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A DERELICT

BY RICHARD HARDING DAVIS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY WALTER APPLETON CLARK

WHEN the war-ships of a navy lie cleared for action outside a harbor, and the war-ships of the country with which they are at war lie cleared for action inside the harbor, there is likely to be trouble. Trouble between war-ships is news, and wherever there is news there is always a representative of the Consolidated Press.

As long as Sampson blockaded Havana and the army beat time back of the Tampa Bay Hotel, the central office for news was at Key West, but when Cervera slipped into Santiago Harbor and Sampson stationed his battle-ships at its mouth, Key West lost her only excuse for existence, and the press boats buried their bows in the waters of the Florida Straits and raced for the cable station at Port Antonio. It was then that Keating, the "star" man of the Consolidated Press Syndicate, was forced to abandon his young bride and the rooms he had engaged for her at the Key West Hotel, and accompany his tug to the distant island of Jamaica.

Keating was a good and faithful servant to the Consolidated Press. He was a correspondent after its own making, an industrious collector of facts. The Consolidated Press did not ask him to comment on what it sent him to see; it did not require nor desire his editorial opinions or impressions. It was no part of his work to go into the motives which led to the event of news interest which he was sent to report, nor to point out what there

was of it which was dramatic, pathetic, or outrageous.

The Consolidated Press being a mighty corporation, which daily fed seven hundred different newspapers, could not hope to please the policy of each, so it compromised by giving the facts of the day fairly set down, without heat, prejudice, or enthusiasm. This was an excellent arrangement for the papers that subscribed for the service of the Consolidated Press, but it was death to the literary strivings of the Consolidated Press correspondents.

"We do not want descriptive writing," was the warning which the manager of the great syndicate was always flashing to its correspondents. "We do not pay you to send us pen pictures or prose poems. We want the facts, all the facts, and nothing but the facts."

And so, when at a presidential convention a theatrical speaker sat down after calling James G. Blaine "a plumed knight," each of the "special" correspondents present wrote two columns in an effort to describe how the people who heard the speech behaved in consequence, but the Consolidated Press man telegraphed, "At the conclusion of these remarks the cheering lasted sixteen minutes."

No event of news value was too insignificant to escape the watchfulness of the Consolidated Press, none so great that it could not handle it from its inception up to the moment when it ceased to be quoted in the news-market of the world. Each

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"You lie," Channing shouted.—Page 142.

night, from thousands of spots all over the surface of the globe, it received thousands of facts, of cold accomplished facts. It knew that a tidal wave had swept through China, a cabinet had changed in Chili, in Texas an express train had been held up and robbed, "Spike" Kennedy had defeated the "Dutchman" in New Orleans, the Oregon had coaled outside of Rio Janeiro Harbor, the Cape Verde fleet had been seen at anchor off Cadiz; it had been located in the harbor of San Juan, Porto Rico; it had been sighted steaming slowly past Fortress Monroe; and the Navy Department reported that the St. Paul had discovered the lost squadron of Spain in the harbor of Santiago. This last fact was the one which sent Keating to Jamaica. Where he was sent was a matter of indifference to Keating. He had worn the collar of the Consolidated Press for so long a time that he was callous. A board meeting—a mine disaster—an Indian uprising—it was all one to Keating. He collected facts and his salary. He had no enthusiasms, he held no illusions. The prestige of the mammoth syndicate he represented gained him an audience where men who wrote for one paper only were repulsed on the threshold. Senators, governors, the presidents of great trusts and railroad systems, who fled from the reporter of a local paper as from a leper, would send for Keating and dictate to him whatever it was they wanted the people of the United States to believe, for when

they talked to Keating they talked to many millions of readers. Keating, in turn, wrote out what they had said to him and transmitted it, without color or bias, to the clearing-house of the Consolidated Press. His "stories," as all newspaper writings are called by men who write them, were as picturesque reading as the quotations of a stock ticker. The personal equation in his work appeared no more offensively than it does in a type-writing machine.

Consequently, he was dear to the heart of the Consolidated Press, and as a "safe" man, was sent to the beautiful harbor of Santiago—to a spot where there were war-ships cleared for action, Cubans in ambush, naked marines fighting for a foothold at Guantanamo, palm-trees and coral-reefs—in order that he might look for "facts."

There was not a newspaper man left at Key West who did not writhe with envy and anger when he heard of it. When the wire was closed for the night and they had gathered at Josh Kerry's, Keating was the storm centre of their indignation.

"What a chance!" they protested. "What a story! It's the chance of a lifetime." They shook their heads mournfully and lashed themselves with pictures of its possibilities.

"And just fancy its being wasted on old Keating," said the *Journal* man. "Why, everything's likely to happen out there, and whatever does happen, he'll make it read like a Congressional Record. Why, when I heard of it I cabled the office that if the paper would send me I'd not ask for any salary for six months."

"And Keating's kicking because he has to go," growled the *Sun* man. "Yes, he is, I saw him last night and he was sore because he'd just moved his wife down here. He said if he'd known this was coming he'd have let her stay in New York. He says he'll lose money on this assignment, having to support himself and his wife in two different places."

Norris, "the star man" of the *World*, howled with indignation.

"Good Lord!" he said, "is that all he sees in it? Why, there never was such a chance. I tell you, some day soon all of those war-ships will let loose at each other

and there will be the best story that ever came over the wire, and if there isn't, it's a regular loaf any way. It's a picnic, that's what it is, at the expense of the Consolidated Press. Why, he ought to pay them to let him go. Can't you see him, confound him, sitting under a palm-tree in white flannels, with a glass of Jamaica rum in his fist, while we're dodging yellow fever on this coral reef, and losing our salaries on a crooked roulette wheel."

"I wonder what Jamaica rum is like as a steady drink," mused the ex-baseball reporter, who had been converted into a war correspondent by the purchase of a white yachting cap.

"It won't be long before Keating finds out," said the *Journal* man.

"Oh, I didn't know that," ventured the new reporter, who had just come South from Boston. "I thought he didn't drink. I never see Keating in here with the rest of the boys."

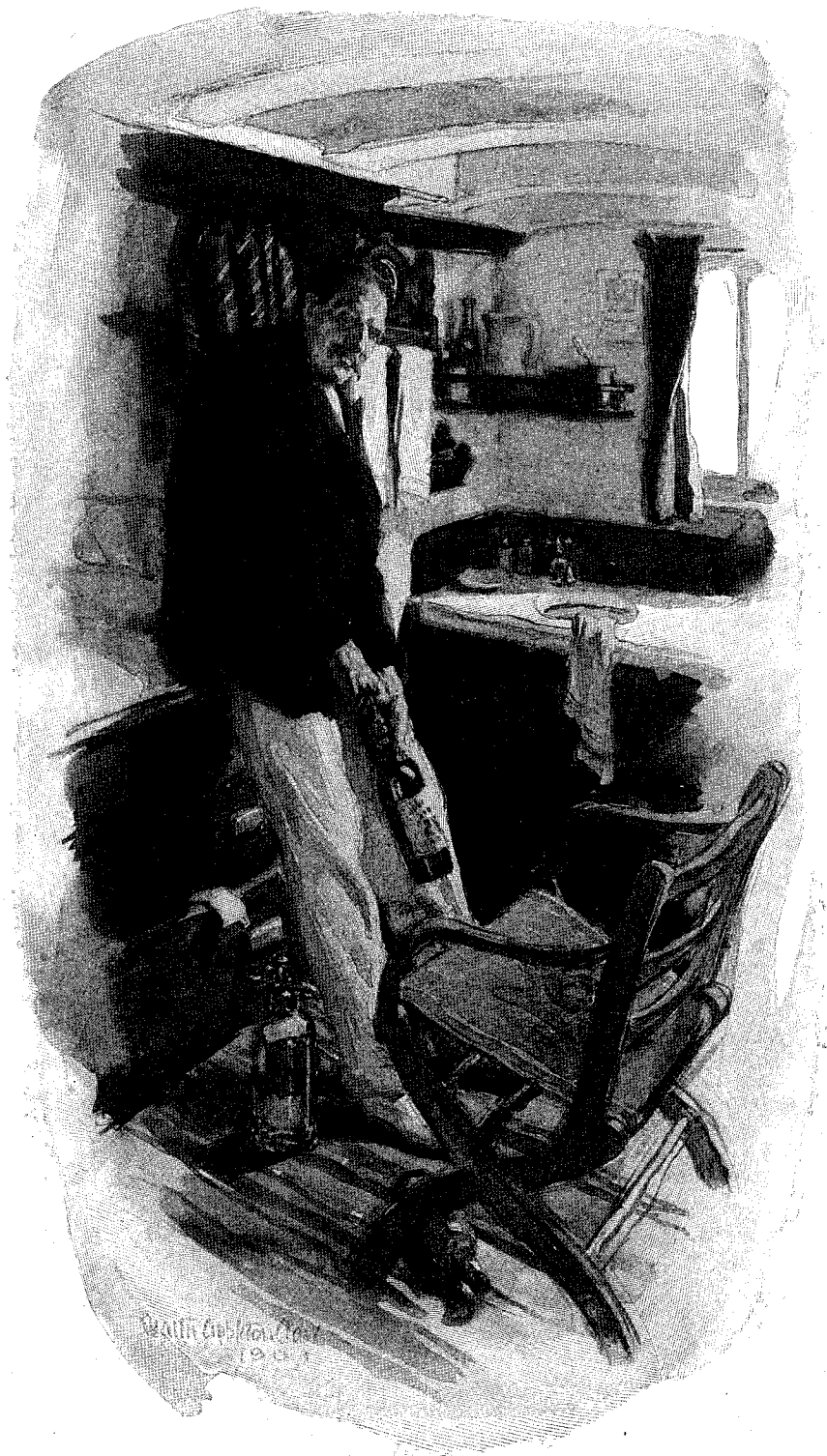
"You wouldn't," said Norris. "He only comes in here by himself, and he drinks by himself. He's one of those confidential drunkards. You give some men whiskey and it's like throwing kerosene on a fire, isn't it? It makes them wave their arms about and talk loud and break things, but you give it to another man and it's like throwing kerosene on a cork mat. It just soaks in. That's what Keating is. He's a sort of a cork mat."

"I shouldn't think the C. P. would stand for that," said the Boston man.

"It wouldn't, if it ever interfered with his work, but he's never fallen down on a story yet. And the sort of stuff he writes is machine made; a man can write C. P. stuff in his sleep."

One of the *World* men looked up and laughed.

"I wonder if he'll run across Channing out there," he said. The men at the table smiled, a kindly, indulgent smile. The name seemed to act upon their indignation as a shower upon the close air of a summer day. "That's so," said Norris. "He wrote me last month from Port-au-Prince that he was moving on to Jamaica. He wrote me from that Club there at the end of the wharf. He said he was at that moment introducing the President to a new cocktail, and as he had no money to pay his passage to Kingston he was trying



Drawn by Walter Appleton Clark.

"Why, it's ol' Charlie Channing," he exclaimed, drowsily.—Page 144.

to persuade him to send him on there as his Haitian Consul. He said in case he couldn't get appointed Consul, he had an offer to go as cook on an oil tramp."

The men around the table laughed. It was the pleased, proud laugh that flutters the family dinner-table when the infant son and heir says something precocious and impudent.

"Who is Channing?" asked the Boston man.

There was a pause and the correspondents looked at Norris.

"Channing is a sort of a derelict," he said. "He drifted into New York last Christmas from the *Omaha Bee*. He's been on pretty nearly every paper in the country."

"What's he doing in Haiti?"

"He went there on the Admiral Decatur to write a filibustering story about carrying arms across to Cuba. Then the war broke out and he's been trying to get back to Key West, and now, of course, he'll make for Kingston. He cabled me yesterday, at my expense, to try and get him a job on our paper. If the war hadn't come on he had a plan to beat his way around the world. And he'd have done it, too. I never saw a man who wouldn't help Charlie along, or lend him a dollar." He glanced at the faces about him and then winked at the Boston man. "They all of them look guilty, don't they," he said.

"Charlie Channing," murmured the baseball reporter, gently, as though he were pronouncing the name of a girl. He raised his glass. "Here's to Charlie Channing," he repeated. Norris set down his empty glass and showed it to the Boston man.

"That's his only enemy," he said. "Write! Heavens, how that man can write, and he'd almost rather do anything else. There isn't a paper in New York that wasn't glad to get him, but they couldn't keep him a week. It was no use talking to him. Talk! I've talked to him until three o'clock in the morning. Why, it was I made him send his first Chinatown story to the *International Magazine*, and they took it like a flash and wrote him for more, but he blew in the check they sent him and didn't even answer their letter. He said after he'd had the

fun of writing a story, he didn't care whether it was published in a Sunday paper or in white vellum, or never published at all. And so long as he knew he wrote it he didn't care whether anyone else knew it or not. Why, when that English reviewer—what's his name—that friend of Kipling's—passed through New York, he said to a lot of us at the Press Club, 'You've got a young man here on Park Row—an opium-eater, I should say, by the look of him, who if he would work and leave whiskey alone, would make us all sweat.' That's just what he said, and he's the best in England!"

"Charlie's a genius," growled the baseball reporter, defiantly. "I say, he's a genius."

The Boston man shook his head. "My boy," he began, sententiously, "genius is nothing more than hard work, and a man——"

Norris slapped the table with his hand.

"Oh, no, it's not," he jeered, fiercely, "and don't you go off believing it is, neither. I've worked. I've worked twelve hours a day. Keating even has worked eighteen hours a day—all his life—but we never wrote 'The Passing of the Highbinders,' nor the 'Ships that Never Came Home,' nor 'Tales of the Tenderloin,' and we never will. I'm a better news gatherer than Charlie, I can collect facts and I can put them together well enough, too, so that if a man starts to read my story he'll probably follow it to the bottom of the column and he may turn over the page, too. But I can't say the things, because I can't see the things that Charlie sees. Why, one night we sent him out on a big railroad story. It was a beat, we'd got it by accident, and we had it all to ourselves, but Charlie came across a blind beggar on Broadway with a dead dog. The dog had been run over and the blind beggar couldn't find his way home without him, and was sitting on the curbstone, weeping over the mongrel. Well, when Charlie came back to the office he said he couldn't find out anything about that railroad deal, but that he'd write them a dog story. Of course they were raging crazy, but he sat down just as though it was no concern of his, and sure enough he wrote the dog story. And the next day over five hundred people stopped in at the office on



Drawn by Walter Appleton Clark.

He had seen an empire . . . wiped off the map in twenty minutes.—Page 146.

their way down town and left dimes and dollars to buy that man a new dog. Now, hard work won't do that."

Keating had been taking breakfast in the ward-room of H. M. S. Indefatigable. As an acquaintance the officers had not found him an undoubted acquisition, but he was the representative of seven hundred papers, and when the Indefatigable's ice machine broke, he had loaned the officers' mess a hundred pounds of it from his own boat.

The cruiser's gig carried Keating to the wharf, the crew tossed their oars and the boatswain touched his cap and asked, mechanically, "Shall I return to the ship, sir?"

Channing, stretched on a bench, with his back to a palm-tree, observed the approach of Keating with cheerful approbation.

"It is gratifying to me," he said, "to see the press treated with such consideration. You came in just like Cleopatra in her barge. If the flag had been flying, and you hadn't steered so badly, I should have thought you were at least an admiral. How many guns does the British Navy give a Consolidated Press reporter when he comes over the side?"

Keating dropped to the sand and crossing his legs under him, began tossing shells at the water.

"They gave this one a damned good breakfast," he said, "and some very excellent white wine. Of course the ice machine was broken, it always is, but then Chablis never should be iced, if it's the real thing."

"Chablis! Ice! Hah!" snorted Channing. "Listen to him! Do you know what I had for breakfast?"

Keating turned away uncomfortably and looked toward the ships in the harbor.

"Well, never mind," said Channing, yawning luxuriously. "The sun is bright, the sea is blue, and the confidences of this old palm are soothing. He's a great old gossip, this palm." He looked up into the rustling fronds and smiled. "He whispers me to sleep," he went on, "or he talks me awake—talks about all sorts of things—things he has seen—cyclones, wrecks and strange ships and Cuban refugees and Spanish spies and lovers that

meet here on moonlight nights. It's always moonlight in Port Antonio, isn't it?"

"You ought to know, you've been here longer than I," said Keating.

"And how do you like it, now that you have got to know it better? Pretty heavenly? eh?"

"Pretty heavenly!" snorted Keating. "Pretty much the other place! What good am I doing? What's the sense of keeping me here? Cervera isn't going to come out, and the people at Washington won't let Sampson go in? Why, those ships have been there a month now, and they'll be there just where they are now when you and I are bald. I'm no use here. All I do is to thrash across there every day and eat up more coal than the whole squadron burns in a month. Why, that tug of mine's costing the C. P. six hundred dollars a day, and I'm not sending them news enough to pay for setting it up. Have you seen 'em yet?"

"Seen what? Your stories?"

"No, the ships!"

"Yes, Scudder took me across once in the Iduna. I haven't got a paper yet, so I couldn't write anything, but——"

"Well, you've seen all there is to it, then; you wouldn't see any more if you went over every day. It's just the same old harbor mouth, and the same old Morro Castle and same old ships drifting up and down; the Brooklyn full of smoke-stacks, and the New York with her two bridges and all the rest of them looking just as they've looked for the last four weeks. There's nothing in that. Why don't they send me to Tampa with the army and Shafter—that's where the story is."

"Oh, I don't know," said Channing, shaking his head. "I thought it was bully!"

"Bully, what was bully?"

"Oh, the picture," said Channing, doubtfully, "and—and what it meant. What struck me about it was that it was so hot, and lazy, and peaceful, that they seemed to be just drifting about, just what you complain of. I don't know what I expected to see; I think I expected they'd be racing around in circles, tearing up the water and throwing broadsides at Morro Castle as fast as firecrackers.

"But they lay broiling there in the heat just as though they were becalmed. They

seemed to be asleep on their anchor-chains. It reminded me of a big bull-dog lying in the sun with his head on his paws and his eyes shut. You think he's asleep, and you try to tiptoe past him, but when you're in reach of his chain—he's at your throat, what? It seemed so funny to think of our being really at war. I mean the United States, and with such an old established firm as Spain. It seems so presumptuous in a young republic, as though we were strutting around, singing, 'I'm getting a big boy now.' I felt like saying, 'Oh, come off, and stop playing you're a world power and get back into your red sash and knickerbockers, or you'll get spanked!' It seems as though we must be such a lot of amateurs. But when I went over the side of the New York I felt like kneeling down on her deck and begging every jackey to kick me. I felt about as useless as a fly on a locomotive engine. Amateurs! Why, they might have been in the business since the days of the ark, all of them might have been descended from bloody pirates; they twisted those eight-inch guns around for us just as though they were bicycles, and the whole ship moved and breathed and thought, too, like a human being, and all the captains of the other war-ships about her were watching for her to give the word. All of them stripped and eager and ready—like a lot of jockeys holding in the big race horses, and each of them with his eyes on the starter. And I liked the way they all talk about Sampson, and the way the ships move over the stations like parts of one machine, just as he had told them to do.

"Scudder introduced me to him, and he listened while we did the talking, but it was easy to see who was the man in the Conning Tower. Keating—my boy!" Channing cried, sitting upright in his enthusiasm, "he's put a combination lock on that harbor that can't be picked—and it'll work whether Sampson's asleep in his berth, or fifteen miles away, or killed on the bridge. He doesn't have to worry, he knows his trap will work—he ought to, he set it."

Keating shrugged his shoulders tolerantly.

"Oh, I see that side of it," he assented. "I see all there is in it for *you*, the sort of stuff you write, Sunday special stuff, but

there's no *news* in it. I'm not paid to write mail letters, and I'm not down here to interview palm-trees either."

"Why, you old fraud!" laughed Channing. "You know you're having the time of your life here. You're the pet of Kingston society—you know you are. I only wish I were half as popular. I don't seem to belong, do I? I guess it's my clothes. That English Colonel at Kingston always scowls at me as though he'd like to put me in irons, and whenever I meet our Consul he sees something very peculiar on the horizon line."

Keating frowned for a moment in silence, and then coughed consciously.

"Channing," he began uncomfortably, "you ought to brace up."

"Brace up?" asked Channing.

"Well, it isn't fair to the rest of us," protested Keating, launching into his grievance. "There's only a few of us here and we—we think you ought to see that and not give the crowd a bad name. All the other correspondents have some regard for—for their position and for the paper, but you loaf around here looking like an old tramp—like any old beach-comber, and it queers the rest of us. Why, those English artillerymen at the Club asked me about you, and when I told them you were a New York correspondent they made all sorts of jokes about American newspapers, and what could I say?"

Channing eyed the other man with keen delight.

"I see, by Jove! I'm sorry," he said. But the next moment he laughed, and then apologized remorsefully.

"Indeed, I beg your pardon," he begged, "but it struck me as a sort of—I had no idea you fellows were such swells—I knew I was a social outcast, but I didn't know my being a social outcast was hurting anyone else. Tell me some more."

"Well, that's all," said Keating, suspiciously. "The fellows asked me to speak to you about it and to tell you to take a brace. Now, for instance, we have a sort of mess-table at the hotel, and we'd like to ask you to belong, but—well—you see how it is—we have the officers to lunch whenever they're on shore and you're so disreputable"—Keating scowled at Channing, and concluded, impotently, "Why

don't you get yourself some decent clothes and—and a new hat?"

Channing removed his hat to his knee and stroked it with affectionate pity.

"It is a shocking bad hat," he said. "Well, go on."

"Oh, it's none of my business," exclaimed Keating, impatiently. "I'm just telling you what they're saying. Now, there's the Cuban refugees, for instance. No one knows what they're doing here, or whether they're real Cubans or Spaniards."

"Well, what of it?"

"Why, the way you go round with them and visit them, it's no wonder they say you're a spy."

Channing stared incredulously, and then threw back his head and laughed with a shout of delight.

"They don't, do they?" he asked.

"Yes, they do, since you think it's so funny. If it hadn't been for us the day you went over to Guantanamo the marines would have had you arrested and court-martialed."

Channing's face clouded with a quick frown. "Oh," he exclaimed, in a hurt voice, "they couldn't have thought that."

"Well, no," Keating admitted grudgingly, "not after the fight, perhaps, but before that, when you were snooping around the camp like a Cuban after rations." Channing recognized the picture with a laugh.

"I do," he said, "I do. But you should have had me court-martialed and shot; it would have made a good story. 'Our reporter shot as a spy, his last words were—' what were my last words, Keating?"

Keating turned upon him with impatience, "But why do you do it," he demanded. "Why don't you act like the rest of us? Why do you hang out with all those filibusters and runaway Cubans?"

"They have been very kind to me," said Channing, soberly. "They are a very courteous race, and they have ideas of hospitality which make the average New Yorker look like a dog hiding a bone."

"Oh, I suppose you mean that for us," demanded Keating. "That's a slap at me, eh?"

Channing gave a sigh and threw him-

self back against the trunk of the palm, with his hands clasped behind his head.

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of you at all, Keating," he said. "I don't consider you in the least." He stretched himself and yawned wearily. "I've got troubles of my own."

He sat up suddenly and adjusted the objectionable hat to his head.

"Why don't you wire the C. P.," he asked, briskly, "and see if they don't want an extra man? It won't cost you anything to wire, and I need the job, and I haven't the money to cable."

"The Consolidated Press," began Keating, jealously. "Why—well, you know what the Consolidated Press is? They don't want descriptive writers—and I've got all the men I need."

Keating rose and stood hesitating in some embarrassment. "I'll tell you what I could do, Channing," he said, "I could take you on as a stoker, or steward, say. They're always deserting and mutinying; I have to carry a gun on me to make them mind. How would you like that? Forty dollars a month, and eat with the crew?"

For a moment Channing stood in silence smoothing the sand with the sole of his shoe. When he raised his head his face was flushing.

"Oh, thank you," he said. "I think I'll keep on trying for a paper—I'll try a little longer. I want to see something of this war, of course, and if I'm not too lazy I'd like to write something about it, but—well—I'm much obliged to you, any way."

"Of course, if it were my money I'd take you on at once," said Keating, hurriedly.

Channing smiled and nodded. "You're very kind," he answered. "Well, goodbye."

A half hour later in the smoking-room of the hotel Keating addressed himself to a group of correspondents.

"There is no doing anything with that man Channing," he said in a tone of offended pride. "I offered him a good job and he wouldn't take it. Because he got a story in the *International Magazine*, he's stuck on himself, and he won't hustle for news—he wants to write pipe dreams. What the public wants just now is news."

"That's it," said one of the group, "and

we must give it to them—even if we have to fake it.”

Great events followed each other with great rapidity. The army ceased beating time, shook itself together, adjusted its armor and moved, and, to the delight of the flotilla of press boats at Port Antonio, moved, not as it had at first intended, to the north coast of Cuba, but to Santiago, where its transports were within reach of their megaphones.

“Why, everything’s coming our way now!” exclaimed the *World* manager in ecstasy. “We’ve got the transports to starboard at Siboney, and the war-ships to port at Santiago, and all we’ll need to do is to sit on the deck with a field-glass, and take down the news with both hands.”

Channing followed these events with envy. Once or twice as a special favor the press boats carried him across to Siboney and Daiquiri, and he was able to write stories of what he saw there; of the landing of the army, of the wounded after the Guasimas fight and of the fever camp at Siboney. His friends on the press boats sent this work home by mail on the chance that the Sunday editor might take it at space rates. But mail matter moved slowly and the army moved quickly, and events crowded so closely upon each other that Channing’s stories when they reached New York were ancient history and were unpublished, and, what was of more importance to him, unpaid for. He had no money now, and he had become a beach-comber in the real sense of the word. He slept the warm nights away among the bananas and cocoanuts on the Fruit Company’s wharf, and by calling alternately on his Cuban exiles and the different press boats, he was able to obtain a meal a day without arousing any suspicions in the minds of his hosts that it was his only one.

He was sitting on the stringer of the pier-head one morning waiting for a press boat from the “front” when the Three Friends ran in and lowered her dingy, and the *World* manager came ashore, clasping a precious bundle of closely written cable-forms. Channing scrambled to his feet and hailed him.

“Have you heard from the chief about me yet?” he asked. The *World* man frowned and stammered, and then taking

Channing by the arm hurried with him toward the cable office.

“Charlie, I think they’re crazy up there,” he began, “they think they know it all. Here I am on the spot, but they think——”

“You mean they won’t have me,” said Channing. “But why?” he asked, patiently. “They used to give me all the space I wanted.”

“Yes, I know, confound them, and so they should now,” said the *World* man, with sympathetic indignation. “But here’s their cable; you can see it’s not my fault.” He read the message aloud. “Channing, no. Not safe, take reliable man from Siboney.” He folded the cablegram around a dozen others and stuck it back in his hip-pocket.

“What queered you, Charlie,” he explained, importantly, “was that last break of yours New Year’s, when you didn’t turn up for a week. It was once too often, and the chief’s had it in for you ever since. You remember?”

Channing screwed up his lips in an effort of recollection.

“Yes, I remember,” he answered, slowly. “It began on New Year’s eve in Perry’s drug-store, and I woke up a week later in a hack in Boston. So, I didn’t have such a run for my money, did I? Not good enough to have to pay for it like this. I tell you,” he burst out suddenly, “I feel like hell being left out of this war, with all the rest of the boys working so hard. If it weren’t playing it low down on the fellows that have been in it from the start, I’d like to enlist. But they enlisted for glory, and I’d only do it because I can’t see the war any other way, and it doesn’t seem fair to them. What do you think?”

“Oh, don’t do that,” protested the *World* manager. “You stick to your own trade. We’ll get you something to do. Have you tried the Consolidated Press yet?”

Channing smiled grimly at the recollection.

“Yes, I tried it first.”

“It would be throwing pearls to swine to have you write for them, I know, but they’re using so many men now. I should think you could get on their boat.”

“No, I saw Keating,” Channing ex-

plained. "He said I could come along as a stoker, and I guess I'll take him up, it seems——"

"Keating said that!" exclaimed the *World* man. "Keating? Why, he stands to lose his own job, if he isn't careful. If it wasn't that he's just married the C. P. boys would have reported him a dozen times."

"Reported him, what for?"

"Why—you know. His old complaint."

"Oh, that," said Channing. "My old complaint?" he added.

"Well, yes, but Keating hasn't been sober for two weeks, and he'd have fallen down on the Guasimas story if those men hadn't pulled him through. They had to, because they're in the syndicate. He ought to go shoot himself; he's only been married three months and he's handling the biggest piece of news the country's had in thirty years, and he can't talk straight. There's a time for everything, I say," growled the *World* man.

"It takes it out of a man, this boat work," Channing ventured in extenuation. "It's very hard on him."

"You bet it is," agreed the *World* manager, with enthusiasm. "Sloshing about in those waves, seasick mostly, and wet all the time, and with a mutinous crew, and so afraid you'll miss something that you can't write what you have got." Then he added, as an after-thought, "And our cruisers thinking you're a Spanish torpedo boat and chucking shells at you."

"No wonder Keating drinks," Channing said, gravely. "You make it seem almost necessary."

Many thousand American soldiers had lost themselves in a jungle, and had broken out of it at the foot of San Juan Hill. Not wishing to return into the jungle they took the hill. On the day they did this Channing had the good fortune to be in Siboney. The *World* man had carried him there and asked him to wait around the water-front while he went up to the real front, thirteen miles inland. Channing's duty was to signal the press boat when the first despatch rider rode in with word that the battle was on. The *World* man would have liked to ask Channing to act as his despatch rider, but he did not do so, because the despatch riders were either Jamaica negroes or newsboys

from Park Row—and he remembered that Keating had asked Channing to be his stoker.

Channing tramped through the damp, ill-smelling sand of the beach, sick with self-pity. On the other side of those glaring, inscrutable mountains, a battle, glorious, dramatic and terrible, was going forward, and he was thirteen miles away. He was at the base, with the supplies, the sick, and the skulkers.

It was cruelly hot. The heat-waves flashed over the sea until the transports in the harbor quivered like pictures on a biograph. From the refuse of company kitchens, from reeking huts, from thousands of empty cans, rose foul, enervating odors, which deadened the senses like a drug. The atmosphere steamed with a heavy, moist humidity. Channing staggered and sank down suddenly on a pile of railroad ties in front of the commissary's depot. There were some Cubans seated near him dividing their Government rations, and the sight reminded him that he had had nothing to eat. He walked over to the wide door of the freight depot, where a white-haired, kindly faced and perspiring officer was, with his own hands, serving out canned beef to a line of Cubans. The officer's flannel shirt was open at the throat. The shoulder-straps of a colonel were fastened to it by safety-pins. Channing smiled at him uneasily.

"Could I draw on you for some rations?" he asked. "I'm from the Three Friends. I'm not one of their regular accredited correspondents," he added, conscientiously, "I'm just helping them for to-day."

"Haven't you got a correspondent's pass?" asked the officer. He was busily pouring square hardtack down the throat of a saddle-bag a Cuban soldier held open before him.

"No," said Channing, turning away, "I'm just helping."

The officer looked after him, and what he saw caused him to reach under the counter for a tin cup and a bottle of lime-juice.

"Here," he said, "drink this. What's the matter with you—fever? Come in here out of that sun. You can lie down on my cot, if you like."

Channing took the tin cup and swal-

lowed a warm mixture of boiled water and acrid lime-juice.

"Thank you," he said, "but I must keep watch for the first news from the front."

A man riding a Government mule appeared on the bridge of the lower trail, and came toward them at a gallop. He was followed and surrounded by a hurrying mob of volunteers, hospital stewards, and Cubans.

The Colonel vaulted the counter and ran to meet him.

"This looks like news from the front, now," he cried.

The man on the mule was from civil life. His eyes bulged from their sockets and his face was purple. The sweat ran over it and glistened on the cords of his thick neck.

"They're driving us back!" he shrieked. "Chaffee's killed, an' Roosevelt's killed, an' the whole army's beaten!" He waved his arms wildly toward the glaring, inscrutable mountains. The volunteers and stevedore's and Cubans heard him open-mouthed and with panic-stricken eyes. In the pitiless sunlight he was a hideous and awful spectacle.

"They're driving us into the sea!" he foamed.

"We've got to get out of here, they're just behind me. The army's running for its life. They're running away!"

Channing saw the man dimly, through a cloud that came between him and the yellow sunlight. The man in the saddle swayed, the group about him swayed, like persons on the floor of a vast ballroom. Inside he burned with a mad, fierce hatred for this shrieking figure in the saddle. He raised the tin cup and hurled it so that it hit the man's purple face.

"You lie!" Channing shouted, staggering. "You lie! You're a damned coward. You lie!" He heard his voice repeating this in different places at greater distances. Then the cloud closed about him, shutting out the man in the saddle, and the glaring, inscrutable mountains, and the ground at his feet rose and struck him in the face.

Channing knew he was on a boat because it lifted and sank with him, and he could hear the rush of her engines. When

he opened his eyes he was in the wheelhouse of the Three Friends, and her captain was at the wheel smiling down at him. Channing raised himself on his elbow.

"The despatch rider?" he asked.

"That's all right," said the captain, soothingly. "Don't you worry. He come along same time you fell, and brought you out to us. What ailed you—sunstroke?"

Channing sat up. "I guess so," he said.

When the Three Friends reached Port Antonio, Channing sought out the pile of coffee-bags on which he slept at night and dropped upon them. Before this he had been careful to avoid the place in the daytime, so that no one might guess that it was there that he slept at night, but this day he felt that if he should drop in the gutter he would not care whether anyone saw him there or not. His limbs were hot and heavy and refused to support him, his bones burned like quicklime.

The next morning, with the fever still upon him, he hurried restlessly between the wharves and the cable office, seeking for news. There was much of it; it was great and trying news, the situation outside of Santiago was grim and critical. The men who had climbed San Juan Hill were clinging to it like sailors shipwrecked on a reef unwilling to remain, but unable to depart. If they attacked the city Cervera promised to send it crashing about their ears. They would enter Santiago only to find it in ruins. If they abandoned the hill, two thousand killed and wounded would have been sacrificed in vain.

The war critics of the press boats and of the Kingston Club saw but two courses left open. Either Sampson must force the harbor and destroy the squadron and so make it possible for the army to enter the city, or the army must be reinforced with artillery and troops in sufficient numbers to make it independent of Sampson and indifferent to Cervera.

On the night of July 2d, a thousand lies, a thousand rumors, a thousand prophecies rolled through the streets of Port Antonio, were filed at the cable office and flashed to the bulletin boards of New York City.

That morning, so they told, the batteries on Morro Castle had sunk three of Sampson's ships; the batteries on Morro Castle

had surrendered to Sampson; General Miles with 8,000 reinforcements, had sailed from Charleston; eighty guns had started from Tampa Bay, they would occupy the mountains opposite Santiago and shell the Spanish fleet; the authorities at Washington had at last consented to allow Sampson to run the forts and mines, and attack the Spanish fleet; the army had not been fed for two days, the Spaniards had cut it off from its base at Siboney; the army would eat its Fourth of July dinner in the Governor's Palace; the army was in full retreat; the army was to attack at daybreak.

When Channing turned in under the fruit-shed on the night of July 2d, there was but one press boat remaining in the harbor. That was the Consolidated Press boat, and Keating himself was on the wharf signalling for his dinky. Channing sprang to his feet and ran toward him, calling him by name. The thought that he must for another day remain so near the march of great events and yet not see and feel them for himself, was intolerable. He felt there was no sacrifice to which he would not stoop, if it would pay his passage to the coast of Cuba.

Keating watched him approach, but without sign of recognition. His eyes were heavy and bloodshot.

"Keating," Channing begged as he halted, panting, "won't you take me with you? I'll not be in the way, and I'll stoke or wait on table, or anything you want, if you'll only take me."

Keating's eyes opened and closed sleepily. He removed an unlit cigar from his mouth and shook the wet end of it at Channing, as though it were an accusing finger.

"I know your game," he murmured, thickly. "You haven't got a boat and you want to steal a ride on mine—for your paper. You can't do it, you see, you can't do it."

One of the crew of the dinky climbed up the gangway of the wharf and took Keating by the elbow. He looked at him and then at Channing and winked. He was apparently accustomed to this complication. "I haven't got a paper, Keating," Channing argued, soothingly. "Who have you got to help you?" he asked. It came to him that there might be on the

boat some Philip sober, to whom he could appeal from Philip drunk.

"I haven't got anyone to help me," Keating answered, with dignity. "I don't need anyone to help me." He placed his hand heavily and familiarly on the shoulder of the deck hand. "You see that man?" he asked. "You see tha' man, do you? Well, tha' man, he's too good for me an' you. Tha' man—used to be the best reporter in New York City, an' he was too good to hustle for news, an' now he's—now he can't get a good job—see? Nobody'll have him, see? He's got to come and be a stoker."

He stamped his foot with indignation.

"You come an' be a stoker," he commanded. "How long you think I'm going to wait for a stoker? You stoker, come on board and be a stoker."

Channing smiled guiltily at his good fortune. He jumped into the bow of the dinky and Keating fell heavily in the stern.

The captain of the press boat helped Keating safely to a bunk in the cabin and received his instructions to proceed to Santiago Harbor. Then he joined Channing. "Mr. Keating is feeling bad to-night. That bombardment off Morro," he explained, tactfully, "was too exciting. We always let him sleep going across, and when we get there he's fresh as a daisy. What's this he tells me of your doing stoking?"

"I thought there might be another fight to-morrow, so I said I'd come as a stoker."

The captain grinned.

"Our Sam, that deck-hand, was telling me. He said Mr. Keating put it on you, sort of to spite you—is that so?"

"Oh, I wanted to come," said Channing.

The captain laughed comprehendingly. "I guess we'll be in a bad way," he said, "when we need you in the engine-room." He settled himself for conversation with his feet against the rail and his thumbs in his suspenders. The lamps of Port Antonio were sinking into the water, the moonlight was flooding the deck.

"That was quite something of a bombardment Sampson put up against Morro Castle this morning," he began, critically. He spoke of bombardments from the full

experience of a man who had seen shells strike off Coney Island from the proving grounds at Sandy Hook. But Channing heard him eagerly. He begged the tug-boat captain to tell him what it looked like, and as the captain told him he filled it in and saw it as it really was.

"Perhaps they'll bombard again to-morrow," he hazarded, hopefully.

"We can't tell till we see how they're placed on the station," the captain answered. "If there's any firing we ought to hear it about eight o'clock to-morrow morning. We'll hear 'em before we see 'em."

Channing's conscience began to tweak him. It was time, he thought, that Keating should be aroused and brought up to the reviving air of the sea, but when he reached the foot of the companion-ladder, he found that Keating was already awake and in the act of drawing the cork from a bottle. His irritation against Channing had evaporated and he greeted him with sleepy good-humor.

"Why, it's ol' Charlie Channing," he exclaimed, drowsily. Channing advanced upon him swiftly.

"Here, you've had enough of that!" he commanded. "We'll be off Morro by breakfast-time. You don't want that."

Keating, giggling foolishly, pushed him from him and retreated with the bottle toward his berth. He lurched into it, rolled over with his face to the ship's side and began breathing heavily.

"You leave me 'lone," he murmured, from the darkness of the bunk. "You mind your own business, you leave me 'lone."

Channing returned to the bow and placed the situation before the captain. That gentleman did not hesitate. He disappeared down the companion way, and, when an instant later he returned, hurled a bottle over the ship's side.

The next morning when Channing came on deck the land was just in sight, a rampart of dark green mountains rising in heavy masses against the bright, glaring blue of the sky. He strained his eyes for the first sight of the ships, and his ears for the faintest echoes of distant firing, but there was no sound save the swift rush of the waters at the bow. The sea lay smooth and flat before him, the sun flashed upon

it; the calm and hush of early morning hung over the whole coast of Cuba.

An hour later the captain came forward and stood at his elbow.

"How's Keating?" Channing asked. "I tried to wake him, but I couldn't."

The captain kept his binoculars to his eyes, and shut his lips grimly. "Mr. Keating's very bad," he said. "He had another bottle hidden somewhere, and all last night—" he broke off with a relieved sigh. "It's lucky for him," he added, lowering the glasses, "that there'll be no fight to-day."

Channing gave a gasp of disappointment. "What do you mean?" he protested.

"Why, look for yourself," said the captain, handing him the glasses. "They're at their same old stations. There'll be no bombardment to-day. That's the Iowa nearest us, the Oregon's to starboard of her, and the next is the Indiana. That little fellow close under the land is the Gloucester."

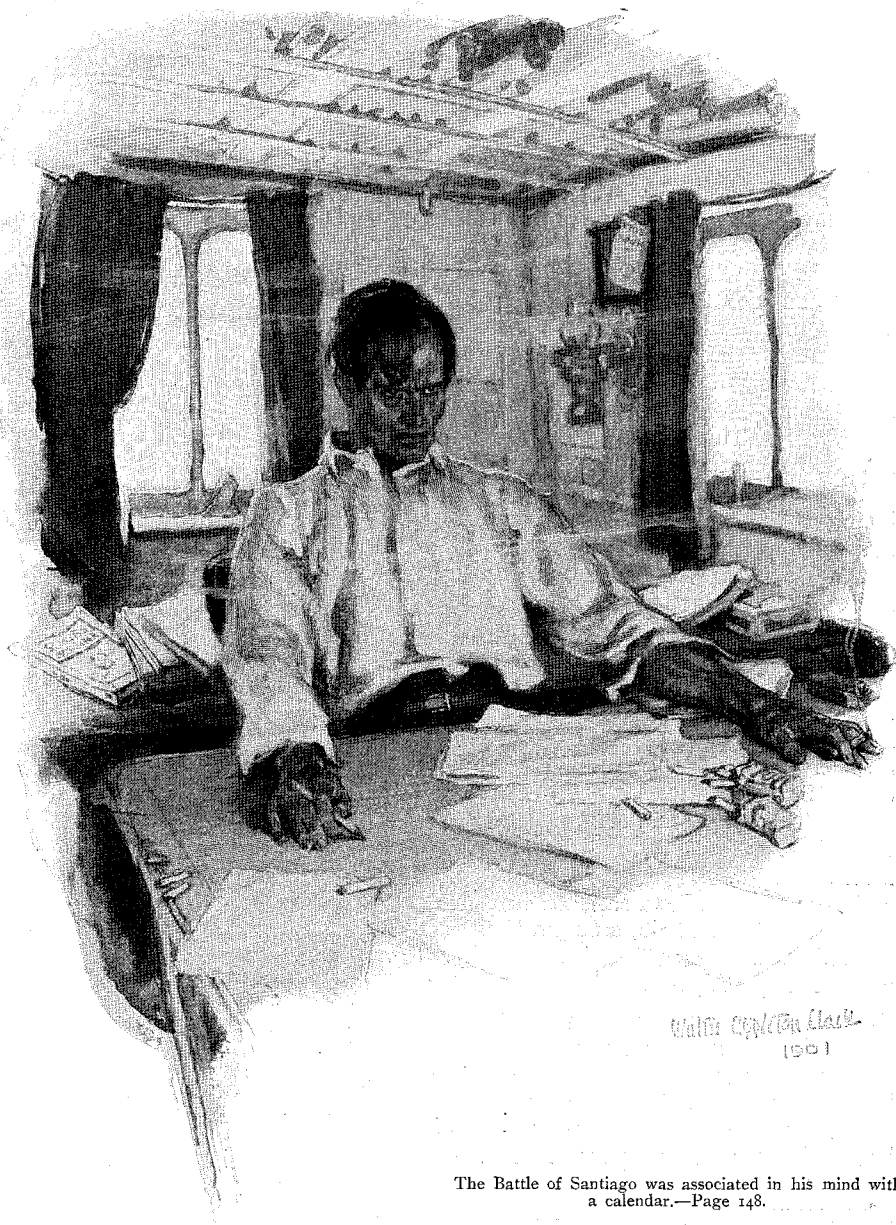
He glanced up at the mast to see that the press boat's signal was conspicuous, they were drawing within range.

With the naked eye Channing could see the monster, mouse-colored war-ships basking in the sun, solemn and motionless in a great crescent, with its one horn resting off the harbor mouth. They made great blots on the sparkling, glancing surface of the water. Above each superstructure, their fighting tops, giant davits, funnels, and gibbet-like yards twisted into the air fantastic and incomprehensible, but the bulk below seemed to rest solidly on the bottom of the ocean, like an island of lead. The muzzles of their guns peered from the turrets as from ramps of rock.

Channing gave a sigh of admiration.

"Don't tell me they move," he said. "They're not ships, they're fortresses!"

On the shore there was no sign of human life nor of human habitation. Except for the Spanish flag floating over the streaked walls of Morro, and the tiny blockhouse on every mountain-top, the squadron might have been anchored off a deserted coast. The hills rose from the water's edge like a wall, their peaks green and glaring in the sun, their valleys dark with shadows. Nothing moved upon the white beach at their feet, no smoke rose



The Battle of Santiago was associated in his mind with a calendar.—Page 148.

from their ridges, not even a palm stirred. The great range slept in a blue haze of heat. But only a few miles distant, masked by its frowning front, lay a gayly colored, red-roofed city, besieged by encircling regiments, a broad bay holding a squadron of great war-ships, and gliding cat-like through its choked undergrowth and crouched among the fronds of its motionless palms, were the ragged patri-

ots of the Cuban army, silent, watchful, waiting. But the great range gave no sign. It frowned in the sunlight, grim and impenetrable.

"It's Sunday," exclaimed the captain. He pointed with his finger at the decks of the battle-ships, where hundreds of snow-white figures had gone to quarters. "It's church service," he said, "or it's general inspection."

Channing looked at his watch. It was thirty minutes past nine. "It's church service," he said. "I can see them carrying out the chaplain's reading desk on the Indiana." The press boat pushed her way nearer into the circle of battle-ships until their leaden-hued hulls towered high above her. On the deck of each, the ship's company stood ranged in motionless ranks. The calm of a Sabbath morning hung about them, the sun fell upon them like a benediction, and so still was the air that those on the press boat could hear, from the stripped and naked decks, the voices of the men answering the roll-call in rising monotone, "one, two, three, *four*; one, two, three, *four*." The white-clad sailors might have been a chorus of surpliced choir-boys.

But up above them the battle-flags slumbering at the mast-heads stirred restlessly, and whimpered in their sleep.

Out through the crack in the wall of mountains, where the sea runs in to meet the waters of Santiago Harbor, and from behind the shield of Morro Castle, a great, gray ship, like a great, gray rat, stuck out her nose and peered about her, and then struck boldly for the open sea. High before her she bore the gold and blood-red flag of Spain, and like a fugitive leaping from behind his prison walls she raced forward for her freedom, to give battle, to meet her death.

A shell from the Iowa shrieked its warning in a shrill crescendo, a flutter of flags painted their message against the sky. "The enemy's ships are coming out," they signalled, and the ranks of white-clad figures which the moment before stood motionless on the decks, broke into thousands of separate beings, who flung themselves panting down the hatchways, or sprang cheering to the fighting-tops.

Heavily but swiftly, as islands slip into the water when a volcano shakes the ocean-bed, the great battle-ships buried their bows in the sea, their sides ripped apart with flame and smoke, the thunder of their guns roared and beat against the mountains, and from the shore the Spanish forts roared back at them, until the air between was split and riven. The Spanish war-ships were already scudding clouds of smoke, pierced with flashes of red flame, and as they fled fighting, their batteries rattled with unceasing, feverish fury. But the

guns of the American ships, straining in pursuit, answered steadily, carefully, with relentless accuracy, with cruel persistence. At regular intervals they boomed above the hurricane of sound like great bells tolling for the dead.

It seemed to Channing that he had lived through many years. That the strain of the spectacle would leave its mark upon his nerves forever. He had been buffeted and beaten by a storm of all the great emotions; pride of race and country, pity for the dead, agony for the dying, who clung to blistering armor-plates, or sank to suffocation in the sea; the lust of the hunter, when the hunted thing is a fellow-man; the joys of danger and of excitement, when the shells lashed the waves about him, and the triumph of victory, final, overwhelming, and complete.

Four of the enemy's squadron had struck their colors, two were on the beach, broken and burning, two had sunk to the bottom of the sea, two were in abject flight. Three battle-ships were hammering them with thirteen-inch guns. The battle was won.

"It's all over," Channing said. His tone questioned his own words.

The captain of the tug-boat was staring at the face of his silver watch, as though it were a thing bewitched. He was pale and panting. He looked at Channing piteously, as though he doubted his own senses, and turned the face of the watch toward him.

"Twenty minutes!" Channing said. "Good God! Twenty minutes!"

He had been to hell and back again in twenty minutes. He had seen an empire, which had begun with Christopher Columbus and which had spread over two continents, wiped off the map in twenty minutes.

The captain gave a sudden cry of concern. "Mr. Keating," he gasped. "Oh, Lord, but I forgot Mr. Keating. Where is Mr. Keating?"

"I went below twice," Channing answered. "He's insensible. See what you can do with him, but first—take me to the Iowa. The Consolidated Press will want the 'facts.'"

In the dark cabin the captain found Keating on the floor where Channing had dragged him, and dripping with the water which Channing had thrown in his face.



Drawn by Walter Appleton Clark.

"We've got a great story! We want a clear wire."—Page 150.

He was breathing heavily, comfortably. He was not concerned with battles.

With a megaphone Channing gathered his facts from an officer of the Iowa who looked like a chimney sweep, and who was surrounded by a crew of half-naked pirates, with bodies streaked with sweat and powder.

Then he ordered all steam for Port Antonio, and going forward to the chart-room, seated himself at the captain's desk, and pushing the captain's charts to the floor, spread out his elbows, and began to write the story of his life.

In the joy of creating it, he was lost to all about him. He did not know that the engines, driven to the breaking point, were filling the ship with their groans and protests, that the deck beneath his feet was quivering like the floor of a planing mill, nor that his fever was rising again, and feeding on his veins. The turmoil of leaping engines and of throbbing pulses was confused with the story he was writing, and while his mind was inflamed with pictures of warring battle-ships, his body was swept by the fever, which overran him like an army of tiny mice, touching his hot skin with cold, tingling taps of their scampering feet.

From time to time the captain stopped at the door of the chart-room and observed him in silent admiration. To the man who with difficulty composed a letter to his family, the fact that Channing was writing something to be read by millions of people, and more rapidly than he could have spoken the same words, seemed a superhuman effort. He even hesitated to interrupt it by an offer of food.

But the fever would not let Channing taste of the food when they placed it at his elbow, and even as he pushed it away, his mind was still fixed upon the paragraph before him. He wrote, sprawling across the desk, covering page upon page with giant hieroglyphics, lighting cigarette after cigarette at the end of the last one, but with his thoughts far away, and as he performed the act, staring uncomprehendingly at the captain's colored calendar pinned on the wall before him. For many months later, the Battle of Santiago was associated in his mind with a calendar for the month of July, illuminated by a colored picture of six white kittens in a basket.

At three o'clock Channing ceased writing and stood up, shivering and shaking with a violent chill. He cursed himself for this weakness, and called aloud for the captain.

"I can't stop now," he cried. He seized the rough fist of the captain as a child clings to the hand of his nurse.

"Give me something," he begged. "Medicine, quinine, give me something to keep my head straight until it's finished. Go, quick," he commanded. His teeth were chattering, and his body jerked with sharp, uncontrollable shudders. The captain ran, muttering, to his medicine-chest.

"We've got one drunken man on board," he said to the mate, "and now we've got a crazy one. You mark my words, he'll go off his head at sunset."

But at sunset Channing called to him and addressed him sanely. He held in his hand a mass of papers carefully numbered and arranged, and he gave them up to the captain as though it hurt him to part with them.

"There's the story," he said. "You've got to do the rest. I can't—I—I'm going to be very ill." He was swaying as he spoke. His eyes burned with the fever, and his eyelids closed of themselves. He looked as though he had been heavily drugged.

"You put that on the wire at Port Antonio," he commanded, faintly, "pay the tolls to Kingston. From there they are to send it by way of Panama, you understand, by the Panama wire."

"Panama!" gasped the captain. "Good Lord, that's two dollars a word." He shook out the pages in his hand until he found the last one. "And there's sixty-eight pages here," he expostulated. "Why the tolls will be five thousand dollars!" Channing dropped feebly to the bench of the chart-room and fell in a heap, shivering and trembling.

"I guess it's worth it," he murmured, drowsily.

The captain was still staring at the last page.

"But—but look here," he cried, "you've—you've signed Mr. Keating's name to it! 'James R. Keating.' You've signed his name to it!"

Channing raised his head from his folded arms and stared at him dully.



Drawn by Walter Appleton Clark.

Threw a frightened look toward the open door.—Page 152.

"You don't want to get Keating in trouble, do you?" he asked with patience. "You don't want the C. P. to know why he couldn't write the best story of the war? Do you want him to lose his job? Of course, you don't. Well then, let it go as his story. I won't tell, and see you don't tell, and Keating won't remember."

His head sank back again upon his crossed arms. "It's not a bad story," he murmured.

But the captain shook his head; his loyalty to his employer was still uppermost. "It doesn't seem right!" he protested. "It's a sort of a liberty, isn't it, signing another man's name to it, it's a sort of forgery."

Channing made no answer. His eyes were shut and he was shivering violently, hugging himself in his arms.

A quarter of an hour later, when the captain returned with fresh quinine, Channing sat upright and saluted him.

"Your information, sir," he said, addressing the open door politely, "is of the greatest value. Tell the executive officer to proceed under full steam to Panama. He will first fire a shot across her bows, and then sink her!" He sprang upright and stood for a moment, sustained by the false strength of the fever. "To Panama, you hear me!" he shouted. He beat the floor with his foot. "Faster, faster, faster," he cried. "We've got a great story! We want a clear wire, we want the wire clear from Panama to City Hall. It's the greatest story ever written—full of facts, facts, facts, facts for the Consolidated Press—and Keating wrote it. I tell you, Keating wrote it. I *saw* him write it. I was a stoker on the same ship."

The mate and crew came running forward and stood gaping stupidly through the doors and windows of the chart-room. Channing welcomed them joyously, and then crumpled up in a heap and pitched forward into the arms of the captain. His head swung weakly from shoulder to shoulder.

"I beg your pardon," he muttered, "I beg your pardon, captain, but your engine-room is too hot. I'm only a stoker and I know my place, sir, but I tell you, your engine-room is too hot. It's a burning hell, sir, it's a hell!"

The captain nodded to the crew and

they closed in on him, and bore him, struggling feebly, to a bunk in the cabin below. In the berth opposite, Keating was snoring peacefully.

After the six weeks' siege the Fruit Company's doctor told Channing he was cured, and that he might walk abroad. In this first walk he found that, during his illness, Port Antonio had reverted to her original condition of complete isolation from the world, the press boats had left her wharves, the correspondents had departed from the veranda of her only hotel, the war was over, and the Peace Commissioners had sailed for Paris. Channing expressed his great gratitude to the people of the hotel and to the Fruit Company's doctor. He made it clear to them that if they ever hoped to be paid those lesser debts than that of gratitude which he still owed them, they must return him to New York and Newspaper Row. It was either that, he said, or, if they preferred, he would remain and work out his indebtedness checking bunches of bananas at twenty dollars a month. The Fruit Company decided it would be paid more quickly if Channing worked at his own trade, and accordingly sent him North in one of its steamers. She landed him in Boston, and he borrowed five dollars from the chief engineer to pay his way to New York.

It was late in the evening of the same day when he stepped out of the smoking-car into the roar and riot of the Grand Central Station. He had no baggage to detain him, and as he had no money either he made his way to an Italian restaurant where he knew they would trust him to pay later for what he ate. It was a place where the newspaper men were accustomed to meet, men who knew him, and who would lend him money to buy a bath, clean clothes, and a hall bed-room, until he found work.

Norris, the *World* man, greeted him as he entered the door of the restaurant, and hailed him with a cry of mingled fright and pleasure.

"Why, we didn't know but you were dead," he exclaimed. "The boys said when they left Kingston you weren't expected to live. Did you ever get the money and things we sent you by the Red Cross boat?"



Walter Appleton Clark

Drawn by Walter Appleton Clark.

Stood irresolutely in the twilight of the street.—Page 152.

Channing glanced at himself and laughed. "Do I look it?" he asked. He was wearing the same clothes in which he had slept under the fruit-sheds at Port Antonio. They had been soaked and stained by the night dews and by the sweat of the fever.

"Well, it's great luck, your turning up here just now," Norris assured him heartily. "That is, if you're as hungry as the rest of the boys are who have had the fever. You struck it just right; we're giving a big dinner here to-night," he explained, "one of Maria's best. You come in with me. It's a celebration for old Keating, a farewell blow-out."

Channing started and laughed.

"Keating," he asked. "That's funny," he said. "I haven't seen him since—since before I was ill."

"Yes, old Jimmie Keating. You've got nothing against him, have you?"

Channing shook his head vehemently, and Norris glanced back complacently toward the door of the dining-room, from whence came the sound of intimate revelry.

"You might have had, once," Norris said, laughing, "we were all up against him once. But since he's turned out such a wonder and a war hero, we're going to recognize it. They're always saying we newspaper men have it in for each other, and so we're just giving him this subscription dinner to show it's not so. He's going abroad, you know. He sails to-morrow morning."

"No, I didn't know," said Channing.

"Of course not, how could you? Well, the Consolidated Press's sending him and his wife to Paris. He's to cover the Peace negotiations there. It's really a honeymoon trip at the expense of the C. P. It's their reward for his work, for his Santiago story, and the beat and all that——"

Channing's face expressed his bewilderment.

Norris drew back dramatically.

"Don't tell me," he exclaimed, "that you haven't heard about *that*!"

Channing laughed a short, frightened laugh, and moved nearer to the street.

"No," he said. "No, I hadn't."

"Yes, but good Lord! it was *the* story of the war. You never read such a story! And he got it through by Panama a *day* ahead of all the other stories! And no-

body read them any way. Why, Captain Mahan said it was 'naval history,' and the *Evening Post* had an editorial on it, and said it was 'the only piece of literature the war has produced.' We never thought Keating had it in him, did you? The Consolidated Press people felt so good over it that they've promised, when he comes back from Paris, they'll make him their Washington correspondent. He's their 'star' reporter now. It just shows you that the occasion produces the man. Come on in, and have a drink with him."

Channing pulled his arm away, and threw a frightened look toward the open door of the dining-room. Through the layers of tobacco-smoke he saw Keating seated at the head of a long, crowded table, smiling, clear-eyed and alert.

"Oh, no, I couldn't," he said with sudden panic. "I can't drink, doctor won't let me. I wasn't coming in, I was just passing when I saw you. Good-night, I'm much obliged. Good-night."

But the hospitable Norris would not be denied.

"Oh, come in and say 'good-by' to him anyhow," he insisted. "You needn't stay."

"No, I can't," Channing protested. "I—they'd make me drink or eat and the doctor says I can't. You mustn't tempt me. You say 'good-by' to him for me," he urged. "And Norris—tell him—tell him—that I asked you to say to him, 'It's all right,' that's all, just that, 'It's all right.' He'll understand."

There was the sound of men's feet scraping on the floor, and of chairs being moved from their places.

Norris started away eagerly. "I guess they're drinking his health," he said. "I must go. I'll tell him what you said, 'It's all right.' That's enough, is it? There's nothing more?"

Channing shook his head, and moved away from the only place where he was sure to find food and a welcome that night.

"There's nothing more," he said.

As he stepped from the door and stood irresolutely in the twilight of the street, he heard the voices of the men who had gathered in Keating's honor upraised in a joyous chorus.

"For he's a jolly good fellow," they sang, "for he's a jolly good fellow, which nobody can deny!"

BENJAMIN PARROT'S FANCY

By Zack



NEVER heard tell that furrenners thought much of Dunstable Weir, as a place to live in, till old Benjamin Parrot came back along home from Australia and promised to leave all his money—he was most amazing rich—to the first man that took his fancy; but no sooner did the news get abroad than the price o' houses went up, there wasn't building room to contain the folk, and the village bid fair to become a town. It seemed a bit hard to me and t'others who had been born and bred in the parish, and us didn't give these extry lumps no special welcome; for, though they started a "tea-totalers" club and Band o' Hope teas, us had always been well content wi' the ale at the Red Lion afore, and us didn't noways feel less will-un' to bide by it arter us had smacked our lips over their new-fangled brews. Benjamin Parrot watched 'em all out o' his small ferret eyes wonderful unconcerned, and it soon became pretty clear that the man that shud take his fancy hadn't put his foot inside the village. Law bless 'ee, they didn't lose heart, not they—they busticumed the more, that's what they did. The charch o' Dunstable Weir wor mortal old and fally-to-piecey, they patched un up on the outside—well, us didn't complain o' that, 'tiddn't noways comfortable to be fetched out o' a quiet snooze by a big drap o' rain pat 'pon tap the crown o' your head; but not content they tarns a good job into a bad un, and cuts down all the pews inside o' the charch so that everyone could see everyone else—a kind o' prying that no self-respecting body in Dunstable Weir would have demeaned to afore. Well, then they buckles to and puts a banging great stove in the middle o' the aisle, over agin Benjamin Parrot's pew. Warmth in reason is a thing I'm the last to complain of; but the church was terrible small and the stove terrible big, and the first Sunday it was lit Benjamin Parrot was forced to off wi' his coat and sit in his shirt-sleeves. 'Twasn't long arter that the flooring gived

way and stove and all fell quat on top o' the Squire's old Aunt Jane, who had been lying a peaceful corpse there twenty years. It was this same winter—and a bitter cold winter it was—that Martin Fippard's wife fell sick and died. No one knowed 'zactly what 'twas that carried her off, more'n that it was a persistent sickness with a deal o' cling about it. I was present at her taking and though I be partial to death-beds, folks being wonderful much theirselves at such times, there seemed a bit too much human nature about Susan Fippard's. Her wasn't noways old when her died, close upon her thirty-ninth year or thereabouts, and being well-featured was personable to the last. It was always a matter of curiosity in the village what 'twas that made her take to Martin, a terrible plain man wi'out a plain man's tongue; but there's no denying her was mortal fond o' un, as he was willun' to be o' her, only owing to the contrariness o' things he couldn't get beyond simillation. Folkssaid—but they tell up such lies—that he had acted unfaithful from the first. Be that as it may there was one little twig o' a woman, Belle Hart was her name, and Susan Fippard couldn't abide the sight o' her. The queer thing was that though no mortal soul ever saw Martin go nigh the maid, the village all agreed 'long o' Susan that there be times when folks' eyes be to let, and there be more to be zeen than be zeed. It zim'd to me that if once they'd been caught together, folks wouldn't o' been so terrible sure they was guilty, but it was jest the never finding 'em out that made things look so special black. Not that folks was wishful to spare pains over the matter, and they laid most as many traps for Martin as they did for the fancy o' Benjamin Parrot. I reckon myself that the village was mistook, and didn't zee nought, because there was nought to zee; but I niver said so, not holding contradictionousness recommendatory in a single man such as I be. Martin took things wonderful quiet; there was times when I couldn't help but wonder if he knowed that all the village was on the