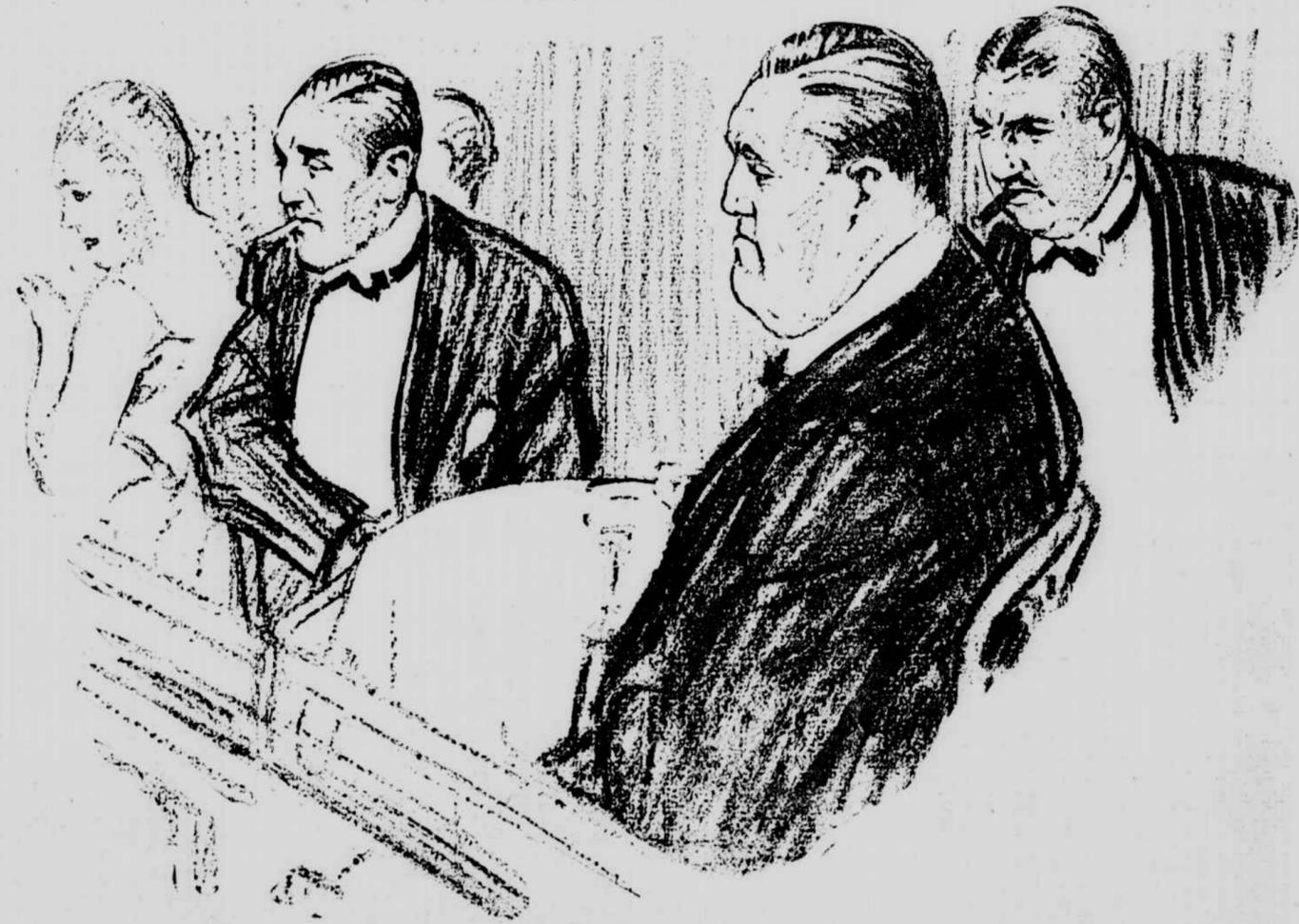
It may be so. But the one time when the writer ever sat in on a big game and heard what went on, there was nothing to distinguish it from the rest. It was a conference over what is called the biggest business venture the country has ever seen. "Colossal," "prophetic" and "stupendous" are a few of the best adjectives applied to it by the financial and business writers of the country. There were present about a dozen men, leaders of their lines in the country, who were the directors of the project, and one or two minions of the press, which accounts for this report.

For one hour and a half these giants of industry, including one member of the Cabinet, talked the matter over, and, aside from impressive references to the big firms which they represented, their conversation was out of the same show-case as that of Mr. Twombly and the business man in re the Twombly Service. No one seemed to know exactly how the thing was going to be pulled off. They hoped that it would be, and each one waited for the other to suggest a way. They talked about International Commerce and Intensive Trade, just as Mr. Twombly talked of Distribution, word for word out of inspirational literature on the subject, and every one agreed that it would be a Big Thing if they could put it across. And that was where it stood when they broke up—it was undoubtedly a Big Thing, and ought to be done.

DOES THE TIRED BUSINESS MAN'S ASSISTANT EVER GET TIRED? NO; HE HASN'T TIME.

And probably it will be done. Some one of the captains of trade will go back to his office and say to an assistant: "Mr. Bleach, will you make out a little report on this subject, reviewing what has been done and suggesting, say, five methods in which the work might be carried on still further?" And Mr. Bleach will probably do it.

Some time I want to write a show for the Tired Business Man's Assistant.



BUSINESS MEN OF THE TIRED TYPE.

"Good morning, Miss Smalz. Take a few letters, please. One to The Eureka Trepanning & Annealing Co., 4786 Onderdonk Place, Lynn, Mass. Gentlemen: . . . (Bus. of thinking and tapping on blotter with paper cutter) . . . Yours of the 6th inst. re-

bet . . . Sure thing . . . All right . . . seven o'clock suits me . . . I say, seven o'clock suits me . . . All right . . . seven o'clock in the lobby . . . all right . . . 'by . . . (To stenographer) let's see, where were we? . . . Oh, yes . . . our Mr.

people for five years shouldn't discourage you. Anything that was a clever business subtlety in 1895 is a clever business subtlety now. In business anything this side of a blow in the face is subtle. After the business man and Mr. Mel-

sumer demand, each using the phrases to be found in any pamphlet entitled "The Efficient Salesman," or "Business in Terms of Selling," or, even earlier than these, "Franklin's Almanack." When they are through they have accomplished the following: One tureen corn chowder,