

# They Always Stick

THE story was that two girls, each about twenty years of age, remained at their posts of duty in the Nixonville telephone exchange until the building collapsed under the pounding of a flood. By telephoning to every farmhouse and cross roads community in the valley they saved about twelve hundred lives; also a considerable amount of property. Both girls had previously experienced floods in that valley so they knew, when they determined to remain as long as the wires were open, that they were risking their lives. By the time the last wire was dead they couldn't leave. The water was too deep. Before the building went down, however, they took four doors off their hinges, fastened them together with wire, and were whirled away on this raft to comparative safety among the overhanging branches of a tree. There they were rescued several hours later.

On the following day a young reporter, representing the morning newspaper of a city about two hundred miles distant, got the story in detail and—as he would have said—hung it on the wire. It would have filled about one column. The story, as it appeared, follows:

"There was no loss of life at Cartersville, Landers City, Polktown, Hendersonville, Valley View, or intervening points, warning having been received in time. At Nixonville, Watson's Drug Store, above which is the telephone exchange, went down when a cotton shed floated against it. No lives lost."

The story of the two telephone girls had to be cut that day because there was more pressing news. Sixty-eight persons drowned in the flood elsewhere had been identified. Communication with several towns was still cut off; and a river ordinarily about one hundred yards wide was roaring toward salt water anywhere from ten to forty miles wide. The first news would necessarily relate to the various fates of whole communities—also lists of the dead. Heroes and heroines could wait. This was the view of the news editor, and his opinion prevailed. The young reporter made inquiry about his story on returning to the office, and listened with interest to the explanation; he was still learning the business. Then he cached a carbon copy of his story in the top drawer of his desk and went forth after more flood news. It was not difficult to find; he was busy for a week.

When the floods of water and news had subsided so that the farms and front pages were again rather dry he spread before the city editor four sheets of carbon paper and said:

"Perkins couldn't use this when I wired it in but no one has printed it. I think it's still a good story. If you wish I'll rewrite it."

The young reporter had seen those two telephone girls while their clothes were still wet, and hanging

on the wash lines in their several back yards. When he interviewed them they were in bed digesting heavy doses of quinine. He couldn't free his mind of a sense of responsibility; their adventure impressed him as news. The city editor had formerly edited a newspaper right in the flood district. After reading the four sheets of carbon copy the city editor said:

"No, I don't see much to this. The telephone girls always stick. If we printed this we'd get a dozen more like it. You might take it up with the Sunday editor and write a feature story about it some day."

So the four sheets of carbon paper were again cached in the top drawer and the young reporter went out to cover a murder trial.

At the end of ten days he had more or less forgotten the telephone girls but the Sunday editor summoned him and said:

"I'm using a page feature about the men who went out in boats and rescued people from trees during the flood. If you have anything along that line I could use it."

The young reporter furnished two paragraphs, then seized the opportunity to offer his treasured carbon copy. The Sunday editor glanced at the pages, returned them, and said:

"If you can get their pictures."

At first pictures couldn't be obtained; the young ladies had none to spare; moreover they were fearful lest Nixonville laugh. One couldn't be sure what a newspaper might say. Later they sent snapshots of two groups of young men and women. Arrows indicated which were the heroines. Meanwhile one of the men who went out in boats had been nominated for a hero medal. But for that fact the young reporter might not have bothered to write his story. He hadn't thought of medals; now, however, he coveted a brace of them for the telephone girls.

Five days after the story of the telephone girls had been placed upon the Sunday editor's desk the young reporter was summoned by the managing editor and the following conversation took place:

"Did you write this?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know Charlie Abbott?"

"Yes, sir. I think he's press agent for the telephone company."

"Does he know you wrote this?"

"No, sir."

"That's all."

"Aren't you going to use it?"

"Not now. Maybe some time later."

"If you don't mind my asking, what's the telephone company got to do with it?"

"There's some legislation pending and I thought they might be trying to put over a little sob stuff."

"Oh. I hadn't thought of that."

"It's all right, young man. We may use it some time later but not now."

"Yes, sir."

Two months later the Sunday editor said to the young reporter in answer to inquiry:

"I threw it away. That's stale stuff now. Anyway, Perkins tells me the girls always stick. Well, if they do it isn't news. You know the old rule: If a dog bites a man it isn't news, if a man bites a dog it's big news."

The young reporter said: "Yes, sir," but it wasn't entirely clear to him.

Later when he had become a staff correspondent at the state capital—and mildly important to lobbyists—he dined one evening with one of the numerous vice-presidents of the telephone company and told him about the two telephone girls at Nixonville. The vice-president was not quite bored but he evidently had heard more thrilling stories.

"They always do that," was his comment.

"Do you ever print anything in the house organ about such happenings?"

"Sometimes."

"I'd like to write that story for you."

The vice-president's eyes narrowed ever so slightly. Was the young man looking for something? Eyes often narrow in just that way at the seats of government. The young staff correspondent felt embarrassed and changed the subject, nor did he ever mention it again.

The story has an epilogue—if you care for it. Both of the telephone girls married heroes. Mabel is now the wife of a young farmer who received a medal for rescuing three persons from a tree. Mary, the other telephone girl, is the wife of a young man who was decorated for killing eight Germans. They are very proud of their husbands. Not every soldier is decorated; nor did every farmer in the flood district risk his life during that tragic week.

As for the telephone girls, they always stick.

CHESTER T. CROWELL.

## The Dick Test

IN 1796, at the time when Jenner was making his fertile observations on small pox and milk maids, Erasmus Darwin exhorted the medical scientists of his day to indulge in human experimentation with scarlet fever in the hope that inoculations with material from "the ulcers in the throat" of the sick might point the way to the control of that dreaded disease and add to the "honor and glory" of the medical profession.

At the last annual meeting of the American Medical Association, 134 years later, in the section on the Practice of Medicine, a paper was scheduled under the rather non-committal title, *The Prevention of Scarlet Fever*. This paper was the answer to the challenge of Erasmus Darwin. Back of it were ten years of research carried on by Doctors George and Gladys Dick at the McCormick Institute for Infectious Disease in Chicago. It was the public announcement that success had finally attended their decade of labor.

Their work has been the result of one of the most extensive pieces of human experimentation ever undertaken primarily for the purpose of studying the cause and the mode of infection of a disease as distinguished from the attempt to ward off a dreaded disease by an experimental induction of a milder form. But though their experiments dealt at first almost exclusively with the causative organism and the mode of its activity, their results have included the means of detecting susceptibility, of producing immunity and perhaps even of treating the disease. Probably it would be too much to say that animal experiments alone could never have brought results in this field; but it is evident that

they could not have been as conclusive nor as immediately practicable as these which have been based upon human inoculations, principally because it has been found that the ordinary laboratory animals are more or less immune to scarlet fever.

Though the Dicks have not been the sole laborers in the field of scarlet fever research, it is they who have worked it most continuously since 1914 and in the face of negative and often most discouraging results. Less than a year ago they finally accomplished the goal of all bacteriologists: the successful application of the four postulates of Koch, the definitive tests of the identity of a micro-organism laid down by the great German bacteriologist, to the streptococcus which they believed and finally proved to be the cause of scarlet fever. From this point on, their work has been attended with fewer difficulties and with quite dramatic results.

Their contribution is unique because of its inclusiveness. They have approached the problem of scarlet fever from all its angles. They have not limited themselves to one phase only; on the contrary their studies have included etiology, mode of invasion, susceptibility and prevention, and they have already mapped out for further study the application of their antitoxin to the treatment of the disease. They stand out most distinctly, however, because they have used human subjects for their experimentation rather than rabbits or guinea pigs. Only two or three other experimenters have used human beings in their experiments on scarlet fever. One of these was a Japanese bacteriologist, Takahashi, who reported in 1921 the production of a probable immunity in his four children whom he