LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

THE WASHINGTON HERALD

MAGAZINE SECTION

WASHINGTON, D. C., SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 1911.

REAL WOES AND SECRET TROUBLES OF COMEDIANS

The few American tourists who lingered in Germany and found themselves in the old town of Wismar, in Mecklenburg-Schwerin, this fall, beheld a sad, almost decrepit figure whom the inhabitants delighted to point out with a pride that might have been accorded some aged conqueror or a tenor who in his day had been famous on the operatic stage.

"Capt. Koepenick!" exclaimed the Wismarians, keeping their voices low out of consideration for his feelings while they gave the information to those they guided; then, raising these same voices to the most vociferous of cordial greetings, "Good day, herr captain!"

They touched mockingly respectful caps sometimes to the tired old figure, for derision and regard are curiously commingled in every salutation he receives. The "captain's" answer has been a wry smile of appreciation for both qualities in the greetings and a mumbled "ja, ja," as though he would let them know he understood their lingering admiration, and as for their mockery, he was too good a sport to resent it.

He was old Wilhelm Voigt, the famous "Captain of Koepenick," who perpetrated the biggest joke Germany has been tickled over for many a year.

Now, his penalty paid and his transient glory of rascality faded, he has sunk again to his level of humble working man—a level lower than it was before and with work that is twice as hard.

Now a Bent Old Cobbler.

He is the same bent old cobbler part of his time, and the rest of it is put in chopping wood, with the muscles that wield the ax fit for no such brawny task.

Somehow or other imperial Germany, with its gigantic scoop net of education and training designed to let no glint of talent or genius escape the uses of the fatherland, has wasted hopeless old Wilhelm Voigt. And Germany, in its fugitive paragraphs, its readiness to buy his photograph whenever it appears, and more than all, in its instinctive sympathy for an old pirate whose sublime impudence alone raised his crime to the dignity of an international joke, dimly realizes that his fate is something in which every man jack of the proletariat has a personal concern.

The whole county acknowledges the touch of brains and courage which enabled the cobbler to make a derision of smug officialdom, and the national interest in his subsequent career has testified to the spirit of revolt against the modern system by which everything seems in Germany to be "verboten" to the poor man.

As his jaunty embarkation on his last exploit for independence, when Voigt came to the United States, cheerfully prepared to make a fortune on the stage big enough to support him in his declining years, he proved he had the resilient spirit which long ago saved Germany itself from destruction amid the maws of the ravenous powers it defied and defeated.

Doom of Poverty.

He, too old, too broken to recover, resigned himself to his doom of poverty and ignominy when our immigration officials shipped him back to his native land as a released convict. For some months after that hardy emprise had failed he dropped from public ken. Then he was discovered in Wismar, the protege of another cobbler, who was willing to let him earn at least his daily bread. There he is now, hammer and awl at work when the cobbling trade of Wismar is sufficiently prosperous to let his patron use his skill on the bench, and arduously chopping wood and piling it up when there is nothing else for him to do.

Wismar, having identified him notwithstanding his own willingness to let the bygones of Koepenick be forgotten, mocks him a little bit, but treats him with a meed of genuine respect. About his tired old figure and his grim, old, humorous face there is still the aureole of a grandeur of which the people of Wismar are proud. He is the desperate old knave who challenged the whole power of Germany; who, single-handed, undertook to rob a town, and got away with his loot. Why, if he had only turned that bold trick when the Hohenzollerns were climbing out of the miserable ruck of obscurity he might have been the Herr Graf von Koepenick, with his portrait hanging high in councils of state as one of the early Teuton heroes.

Captures the Whole City.

His enterprise was undertaken under the very eyes of Berlin, for Koepenick is one of the suburbs of the great capital. He had no respectable past to help him. In fact, his past was what made him the famous criminal of the present. It was said, after his coup at Koepenick, that he had been released, under police surveillance, after serving fifteen years in Rawitsch jail for theft, burglary, and forgery. He secured employment with a court shoemaker in Wismar, but declared that the police would not let him alone. While he was in the United States he said the police had persecuted him because he drank too much beer a couple of times. Whichever version was correct, Voigt realized at length just one thing—that a man in a uniform was all-powerful in Germany.

So when he betook himself to Koepenick he hired the uniform of a captain of the Second Prussian Guards, walked abroad amid the respectful salutations of pedestrians, and liked it so well that he ordered the first file of soldiers he encountered to follow him. He marched to the house of Dr. Langerhans, the burgomaster, arrested him, commanded the surrender of the town moneys by the treasurer, and made off with the booty. Sentenced to four years' imprisonment, he was released after twenty months, the Kaiser himself having been delighted with the exploit.

It was said that Voigt received as much as $10,000 in gifts from Germans who loved a joke on the government, but little of it remained when he undertook to recoup his fortunes in America, and nothing at all is left him now.

AS THEY SAID.

From Tit Bits.

Magistrate (to prisoner in the dock): What is your line?

Prisoner: I ain't particular, as the oyster said when they asked him whether he'd be fried or roasted.

Magistrate: We don't want to know what the oyster said. What trade do you follow?

Prisoner: Anything that comes in my way, as the locomotive said when it ran over a man.

Magistrate: We care nothing about the locomotive. What is your business?

Prisoner: That's various, as the cat said when it stole the sausage.

Magistrate: That comes nearer to the line, I suppose.

Prisoner: Altogether in my line, as the rope said when choking the pirate.

Magistrate: If I hear any more absurd comparisons I will give you twelve months.

Prisoner: I'm done, then, as the beefsteak said to the cook.

UNCLE SAM'S WHISKY BILL ANNUALLY INCREASING DESPITE THE PROHIBITION LAWS IN MANY STATES

By JAMES B. MORROW.

Beer and tobacco more than support the army. Whisky more than supports the navy. The government tax on beer would build and arm ten huge battle ships a year. The whisky tax comes within $15,000,000 of paying the annual charge for pensions. About every fourth dollar spent for maintaining the government is obtained from tobacco, distilled spirits, and fermented liquors. So the consumer of a glass of beer or a cocktail may stand boldly forth from behind the barroom screen or curtain and vindicate himself before the spying world outside on the ground that he is helping his country—joint beneficiary with the saloon keeper—to liquidate its debts and to promote world-wide peace and Christian civilization.

Obviously, in the case of the drinker or smoker, neither argument nor quest is required to find the man who pays the tax; he is the one ultimate consumer, silent abroad and speechless at home, who is without rhetorical friends in Congress. Although some form of prohibition is workable in all the States but ten, the distilleries are increasing their product, and the breweries are doing the same. The tax, therefore, is willingly paid. In the matter of whisky, it almost doubles the price of a drink.

It is evident that a tax on intoxicating liquor does not hinder the supply or interfere with the demand. Nor has restrictive legislation, so common the country over, turned topers and tipplers into sober men. Counting women and children, the people of the United States last year drank about seven quarts of whisky apiece. The increase over the year before was 24,000,000 gallons. Estimating ten drinks to the pint and the price at 10 cents a drink, the whisky bill of the American people was $192,000,000 less in 1909 than it was in 1910. In the meanwhile, they had smoked more tobacco and cigars and had drunk 3,180,000 more barrels of beer.

Panic Worse Than Prohibition.

The October panic in 1907 seems to have hurt the liquor business more than has prohibition or local option. It is unlawful to sell intoxicating beverages in nine States—Maine, North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Kansas, and North Dakota. It is lawful and licensable in ten States—New Jersey, Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Nebraska, New Mexico, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, and California. In all of the other States there are local option laws, applicable either to counties, townships, municipalities, wards, or residence districts. But the habit of drinking appears to be growing, nevertheless. It is possible that those who drink are drinking more than formerly. Also, the population is increasing constantly. Doubtless the Anti-saloon League can give a buoyant interpretation of the figures herein set forth. On the other hand, distillers and brewers are loudly grumbling about confiscation and are pleading the rights of private property and the employment of their men.

A young Virginian is the Comissioner of Internal Revenue. Royal Eubank Cabell is his name in full—Cabell being pronounced Cab-ell and not Ca-bell, as one would guess by the spelling. He is six feet and one inch tall, speaks with a James River accent, and after being graduated from Princeton, studied law. He practiced in Richmond with his father, became postmaster in 1906, and three years later was called to Washington by Secretary MacVeagh, who, being grizzled himself, demands youth and intelligent energy in the Treasury. His salary is $6,000 a year and he is a Baptist. Likewise he is a Republican, having come down from an ancient line of Virginia Whigs. One of his great-grandfathers, however, was a Democrat and sat in Congress from Thomas Jefferson's district. When he talks internal revenue he sounds like an animated book. If he has opinions pertaining to prohibition as a preventive of drunkenness, he conceals them for the most part by a recital of the facts.

A New Drink.

"What is 'near' beer," I asked him, "and where is it brewed?"

"It is a new drink," he answered, "that cannot be described with precision at this time. The Bureau of Internal Revenue ruled several years ago that any fermented beverage containing less than one-half of 1 per cent of alcohol was not cognizable under the law taxing intoxicating liquors. Since then there have been modifications of the decision and the matter is up now and is involved in considerable confusion.

"I am told that the Supreme Court of Georgia has declared that a beverage containing less than 4 per cent of alcohol does not come within the statute of the State which prohibits the sale of intoxicating liquors. If that is true, the decision permits the sale of a great many brands of beer that are widely advertised and generally sold in all parts of the country. Beer—regular beer, and not the kind called 'near'—contains from 4 per cent to 9 per cent of alcohol, that which is brought from Europe being darker and heavier, or stronger, than that which is made in this country. 'Near' beer, of course, is manufactured to be sold in what is called 'dry' territory."

"Even though liquor of all kinds," I said, "has been voted out of several States and out of many counties, townships, cities, and villages in other States, there was an increase during the last revenue year of 24,000,000 gallons in the production of distilled spirits."

"Our population is growing all the time," Mr. Cabell answered, "and we are consuming more of everything in the form of food and drink. Then, general prosperity, by the figures, goes beyond bread, meat, and clothing and includes drinkable liquors. The smoke of the distillery mingles with the smoke of the factory.

Driven Out of Business.

"Naturally both dealer and drinker prefer the more concentrated form of alcohol, which is either whisky or brandy. It does not require ice and can be shipped by express. 'Blind tigers' can sell it with less chance of detection and less bother than they can sell beer with its barrels or its boxes and a clutter of empty bottles. Prohibitory laws have driven a number of local breweries out of business, small establishments that supplied the trade of restricted regions. Whisky has displaced beer in such communities. If any beer is sold, it comes in secretly from large breweries at a distance."

"However, there has been a decrease," I said, "in the number of distilleries and of wholesale and retail liquor dealers."

"The manufacture of spirits is becoming centralized. It is following the methods of modern business. There are about 900 distilleries in the United States at which spirits are made of grain, molasses, and fruits. Ten years ago there were 2,331 establishments producing brandy from fruit and 1,670 producing spirits from grain—4,000 in all. North Carolina then had 1,336 distilleries. Now it is a 'dry' State. Back in those days the production of most distilleries was small. Gradually the business came into control of certain groups of men, just as the iron and steel business became centered in a few hands. There are eight distilleries in Illinois. Six of them are in operation, and last year they paid $32,000,000 of the $141,500,000 collected by the government in taxes on the manufacturing branch of the whisky industry. While legislation has reduced somewhat the number of small distilleries, more whisky than ever is being produced, which shows that the making of spirits is undergoing the same changes that have occurredd in the making of almost everything else in the country. Banks and railroads are combining. So are the distilleries. The little distillery, unless it is manufacturing a special brand of whisky, has been sold or abandoned by its former owners."

"What is a distillery that produces brandy from fruits? There seems to be more of them than distilleries that produce whisky from grain."

"There was objection originally to the taxation of beverages made by the fermentation of fruits. The farmer, it was said, pressed cider from apples and paid no tax. Logically, he should be permitted to press wine from grapes. Consequently beverages made from apples, grapes, peaches, pears, cherries, prunes, figs, and berries are not taxable, but when alcohol is added the beverage becomes brandy and as such is taxable, but not at the rate of $1.10 a gallon, as is the law with respect to whisky.

"The first tax on intoxicating liquors was laid in the eighteenth century. Doctrinally, the Democratic party was opposed to internal taxation, but such taxes were regularly authorized as war measures. In 1863, during the war between the North and South, spirits, fermented liquors, and other things were taxed that money might be obtained for the support of the national government. The tax on spirits, beer, and tobacco has been collected ever since. There is also a tax on oleomargarine, and last year Congress voted a tax on certain kinds of corporations. For the year 1911 we estimate that our collections will amount to $308,000,000 — $292,000,000 from spirits, fermented liquors, tobacco, and oleomargarine and $25,000,000 from corporations."

"You have asserted," I said, "that there has been an increase of illicit distilling, especially where 'State-wide prohibition laws have been enacted.'"

"Liquors have been outlawed in Georgia. They can neither be made nor sold in that State. However, there is more 'moonshine' whisky produced in Georgia than anywhere else. Indeed, throughout all the great region extending from Western Pennsylvania to the southern rim of the country illicit distilling is carried on constantly. The Alleghany, Blue Ridge, and Cumberland mountains contain many stills hidden away in almost inaccessible places. George Washington had to call out several thousand militiamen to put down the whisky rebellion that occurred in Western Pennsylvania during the year 1794. Gov. Lee, of my State, commanded the troops and marched against the men who openly refused to pay the excise tax on stills and distilled spirits.

Were Hardy and Pious Men.

"The insurrectionists, as they were called, were hardy and pious men. They were of Scotch-Irish blood, lived in log cabins, dressed in deerskin, carried their furs over the mountains on horses to Philadelphia and Baltimore, and rode twenty miles to hear the gospel preached in the woods on Sunday morning. Rye became the principal crop of their stumpy little fields in the forests. It could not be sold at home because there were no stores or warehouses. A horse could carry but four bushels to market. The distance was very long and the way up hill and difficult.

"When the rye was converted into whisky a horse could carry the equivalent of twenty-four bushels to Baltimore or Philadelphia. Moreover, there was a manufacturer's profit for the farmer. 'Old Monongahela,' as the whisky was known, became the one important product of Western Pennsylvania and was traded for sugar, salt, and iron. Naturally the excise tax was resisted. An honorable and necessary business, in the view of the pioneers, was threatened with destruction.

"The descendants of the rebels of 1794 are living to-day in the mountains of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and some of the States of the South. They contentiously hold to the principles of their ancestors. Intelligent men will say: 'John Brown takes his corn to the mill and has it ground into meal. He carries his meal home and makes it into bread. The government in Washington does not tax his bread. It has no right to tax his whisky, also made of the corn of his fields and intended only for his own use, or to be sold at his pleasure, as might be the case with his bread.'

"The agents of the Federal government have incessantly battled against customs, traditions, and inborn convictions, but illicit distilling continues. We raided and destroyed 1,911 outlawed stills last year. They were small, of course, but in the aggregate could distill about 28,000 gallons of 'moonshine' whisky a day. After the building of railways through their valleys the 'blockers,' meaning blockaders or 'moonshiners,' withdrew to the hidden recesses of their familiar mountains. They locate necessarily on or near streams of water. Our agents follow the streams and find the stills. The hunt is so vigorous that 'moonshiners' now play one-night stands, as we say—that is, they move their stills every day in wagons. Farmers will ferment their grain at home and steal away after the sun goes down to an itinerant still in some nook of the forest. Before daylight next morning the still has vanished and the farmer has returned to his home with a supply of whisky that is almost the color of alcohol."

Tragedy of Raiding Stills.

"One of your officers was killed and three officers were badly wounded," I said, "while raiding an illicit distillery last year."

"Yes; in Walker County, Ala. A great deal of 'moonshine' whisky is made in and around the town of Anniston. Surber, our agent in Atlanta, took six men and raided an active still in the mountains. The still was approached from three directions. Anderson and Putnam, two of the deputies, were together. They were fired on from behind a fallen tree in a tangle of underbrush. Anderson was hit twice and killed instantly. Putnam was wounded in the hip and his horse was shot from under him. However, he got away. Surber organized a posse and caught the assassins, three men and a fifteen-year-old boy. Two of the men were sentenced to the penitentiary for thirty years each. The other man was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment and the boy to fifteen years."

"A State," I said, "may prohibit the sale of intoxicating liquors, but the United States government does not hesitate to license persons in that very same State to sell such liquors."

Perverting the Truth.

"You seem to have read some inaccurate temperance literature," Mr. Cabell answered. "The United States does not license any one to engage in the business of selling distilled spirits or fermented liquors. Prohibitionists often say that it does, but they are either in error or are purposely perverting the truth. I have heard preachers assert that the government is a partner of every saloon keeper in the country. On each receipt given to a liquor dealer by any of our collectors will be found in plain type the following statement: 'This stamp is simply a receipt for a tax due the government and does not exempt the holder from any penalty or punishment provided for by the law of any State for carrying on the same business within such State, and does not authorize the commencement nor the continuance of such business contrary to the law of such State or in places prohibited by municipal law.'

"Now, the Constitution of the United States provides that all taxes for Federal purposes must be uniform. If Kansas is taxed to support the national government, New York must also be taxed in exactly the same manner. The 'license,' as many good people call it, is in short, an occupation tax which the government has seen fit to levy on wholesale and retail liquor dealers. Manifestly we cannot ask John Smith, when he comes to pay such tax, if his State prohibits the sale of intoxicating beverages, or if his city has restrictive or regulatory ordinances. But—and now mark what I have to say—when John Smith pays the tax the internal revenue collector of the district posts John Smith's name in his office and there the State or city officials may see it. We accept the tax, give a receipt, and post the name; it is then up to the State or city authorities to get the name, work up a case, and prosecute John Smith.

"Liquor dealers pay the Federal tax, and pay it promptly. They know that if they fail to pay they will suffer the full penalty of the law. At the same time they very often violate State and municipal laws, believing they can do so with impunity. I venture to say that 90 per cent of the prosecutions in prohibition or local option communities are based on information obtained at the offices of the collectors of internal revenue.

"If there were no Federal tax on the occupation of selling intoxicating beverages, local officers would not know the names of the dealers. As it is, for reasons easily understood, they do not always use the information that is attainable without personal effort on their part. The tax, in short, is a practical temperance measure."

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ROYAL E. CABELL,

Vigorous young Virginian and Internal Revenue Commissioner, says beer drinkers now get their alcohol in concentrated form to escape official scrutiny.

SAYS PRODUCTION OF LIQUOR IS INCREASING.

WORLD'S GREATEST JOKER FOOLED AN ENTIRE CITY

For the life of me I can never understand why some people, many people, the majority of people, in fact, will persist in hugging the notion that the existence of a comedian is nothing more or less than one merry and continual round of mirth and laughter. "Mirth and laughter," forsooth! Never was there a more erroneous idea than this. Why, I sometimes wonder how it is that comedians can ever raise a smile at all on their faces, to say nothing of the effect they hope to exercise on the features of others, so serious and strenuous is their life.

Still, there it is! Those who have no experience at all of the behind-the-scenes side of a comedian's profession should, perhaps, be excused for cherishing this notion, as they only see the so-called "laughter-maker" at business, where, if he does not succeed in raising a smile on the faces of his audience, he will not remain long. Presumably, therefore, he is more or less successful in his object—otherwise he would not be seen at all.

But, seriously, the trials and troubles of a comedian are very, very real. Only a few weeks ago, when playing in a sketch at night, and rehearsing all day, I received an invitation to sup at a fashionable restaurant after my evening's show was over. To my sorrow, I accepted. Why to my sorrow? Well, because the moment I had located myself on a chair at my hostess's side, she turned round to me and said, "Now do make us laugh, Mr. Graves. My daughters and I"—I must tell you that she had three very plain daughters with her, who gazed at me expectantly—"have been suffering from terrible depression all day. We look to you to remove this gloom. Now, then"—and the kindly soul tapped me playfully on the wrist with a fan—"be funny at once." I put it to you, could anyone be funny in such circumstances?

His Lot to Be Pitied.

Ah, me, yes; the comedian is indeed to be pitied. A distant relation of mine, passed away some months ago, and it fell to my lot to have to go with the object of trying to comfort his sorrowing widow. A job of this kind is always rather a thankless one; in fact, one is wise to say as little as possible. Still, I did my best; and in the presence of her two sons, aged fourteen and fifteen, and one daughter, aged seventeen, I muttered words of comfort, pointing out that this was a trying old world and that the dear fellow would certainly be happier in the next, and so on and so forth. To be quite frank, I thought I was doing the job really well, until, as I left the room, I heard one of the boys say to his sister, "So that's cousin George, is it? He doesn't make me laugh; he's never said a funny thing since he's been in the house. I wonder who pays him his salary?"

In pantomime especially is the lot of a comedian a hard one. He is supposed to be funny and to deal in humor particularly suited to the childish mind, and yet almost equally as well suited to the sense of the ridiculous of the adult. Now, that is not an easy task, is it? Would they expect to make their best friend's little boy laugh with the same brand of joke that they hand out to an adult? I think not, and probably, if they tried, their friend's little boy's mother would ask them to be more careful in future as to how they spoke to children.

Earns His Pay.

Oh, yes, there's no doubt about it at all. A comedian is a man to be pitied and to be sympathized with, for he's expected to be equal to every emergency and to deal in five-pronged jokes—that is to say, jokes that will appeal alike to the young, the old, the middle-aged, the serious, and the frivolous.

By no means the least of a mirth-provoker's woes is that very often he either has to juggle with the sense of the humor of the author of whatever piece he may be playing in, or offend that worthy gentleman for life. Frequently, of the two evils the latter would most assuredly be the lesser, for authors, like other mere mortals, are not infallible, and sometimes their notion of the ridiculous would not even make an undertaker's assistant laugh. Hence, indirectly, they are doing to the comedian who has to deal in their good goods what the immortal Shakespeare would doubtless have described as "a dirty trick." Still, there it is; the comedian is forced to plow his sad, serious way through life—a much-misunderstood, much-to-be-pitied man.

He has his compensations, of course. His salary, perhaps you will say. Well, believe me, he thoroughly earns that. His chief compensations, I think, lies in the fact that if he does succeed in making people laugh your "comic" can pat himself on the back and say, "Anyway, I've done something to cheer up the lives of people who have real cares—I've helped them in some slight measure, at any rate, to make them forget their troubles for a short time."

BOOTBLACK MADE A MILLION OUT OF NIAGARA FALLS

The fall of a banker who has mismanaged his bank is no new story. Like the mother-in-law joke, it hardly changes with all the years. And while there is a vital, pungent story in the great tangle of circumstances that brought Joseph G. Robin a prisoner to the bar, it is not about the rich banker Robin's downfall. It is the story of the lonely boy Robinovitch and how he ate his way like an acid through the thickly folded fabric of New York affairs.

Robin, according to is own account, came to this country a boy of fifteen, about twenty years ago. With him was his sister, and earnest girl, who had studied medicine and received her doctor's degree. They had lived in Russia, in Germany, and then for several years in Paris. They were very poor. Louise Robinovitch obtained an appointment as interne in the Hospital for the Insane on Wards Island. The position hardly provided for her own wants. Her brother was left to shift for himself.

His equipment for the battle consisted of a good knowledge of French and Russian, a broad general reading, an unusual understanding of mathematics—he knew differential calculus—a little bad English, and no money. He saw that the first thing to do was to make himself master of the language. He entered a night school. Within eight months he wrote idiomatically, fluently, and with almost perfect correctness, and he spoke without an accent.

First Business Venture.

Meanwhile, he ran errands; he shoveled snow; he wrote letters in Russian and English for East Side merchants. It is said that one day he bought the outfit of a retiring bootblack and started shining shoes in Union Square. The competition was very keen. It took Robinovitch only a week to work out a scheme to fit the situation. He got an old messenger boy's cap and fitted it with a neatly lettered legend, "One-minute shine. He was able to make the advertisement good, and his trade doubled and trebled. In a few days he took two other bootblacks into partnership, selling each of them a cap. The three of them formed a close corporation, strong enough to suppress any imitator by force of arms, and they sold other newsboys the right to wear the caps, together with the caps themselves, at a handsome profit.

Now, naturally, such a scheme could not grow forever. As soon as a majority of the boys in the square were equipped with the caps there would no longer be any distinction in wearing them. Robinovitch chose the psychological moment to withdraw. He had kept secret the name of the hatter and the draftsman who did the lettering, and he sold the information to his partners. In three weeks more there was hardly one of the lettered caps to be seen on the square.

In his determination to learn English, young Robinovitch fastened himself upon the police reporters who regularly "covered" the East Side. He talked with them, persuaded them to read the things he wrote, begged chances to follow news stories with them, and went out to buy them coffee and cigars.

His Newspaper Career.

So, when a new paper, the Recorder, was started on the most advanced lines of "yellow" journalism, Robinovitch was mentioned as an intelligent young fellow with a bad case of "news fever," and got a chance on the staff.

Here his knowledge of Europe stood him in good stead. He read the foreign exchanges and wrote a weekly column of trans-Atlantic scandal, signing himself "Gus Podin." His other duties consisted chiefly of working up sensational articles for the Sunday edition. He did odd jobs of writing for the women's department. He wrote a novel. And all the while he was keeping half a dozen side irons in the fire—schemes for plating silverware, for starting a song publishing house, for running a loan fund in the office, and the like.

He had been some two years on the Recorder when his sister in the asylum complained of certain abuses in the treatment of patients there. She quarreled with one of the officers of the institution, and then told her brother the whole story. He saw the possibilities of an "expose," wrote an article attacking the system, and sold it to a rival newspaper for $300. Also, he contrived matters so that he was taken on the staff of the paper to write articles for the "crusade" which followed.

The sensation lasted for weeks. When it was over Robinovitch was out of a job. He could not have gone back to the Recorder, and he did not wish to. He was born to play a lone hand. He was too keen and too sure of himself to fit well into any institution. His way was to fit institutions to himself.

For a while he drifted about New York, turning over his money in petty schemes of different sorts. And then he learned the bitter lesson that so many young men learn here every year—that the stranger is not wanted, just because he is a stranger. New York is not always respectable, but it must have a varnish of respectability on the things for which it spends its money. Robinovitch determined to prove his respecta-

A man who had been with him on the Recorder staff met him one day standing on a Broadway corner with two men. They looked like prosperous livery stable keepers. Robinovitch stopped the reporter to shake his hand effusively—he always had a bluff, hail-fellow-well-met way about him—and dragged him into the group. He named a mining stock which he had been peddling several months before, and urged him, with a verbal slap on the back, to "get next to a good thing."

The reporter suspected that he was being exhibited as a specimen of the young man's acquaintances.

"As regards that stock, Robinovitch"—he began.

The other spread out his hands in a gesture of irritation.

"I've changed my name," he said hastily. "I call myself Robinson now."

Harder and harder the lesson was driven home to him that there was a wall built straight through the structure of New York affairs. On one side were money and credit and work for sharp wits; on the other side were Robinovitch and a million or so of others. The name of the wall was Indifference.

Enter Gen. O'Beirne.

One day Robinovitch came to Gen. James R. O'Beirne and made his proposal bluntly.

"I've got a philanthropic scheme, general," he said, "that I think you'll be interester in. It's a plan for helping people with small incomes to build their own homes. They will help each other.

Of course, the general knew about building and loan associations before Robinovitch told him about them, but he wanted to help Robinovitch to go on in a course that was unquestionably a good one. So the general took up the plan, introduced Robinovitch to a number of men who had money and some things that money does not always bring, and among them they organized a mutual building and loan association.

They rented a small office in Lower Broadway; Gen. O'Beirne was made president and Robinovitch became general manager and did practically all the active work—on a salary of $15 a week. That, with a "raise" which came a few months later, was all the money Robinovitch ever got out of the association.

Robinovitch was scrupulously honest in all his dealings with his company. He was by no means ungrateful, and he saw besides what his position meant to his future. Here was his one chance to establish himself, to become known as a keeper of good company; to study the inner workings of a corporation; to watch the ways of directors and underlings, and the cracks in the corporate structure through which responsibility is apt to leak away and be lost.

Harnessed Niagara.

He must have had a thousand dollars or so when, after a few years with the building and loan association, he saw a chance at Niagara. His name was now Joseph G. Robin.

Niagara waterpower had been exploited for many years, but on a small scale. It was in the beginning of the present enormous development that Robin turned his attention to the falls. He had used his building association well, and it had used him well in return, for now he did not go down to Niagara as a lonely, adventurous promotor, but as an experienced, reputable business man, well introduced.

He studied the engineering problem at the falls till he had the whole affair at his fingers' ends, and then he set out to talk a power company. He talked it well, for he had a good proposition. He "interested" capital and took part in the organization of the Niagara, Lockport and Ontario Power Company. He still had his liking for respectable names. Cassius M. Wicker and George Westinghouse were deeply interested in the company. When Robin sold out a few years later he realized a profit of $1,000,000.

From the organization of the Niagara company, the story of Robin's life has been told too many times to need repeating. Any new information as to how he manipulated the Northern Bank, the Washington Savings Bank, and his various insurance and loan companies will have to come from the courts.

A TREK ACROSS SAHARA DESERT

It is the opinion of Capt. A. H. W. Haywood, of the British army, that the great Sahara Desert is gradually encroaching on the country south of the Niger. Capt. Haywood recently completed a trip through the desert. He entered the sand country at Gao, having been forced to abandon the route from Timbuctoo to Insalah, which is situated on the twenty-eighth parallel in the direction of Algiers, because of the intense heat. He could not find a desert guide who was willing to run the risk of traveling through the wind-driven sand along a route which in certain parts offered no hope of an oasis or a well in ten days' ride.

At Gao, however, he hired a riding camel and four baggage camels and started due north to Kidal, accompanied by a cook and an escort of six men of the Senegalese Tirailleurs. Telling of his experiences, Capt. Haywood says:

"We went two and three days between wells, I riding and my boy alternately riding a baggage animal and walking. At first we found considerable Saharan vegetation in the dried-up water courses, which meant good gazelle shooting and pasturage for the camels, but as we pusher further north the vegetation grew scantier and the persistent northeast winds, blowing the sand in our faces, became more unpleasant.

"At Kidal I said good-by to my escort, hired five new camels and an Arab guide, and began my longest and most difficult trek to Insalah. We had now 800 miles of true Saharan desert in front of us.

"North of Adrar we came into a country in which there was no sign of water for the camels, wood for a camp fire, or vegetation. We now had to carry water for seven days and seven nights, and we marched almost continuously.

"In this uncomfortable fashion we covered 200 miles of the Tanezrouft region, and thought ourselves lucky to finish this trek on June 1."

THE ART OF MAKING LACES IN BELGIUM

At Turnhout 2,500 lace makers produce "la dentelle de Malines," a superior article both in design and workmanship, but the majority produces "point de Paris," used for household furnishings; "point de Lille," sold in Holland and Brittany for trimming the characteristic caps worn by native women; "point de Binche" and torchon laces, according to a United States consular report from Belgium.

The lacemakers begin their apprenticeship at six to eight years of age, although the legal age limit is nine years. Their hours are 6:30 to noon and 1 to 7 o'clock in summer and in winter 8 a. m. to 10 p. m. They earn 8 to 10 cents a day; the more expert 14 cents.

The maximum wages paid to the most skillful lacemakers never exceed 30 cents a day, and out of 2,500 workers only about 20 are paid the maximum. Children up to twelve years of age, and even older, are paid 20 cents per week. Relatively to its value the lace workers producing the Malines lace are the most poorly paid.

All lacemakers are paid by the ell, the Flemish ell being 27 inches. Those working in the schools earn less than those working for a local agent or kantoor. It is largely due to the existence of intermediaries, or "middlemen," that wages are so low.

Lace schools are either maintained by religious institutions or are directed by more or less expert lacemakers, who gather together the pupils, girls of different ages, in their dwellings, small workingmen's houses; added to which are the workrooms into which the children are packed.

At nightfall the benches are ranged along the wall, and upon small round tables a petroleum lamp is placed, with flasks of clear water arranged so that the light traverses the water and falls on the lace pillows of the workers.

Lace workers attending these schools pay 30 cents a month, and the price of the thread furnished for their work is deducted from their wages.

The children employed receive no instruction, the greater part not knowing how to read or write. The director of a school must turn over all work to the agent, so that sales in the open market are excluded. All work executed is usually specially ordered.