

THE JIT

By Rex Lampman.

In all the world—with all its wonders—both natural and man-made—there's nothing quite so interesting—to me—as people.

Just plain people—with all their faults—and failings—and kindnesses—and virtues.

And one reason—perhaps—that people are so interesting—is that they're all different—each from the other.

And their differences are to be seen in everything they do—or say.

For instance—there's the people—who stop every day—and sit on the benches—by the Unitarian church—across from The Journal.

And yesterday—there came a boy—who was very different from any of the others.

And he sat on the end of the bench—nearest the wooden step—down from the sidewalk to the pavement—at the corner of Yamhill and Broadway.

And he sat as if he was interested in nothing at all.

—until somebody came along.

And then he glanced sidewise—toward the wooden step.

And nearly always—whoever was passing—would stoop.

—and try to pick something up—from the step.

And then they'd brace up—and look around—to see if anyone had seen them.

—and then they'd go on.

And all this looked interesting.

—so I went over—and walked past the step.

—and saw that there was a nickel nailed to it.

And I went and sat down by the boy.

And a fat man came along—with a stiff hat.

And he saw the nickel—and stooped down.

—and dug at it with his fingernails.

—and his hat fell off—and rolled.

And he got red—and straightened up.

—and walked after his hat—and picked it up—with dignity.

And he brushed it with his sleeve.

—and looked at the nickel.

—and swore softly.

—and went on.

And two girls came along—dressed in black and white stripes.

—so they looked like optical illusions.

And one tried to pick up the nickel.—and the other giggled.

And the girl who tried kicked at the nickel.

—and hurt her toe on the curb.

—and said—"Somebody thinks they're smart!"

—and then went on.

And a man came along—a sort of modern Mr. Worldly Wiseman.

—for he saw the nickel—and smiled.

—and muttered—"Too early for April 1."

—and tried it with his toe.

—and smiled again—at his own shrewdness—and went on.

And another man—who wore a heavy gold watch chain—tried to pick up the nickel.



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—and then snorted—like a gasoline engine.

And he thought a moment—and then took out his knife.

—and tried to pry up the nickel.

—and broke the blade.

And the boy and I took hold of hands—and squeezed hard—to keep from yelling.

And the man looked at the stub blade—and shut it—and put his knife in his pocket—and glared at the nickel—and went on.

And sometimes—they came and sat on the bench—with us—to watch the others.

And we were sorry—for a dear old lady—who tried—and said—"Well—I declare."

And the boy—he had "just blew in" from Edmonton—and didn't know where he was going.

—but he was seeing the world.

And I don't know how long he stayed there—and watched the nickel—because—

Listen—The esteemed city editor saw me—and sent Rex Stewart—our sad-eyed office boy—across the street—with a note—suggesting that I do some useful labor.—Oregon Journal.

First Traveler—So you have returned from Africa? Had any narrow escapes?

Second T.—Only one—a regular prize-winner, I should think.

First T.—Let me hear it.

Second T.—Well, I was chased by a big lion, and having no cartridges left I threw away my rifle and faced the brute; but as he sprang at me I caught him by the lower jaw with one hand and by the nose with the other. And there I stood and held his mouth wide open until he starved to death. A narrow escape, eh?—British Jester.