

The Peeping Tom

A Short Story

RALPH ROBIN



THE DOSSES' apartment, unsatisfactory but very reasonable, was behind the Capitol on Eighth Street, Southeast. It was on the second floor, and the two windows of the living room, which was also the bedroom, opened onto the flat extended roof of the hardware store downstairs; these windows looked out across an alley at the long building of a wholesale dry-cleaning plant and, beyond, at the tip of a church and the top of a tree. The roof of the hardware store was covered with painted metal, which added to the heat during the summer; but at least it was a good place for Mabel to hang the wash Saturdays, even if Clifton didn't like the way the men in the cleaning plant looked up at her from steam presses that went ss's-rr'm, ss's-rr'm. The noise itself was annoying, not to speak of the smell, but on Sundays the dry-cleaning plant was closed and during the week the Dosses both went to work.

Clifton often worked late at his new job, and one night when Mabel was sitting alone reading *Better Homes and Gardens*, she turned out the light to rest her eyes and saw a man on the roof, half formed in the dark, bent over, facing the window.

The windows were closed but not locked, and Mabel jumped up and locked them with shaky hands. By the time she got to the second window the man was scrambling down the side of the roof—on the rain pipe, she guessed.

When Clifton came home and she told him, he said: "It must have been

one of those colored men from the cleaning plant. Didn't you call the police?"

"I couldn't tell whether he was colored. I was going to call the police. Then I thought, what good could they do after he was gone?"

"Well, that's what they're for." But Clifton was full of the new job. "I've got to write up my notes," he said, "while they are fresh in my mind."

He sat down at the drop-leaf table of which the leaves were never dropped. His bald spot, in a ring of brown hair, glistened. He wrote carefully in a gray government notebook, smiling occasionally.

Clifton looked to see if his wife was watching him smile. He said: "I'm not supposed to say anything, even to you, Mabel, but this is good. I've been getting nothing but good reports on this guy all along. One after another says he's loyal to the best of their knowledge and has good moral character and nothing bad about him at all. And then I get to this one guy, his friend, a big cheerful talkative guy, and when I ask him if this man is thoroughly reliable, he comes out with: 'Is he reliable? Let me tell you how reliable he is. We played poker in the same gang for almost two years and once he had a real bad night and lost fifty dollars he didn't have on him. He owed it to me because I'd been doing all right and had been loaning him chips. And would you believe it?—the next morning he took annual leave from his job to get the money

out of his savings account and bring it over to my office. How's that for being reliable? I wouldn't have minded waiting till payday.' Isn't that a hot one, Mabel?"

"What's so hot about it? I don't get it."

"That guy thought he was talking his friend up, and here he was cooking his goose for him. Gambling is one of the things we got to look for on these sensitive jobs."

Mabel said, "I get it now. That is a hot one."

THE NEXT week, on Wednesday, the man came on the roof again.

Clifton was home this time. They were undressing for the night and the shades were down, though there might have been an inch or two of glass exposed below one of the shades—Mabel was sometimes careless about such things. They heard a scraping sound on the roof. Clifton, whispering, ordered his wife to go in the kitchen, which did not face the flat roof. She was sufficiently confused to obey, and Clifton snapped up a window shade, opened the window, and charged through with a roar. He saw a murky running man drop off the alley end of the roof.

Clifton forgot the lean-to for trash and he expected with a quirk of pleasure to see the man lying in the alley with a broken leg. But when he reached the end of the roof and knelt, he saw the lean-to and no man. He went back through the window and dusted his knees and called

the police and told them there had been a Peeping Tom on the roof.

He put on a necktie and the jacket of his suit and Mabel put on a housecoat, and Clifton had scarcely begun to complain of the slowness of the police when a policeman ran up the stairs. He ran through the apartment and went on the roof. He yelled to his partner down below and looked up and down the alley and came back and told Clifton:

"He's gone. We were in the alley a couple minutes after you called. I don't see how he could've got away."

It seemed to Clifton that the policeman, whose face was young and stupid, did not believe that there had been a man on the roof. Clifton said: "I am not the kind of person, or Mrs. Doss either, who imagines things. I wouldn't occupy the position I've got if I wasn't trained to observe." He showed the policeman his identification card.

"Might've got away half a dozen ways at that, place like back there," the policeman said, looking older and more intelligent. "Could've gone over another roof, seeing he could climb so good. A lot of people not like you folks keep us going all the time with silly things. Woman calls up every couple of days and says there's somebody in her closet. She ought to be in St. Elizabeth and would be too if she didn't have a pull. But folks like you now, you know what you're talking about. Only thing I don't understand, Mr. Doss, why didn't you sock him one with your blackjack?"

"I don't carry a blackjack!" Clifton said, startled.

"I thought . . ."

"I'm not like an ordinary detective."

"Nothing wrong with being an ordinary detective. Wish I was a detective, but you can't get anywhere



in this city without pull. Well, even if you ain't a detective, Mr. Doss, did you go after him?"

"I most certainly did. I went right through that window after him as soon as I'd removed Mrs. Doss to a place of safety; though when you come right down to it, it's you fellows' job to catch those fellows."

"Well, he's gone now. Maybe we'll have better luck next time." The policeman started toward the door.

"The next time!" Mabel Doss said. "Wait a minute, officer. You mean he'll come again?"

"See him before?"

"I saw him out there once before," Mabel said, "if it was the same man."

"It was the same man all right. That's the way it works with Peeping Toms that hang around to see what they can see. With these kind of cases they keep coming back even when they know you're on to them. It's what we call a phobia," the policeman explained. "We put 'em in St. Elizabeth now we catch 'em. Was he colored, Mrs. Doss? They're most of them colored."

"Was he colored, Clifton? I couldn't tell the time I saw him."

"He was colored, all right," Clifton said. "The most logical theory is he was one of those colored men from the cleaning plant across the alley."

"Could have been anybody," the policeman said. "This neighborhood is lousy with criminal elements and warped personalities. Don't see what folks like you are doing in a neighborhood like this."

AFTER the policeman left, Mabel said: "He's right. We ought to move. I'm almost afraid to walk down the street alone, when you look at the whites and blacks both they have in this neighborhood. And you remember what a hotbox it gets in the summer. It isn't as though we can't afford a better place now, what with your new job."

"I'm not working just for the money," Clifton said. "It's an important job I'm doing."

"Oh, I know that, dear. And I'm so proud of the way you're putting your heart in it. It makes all the struggle getting your college degree worth while."

Hand in hand they gazed at the drop-leaf table of which the leaves

were never dropped, where Clifton had bent over textbooks and lecture notes. "I could never have done it without you," Clifton said.

"Let's not put off looking for a new place, Clifton. Let's do it this Saturday."

"It's O.K. with me, if I don't have to work. I think I'll have put in about as much overtime as Charlie likes a man to do, so it will probably be O.K."

WHEN Clifton and Mabel woke up on Saturday, the steam presses were already going ss's-rr'm, ss's-rr'm, and the air smelled of solvent and hot wool. Clifton looked out of the window and almost caught the eye of a tall colored man who was staring from the open window of the cleaning plant, hardly glancing at the overcoat that he shifted in his steam press.

"It will be good to move to a place with some fresh air," Clifton said.

"I've clipped all the ads," Mabel said.

The housing shortage was over, sure enough. A little after four o'clock they signed the lease for a nice garden apartment across the Maryland line. It would mean a longer drive to their offices and Clifton's hours were something to think about, but there were so many advantages. They celebrated by eating dinner out at a Howard Johnson's.

They were going to move to the new place two weeks from Monday, and if their Eighth Street landlord— he ran the hardware store downstairs —wasn't willing to take such short notice, they were on month-to-month anyway and couldn't lose more than half a month's rent. Clifton would just say to hell with it, and pay it. For dessert they ate cake with ice cream and hot fudge sauce.

Clifton went to his office Monday with the feeling that everything was working out just fine. So when Charlie sent for him, he had a premonition that it was going to be something good.

Mr. Chas. G. Francis, Jr., sitting behind a light-oak desk no different from Clifton's except that it was the only desk in the room, was pleased with the way Clifton was doing his job. The nailing of the habitual gambler was just one of the things Clif-

ton had done well. "You know what, Clifton?" he said, "I'm going to put you on spot check!"

That was a real compliment to Clifton, a new employee, and Clifton flushed. "I'll do my best, Charlie," he said. Mr. Chas. G. Francis, Jr., encouraged informality.

"A man can do no more. I'm going to start you off with a kind of tough one. I'll give you the story."

The case was a young woman named Betty Forester, who was secretary for a division chief. This division chief—between Clifton and Mr. Chas. G. Francis, Jr.—drew a hell of a lot of water. He'd be sore as a hornet if he knew his secretary was being given a spot check. They were sort of reluctant for that reason to make the spot check, but they couldn't very well help themselves because they had received an anonymous letter saying that this Betty Forester was playing house with a Canadian, and while that wasn't as bad as playing house with a more foreign foreigner, it was worse than playing house with an American, which would be bad enough.

Clifton bent forward in his chair, concentrating. "I think I'm beginning to get the picture," Clifton said. "What procedure do you want me to follow, Charlie?"

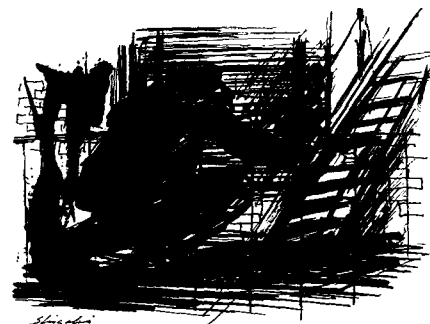
"I was coming to that. Now the procedure is, we're not going to ask around about this Betty because it would be sure to get back to her and she'd tell her boss and he'd raise the roof. At least we're not going to do it unless we have to. Now what we want you to do is, there's this friend of hers—this Dorothy Welk—who's trying to get a job in the department. Actually we're holding Dorothy's investigation in abeyance till this other business is cleared up. But what we want you to do is to pay Betty a little visit at her apartment and ask her some questions about her friend Dorothy Welk, meanwhile keeping our eyes and ears open. It might be a good idea, too, not to phone but just kind of drop in on her."

WHEN he called me in," Clifton told Mabel, "I already had a remonition it was going to be something good."

"Eat your supper, dear," Mabel said.

Betty Forester wasn't home that night, and Clifton grimly resolved to come back the next night and the next night and the next night, should that be necessary to crack the case. But when on the very next night he knocked at the subject's door, the subject, dressed in a pleated blue skirt, opened the door gaily. Clifton was inside as fast as a salesman, and there was the Canadian, rising. He was an obvious Canadian, with a bony face.

In justice to the gay subject, it must be said that she became serious when she saw Clifton's identification card. Clifton said that he had come to ask a few questions about Miss Dorothy Welk, who had given her name as a reference for a govern-



ment position. In an even more foreign tone than Clifton would have expected, the Canadian said, "I dare say this is confidential. I was on the point of leaving."

The Canadian, not introduced by subject, departed, subject calling after him, "Don't forget tomorrow," and Canadian replying foreignly, "I shan't." Betty Forester didn't ask Clifton why he hadn't telephoned. "Will you sit down?" she said. "What is it you want to know about Dorothy?"

How long had Miss Forester known Miss Welk? Eight years. Where had Miss Forester met Miss Welk? At college. Was there anything about Miss Welk to indicate that she might not be completely loyal? Of course not. Was there anything about Miss Welk that might reflect on her moral character? Indeed no; Miss Welk had the highest moral character and her ideals were the finest. In subject's apartment there were bookcases with books and a Magnavox and three bronze horses on the window sill, and she was not really pretty but there was some-

thing about her, and it was too bad that a girl like that could get mixed up with a Canadian. Clifton could have gone for this girl with the serious round cheeks. But Clifton was married, and his marriage was not like some marriages.

"Does Miss Welk have many dates?"

"Excuse me?"

"Does Miss Welk have many dates with men friends? Does she go out much, would you say?"

"Dorothy's a very popular girl. I don't think she's really serious now about any of her beaux, but they are all men of the highest type. As I said, Dorothy is a girl with the highest ideals."

"You say that's indicated by the fact that she's not got herself tied up with one man friend but associates with several?"

After a moment Betty Forester laughed. "I don't really see the connection, Mr. Doss. When the time comes that Dorothy begins to think seriously about marrying one of her present friends or someone else, why certainly she'll start spending most of her free time with that friend and I'm sure her ideals will be just as high then."

"I'm sure they will, Miss Forester. Mrs. Doss and I went steady for two years before we took the plunge."

"You sound as if you're glad you did, Mr. Doss."

"It was nine years ago and I've never regretted it. We're not like some married people."

"Yes, some couples quarrel all the time. Is there anything else about Dorothy, Mr. Doss?"

"Your information will be very helpful, and I guess that is about all. I wonder if I might make a little request. I'm going to meet Mrs. Doss for a late date downtown and I wonder if I might sort of wash up and comb my hair—what's left of it. I've been on the go practically since eight o'clock this morning."

"I can see why your marriage has been such a success," Betty said. "Let me just get my stockings out of the way. You're a married man and know how that is."

The blue pleated skirt swirled. Betty opened the door to the dressing room and closed it behind her. Clifton started to look at the books. Al-

though the question was moral character more than loyalty, it was hard to tell about a girl who would let herself get mixed up with a Canadian. But the books seemed all right: Clifton didn't see any by the authors he was supposed to look for. He recognized two classics he had studied about at college. Then he heard Betty coming back, but he decided to go on looking at the books anyway.

"All clear, Mr. Doss."

"Thank you. You must like books, Miss Forester."

"I do. I do indeed. Do you?"

"I do too," Clifton said. "I took a minor in English."

"Dorothy majored in English. But of course you've seen her forms." Betty smiled. "I put the stockings away, so . . ."

Clifton liked the dressing room: the dresses and skirts hanging, the neat dressing table, the clean towels on shelves, the pink wicker hamper. There was nothing belonging to a man. Clifton went into the bathroom and opened the medicine cabinet. It was neater than Clifton thought women kept medicine cabinets, but everything in it was female. He washed his hands and face, straightened his tie, and combed his hair.

Going back through the dressing room, the investigator had a hunch. He raised the lid of the pink hamper, lifted a spread towel and saw on another spread towel a man's starched white shirt with cardboard in the collar. With the shirt, a large toothbrush, a safety razor, a shaving brush, and a wooden bowl of shaving soap lay in all their guilt. The investigator replaced the towel and quietly closed the hamper.

Clifton said good-by to Betty Forester.

"Have a nice time, Mr. Doss."

"Thank you. You have a nice time too."

"I'm just going to read awhile and then go to bed."

"Well, that's a nice time."

"Yes, of course. You'll put that through for Dorothy as soon as you can, won't you?"

"I'll do my best. It's not just up to me. I just put in my report, you know."

Clifton had parked his car on Sixteenth Street, and now he drove



slowly around the apartment building until he found the window with the three bronze horses. He commended himself for finding it as he drove on and parked about two blocks away. He walked back, staying across the street from the apartments. Betty's Venetian blinds were lowered only part way and open, but he was too low to see deep inside her apartment, which was about two and a half stories above the ground.

On his side of the street, unused land with many scrubby trees rose sharply from the sidewalk. If Clifton just climbed a little distance up that slope, why, he would be able to look right into the subject's apartment. Clifton rolled the cuffs of his trousers and climbed until he was on a level with the window with the bronze horses. He backed against a tree and watched and waited. Betty was walking around the room—nervously?—picking things up and putting them down, swirling the pleated skirt. Clifton thought of lifting the pleated skirt, but he thought of it only for a moment, for Clifton was not like some married men.

Betty Forester stopped walking around the room and went to the door, where she let in, of course, the Canadian. Clifton could see the Canadian's head tilt in an odd foreign way as he said something to her. He did not kiss her, Clifton noticed. They simply sat down in chairs and talked. A microphone would have been the very thing, but for some high-up policy reason Charlie wouldn't let anybody so much as mention a microphone. "It's vital work we're doing," Charlie had said at a staff meeting, "and man for man I'm convinced that we're the best investigative agency in Washington, but let's not get it in our heads that

we're anything more than a one-horse outfit yet—there are a lot of things we can't touch."

Betty Forester and the Canadian talked and talked. Clifton wasn't wearing a topcoat or a hat and he was getting cold. He was also irritated. He knew he resented something, but he did not know what. It might have been the morals everywhere. A girl like Betty Forester played house with a Canadian. Subversives all over the place, and sex criminals, and the Negroes out of hand. Gambling and dope. Clifton was spinning his car keys, and they slipped from his finger and fell on the ground.

He couldn't find them right away, and although Clifton didn't often swear, he swore now. It was lucky—but luck comes from good planning—that he always carried a pocket flashlight with a strong battery, and he began a systematic search for the keys.

Clifton himself was suddenly caught in the glare of a bigger flashlight and a policeman was standing over him. "Just what the hell are you doing here?"

"I'm looking for my car keys."

"Jesus, that's a good one. I never heard a better one. Car parked up a tree? You know what I think? I think you've been looking in those apartment windows to see what you can see. That's what I think."

"Listen, officer, this is in line of duty. I can identify myself. Reach in the inside pocket of my coat and take out my wallet and you'll see."

"Just like the movies, huh? I'm scared to death you'll shoot me. Hand me your wallet. I don't want to put my hands on something like you."

"It's the top card."

"I see it." He flashed the light back and forth from the card to the face.

"It's not a very good picture. Clifton said.

"It's not a very good face. If you really dropped your car keys, find them." He ran the light down Clifton's body and brushed the ground with the light. "There they are."

Clifton picked up the keys.

"I still think I'd get the hell out of here if I were you," the policeman said. "That's what I think. Lead t

way, Sherlock." On the sidewalk, under a street lamp, the policeman looked at the rest of Clifton's cards. He was a heavy man, older than Clifton, with large hands. He gave the wallet back to Clifton, and Clifton put it in his pocket. "Where's your car, Sherlock?"

"My name is Mr. Doss."

"Where's your car, Doss?"

"Two blocks west."

"Got a compass?"

"Why, yes—"

"For God's sakes. Let's walk to your car, Doss. You get paid for this night work?"

"I suppose so."

"Jesus, no wonder taxes are the way they are."

Clifton's face and the bald spot on his head were warm; then they were cold again, and Clifton thought what poor planning it had been not to wear a coat and hat. It was easy to catch a cold this way. He wished he could find a way to make the policeman respect him, and yet he found himself changing step to keep in step with the older man. "I ought to report you for this," he said.

"How do you know I'm not going to take you in and charge you?" the policeman said.

Clifton decided to use tact. He had been about ready to leave his post anyway—he had plenty of evidence in the Betty Forester case, and there was no use looking for trouble. In the long run, he would come out on top if the policeman tried to arrest him, but security of information would be jeopardized, and Charlie wouldn't like that.

"This your car, Doss? Get in." The policeman kept his hand on the open door and watched Clifton put the key in the ignition. "You know what I think? I still think you were looking in those apartment windows to see what you could see. Now get the hell out of this neighborhood."

THE LATE DATE Clifton had with Mabel was at a friend's house, and normally Clifton would not have washed his face and combed his hair for it, even if his marriage was not like some marriages. But he would have rolled down the cuffs of his trousers and wiped the mud from his shoes if his mind hadn't been on other matters. The friend wanted

to know if Clifton had been tracking down a Communist through the swamps with bloodhounds. The others laughed, but Clifton didn't think it was funny.

On the way home Mabel asked him, "Something bad happen?"

"Nothing bad. I'd say I did a pretty good job. This Betty Forester is living with a Canadian all right."

"It's a feeling of insecurity that makes such women promiscuous," Mabel said. "That's psychology."

"I don't remember it from the course in Psych I took," Clifton said. "Where'd you hear that?"

"I read it in a magazine."

"That's an interesting subject, psychology. Do you think the policeman was right—the young policeman who came when the Peeping Tom was on the roof—when he said the Peeping Tom was going to come back?"

"Whatever made you think about that? I was just getting over being scared, though I don't know how I'd be if I didn't know we were going to move so soon. That reminds me. We have to get some cardboard boxes to pack dishes and things in."

Clifton was restless in the sofa bed that night. Several times he thought of waking Mabel, but he didn't really like her as she lay there with her eyes screwed shut and her chin too pointed. He got out of bed and stood at the window. There was moonlight, and he looked at the roof and the dry-cleaning plant and the church steeple and the top of the tree and the moon. He wondered how the garden apartment would be at night;



he wondered whether Mr. Chas. G. Francis, Jr., would like his work on the Betty Forester case; he wondered what would make a girl like Betty Forester live with a Canadian. "I'm the kind of fellow that thinks too much about things," he scolded himself, and he went back to the sofa bed.

IT TURNED OUT that Mr. Chas. G. Francis, Jr., was more pleased than ever with Clifton's work. He said that Clifton had shown real initiative in the Betty Forester case and that he was headed for a real future in investigative work.

"I try to do my best, Charlie," Clifton said.

"A man can do no more," Mr. Chas. Francis, Jr., said. They enjoyed a big laugh together about the dumb cop.

A moving firm arranged to move the Dosses' furniture for the very reasonable price of twenty-six dollars, and the landlord found somebody from the Navy Yard who was only too glad to take the apartment the day they moved out, so they weren't going to lose any money that way. The last Friday night the Dosses were to spend on Eighth Street they packed the good dishes in cardboard boxes and talked about what new furniture they would need.

"Mabel," Clifton said suddenly, "hasn't everything worked out fine?"

"It certainly has, Clifton."

There was a thoughtful silence, almost reverent, and Clifton wanted to tell Mabel how much better she was than the promiscuous Forester woman, but that didn't make sense. Then—breaking into the thoughtful, almost reverent silence—the roof rattled.

"Just don't make any noise," Clifton whispered. "This time I'm going to catch that Peeping Tom."

Clifton walked casually to the three-way lamp—the only light burning—and turned it off.

"What are you going to do?" Mabel asked. "It's dark."

Clifton was looking through the window. There was very little light outside, but there was more light outside than inside and Clifton could see pretty well. At first he couldn't see the Peeping Tom, but then he looked obliquely and saw a

man with spread arms pressing against the wall between the windows.

Clifton opened the window. The man still did not move except to press his body even harder against the wall. A strained voice came from him: "I didn't. . . . I wasn't. . . ."

Clifton went through the window, and the Peeping Tom pushed himself from the wall and ran. Clifton ran after him. The Peeping Tom tripped, and as he fell Clifton saw his white face and hands. That he was not a Negro made Clifton angry. The Peeping Tom started to get up, but Clifton pushed him down and straddled him and sat down on him and yelled to Mabel to call the police.

The prisoner tried, rather weakly, to twist himself loose, and Clifton knocked his head on the tinny roof. "Even if you fellows are sick, you've got to learn a lesson," Clifton said angrily. "There's been just too much of this sort of thing going on."

ALL THE papers had something about Clifton's heroism the next day, and he enjoyed reading about it. It didn't hurt him a bit professionally, either. Clifton was working that Saturday, and Mr. Chas. G. Francis, Jr., came out of his private office to congratulate him. But one thing puzzled Clifton. None of the papers said anything about the man's being a Peeping Tom. The papers said he was a prowler who confessed that he had robbed seventeen apartments and rooms in Southeast Washington.



SPECIAL SECTION ON PAPER-BACK BOOKS

Some Early Ventures In Popular Publishing

FREEMAN LEWIS

The following are excerpts from a lecture delivered last year by Mr. Lewis at the New York Public Library and subsequently published by the library as a pamphlet.

THE AMBITION to provide inexpensive books for many people is an old one among publishers. It could not be achieved, however, until production methods and materials made it possible to use machine techniques. First there had to be machine-made paper instead of handmade paper. Then there had to be mechanical typesetting machines, and electrotyping and stereotyping processes. And finally there had to be fast cylinder presses. Most of these basic inventions and many of the improvements which made them commercially practicable occurred in the period from 1790 to 1830. . . .

The first low-priced venture here was probably the Boston Society for the Diffusion of Knowledge in 1829. The American Library of Useful Knowledge was started in 1831 with this avowed objective: "To issue in a cheap form a series of works, partly original and partly selected, in all the most important branches of learning."

These earliest efforts were more noteworthy than successful. Then in July, 1841, Park Benjamin, editor of a literary newspaper called *New World*, brought out the first volume of Charles Lever's *Charles O'Malley* as a "supplement" priced at fifty cents. His chief rival among literary newspapers, *Brother Jonathan*,

promptly issued the same book as an "extra" at twenty-five cents. In 1842, these rivals were busy issuing novels by English and Continental authors. . . .

It is worth noting that this beginning was essentially a side issue of periodical publishing, made possible by newspaper presses and taking advantage of the low postal rates Congress had authorized for newspapers. The "extras" issued by both *New World* and *Brother Jonathan* were sold by newsboys, but they were also mailed in tens of thousands. . . . In 1843, the Post Office Department got around to charging book postage rates for these "extras," and this blow, combined with a glut of copies and a severe price war, put a temporary end to low-priced book publishing. . . . With the end of the Civil War came the "dime" novels, particularly those of Mr. Beadle. But these were of minor importance. The big revival came in the 1870's and carried through most of the rest of the century. . . .

Once again, the first efforts were the by-products of a newspaper publisher, in this case the *New York Tribune*. In 1873, it began issuing "extras" dealing mainly with scientific subjects. Shortly after appeared the *Tribune Novels*. . . .

THE most important pioneer of this period was a Chicago firm, Donnelley, Gasette & Lloyd, which began its famous Lakeside Library of cheap quarto novels in 1875. Almost overnight a rash of houses appeared—