



Class Report

A STORY

By William E. Wilson



Morton Downs Philbrick
Occupation: Office Manager; Philbrick, Philbrick, and Downs, Insurance.
Permanent Address: Pittsburgh, Penna.

Immediately after Commencement, I bade the boys a fond farewell and sailed for Europe. I was abroad three months and a half and travelled in England, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Denmark, Holland, Norway, Sweden, Algeria, and Tunisia. Of all these countries, I preferred Norway. The Northern Lights are well worth seeing. Also, don't fail to go to Frognerstern and see the Ski Museum, the only thing of its kind in the world. Down in Algeria, I ran across a couple of members of our class. I won't say who they were or where I found them, but we had a grand time, didn't we, Bob? Returning to the U. S. A., I went to work with the firm of Philbrick, Philbrick, and Downs, beginning at the bottom and working up to my present position in three years. I have been recently elected colonel of the Pittsburgh Lighthorse, honorary military brigade. My plans are to remain in the insurance business.

THE sixth annual report of Morton Downs Philbrick's college class, containing, with 300 others, this short autobiography, lay open on his desk, thumbed and heavily pencil-marked. It had come in the afternoon mail.

Philbrick pressed a thick, double-jointed thumb on a button by one of his telephones, and a tall red-haired girl appeared at the door.

"Take a letter, Barbara."

With a slow glide, the girl crossed the room, sat down, and looked up at him impudently.

Philbrick got up and began to pace across the thick office carpet. He had the heavy athletic carriage of a man who had played football but had neglected himself in recent years. His blond hair was thin and his face round and florid.

"Dear men. . . ." No; make it, 'Dear classmate. . . .' No; that won't do. It must be personal. Just make it, 'Dear. . . .' and then fill in the names from the list I'll give you."

He paused at the far end of the room and held his chin in his hand.

"You are breaking old Mort Philbrick's heart!" he began.

The stenographer sighed audibly.

Startled from his concentration, Philbrick looked up. The girl, without raising her head, smiled at him under lifted eyebrows. Philbrick grinned.

"That goes for you, too, Miss America!"

Then he fell again into his pose of deep meditation.

"You are breaking old Mort Philbrick's heart. . . ."

"Exclamation point . . . new paragraph. . . ."

"When I took this job as secretary to our class, I naturally assumed we were all good fellows, that there wasn't a slacker in the bunch. Old F. U. doesn't turn out slackers, you know. It turns out men. . . ."

"Put 'men' in capitals. . . ."

"But here I am writing my third letter to you this spring, asking for contributions to our class fund. . . ."

"New paragraph. . . ."

"I've been doing a little research lately, classmate. Remember the research we had to do for old Professor

Newell? Well, I learned one thing from Newell's course, anyway. It just goes to show what a college education will do for you. I've discovered that 90 per cent of you birds that have failed to answer my requests are listed as "lost" in the sixth annual class report, which came to my hand today. That means you haven't been keeping in touch with the old alma mater and no one knows where you are or what you are doing. Now that looks bad, fella. . . ."

"Spell it f-e-l-l-a. . . ."

"Are you going to let your name be checked off the list of good fellows? No, of course you're not. You're coming through with at least a dollar, like the rest of the gang. . . ."

"New paragraph. . . ."

"This is my last appeal. I've got my daily bread to earn. I can't take time out every day to remind you of your debt to dear old F. U. I'm counting on you. . . ."

"Put that last in capitals."

Philbrick came back to his desk.

"There's a list of names checked in this book, Barbara. Be sure to bring the book back when you're through with it."

The girl picked up the annual report of Philbrick's class and left the room. Philbrick watched the motion of her narrow hips until she had closed the door behind her. Then, opening a desk drawer and taking out a bag of salted peanuts, he began to munch the nuts one at a time as he watched the lighted windows of the skyscraper across the street.

John Albert Jebbs
 Occupation: Instructor in English, Marsden
 University.
 Married: Marian Hewlitt Watkins.
 Permanent Address: Rigby, Ill.

I went to Harvard the year after my graduation and received my A. M. in English in June. After our marriage, Mrs. Jebbs and I took an extended trip through the Rocky Mountains and to the West Coast. Among our experiences was a 75-mile trek on muleback through the mountains. We then returned to Cambridge and I began to work for my Ph. D. The next year I found it necessary to divide my time between studying and teaching, so I took a position as an instructor in English at Marsden University, where I am now teaching. I have published, since graduation: "The Facts Behind an Elizabethan Broadside," *The Research Quarterly*; "An Analytical Study of the Character of Mosbie in 'Arden of Feversham' with New Light on Probable Sources," *Research Quarterly*; "Sackville's Share in 'Gorboduc,'" *Research Quarterly*; and two poems and a vignette in *Effort*, the Marsden University undergraduate publication, of which I am the literary adviser. My plans are to complete my studies for a Ph. D., continue teaching, and engage in literary pursuits.

John Albert Jebbs wedged his sharp hips between two large women on the street car seat. The woman at his left tucked in her skirts and Jebbs said, "Pardon," because he knew his trousers were soggy with rain.

The stale air in the car made his little red eyes smart and his head throb. After grading themes all afternoon, he had hurried past his flat, picked up the mail, and run for the car. Marian would be disappointed. There was no letter from her mother—only a few bills and the sixth annual report of his college class. Marian would ask him if he had run his hand up into the mailbox—sometimes letters got stuck there out of sight—and he would have to admit that he hadn't. He had been in such a hurry.

Sniffing, Jebbs thought of his handkerchief in his hip pocket, then surreptitiously wiped his nose with the back of his free hand. The other hand clutched an umbrella and a battered bouquet of jonquils for Marian. He hoped the flowers wouldn't look too bad when he got to the hospital. Maybe the nurse wouldn't let Marian have them in the room. But jonquils had no odor. That was why he had bought them, that and because they were cheap. Marian would scold, and he would have to tell her he had paid only a quarter for them.

Holding the annual report between his knees, Jebbs ran his hand stiffly down along his trouser leg and under

the wrapper, tearing the brown paper. The woman at his left shifted her position. She was sitting now on his unbuttoned topcoat, and he could feel her weight pulling at his collar. Leaning forward a little, to relieve the strain, he began to thumb the pages of the report awkwardly with one hand.

F . . . G . . . H . . . I . . . J . . .
 Jebbs.

He read through his autobiographic sketch. It looked impressive, all those things he had done. He wished he could show it to the woman at his left. She would be more respectful then, knowing all those interesting facts about him.

He read through the sketch again. Calling that trip on muleback a "trek" had been a good touch, a sort of jaunty informal stroke. Marian had liked that sentence. She said it was personal, it sounded like him, his style. They really didn't go quite seventy-five miles on that trip. Only sixty-two, to be exact. But Marian had agreed with him that, for the sake of round figures, the slight exaggeration was excusable.

"John Albert Jebbs, Instructor in English . . ." almost a page of type in his story. None of the others had quite so much. He hadn't realized how much he had accomplished until he began to write the sketch. He wished the head of the English Department at the university could see it. Maybe he could contrive some excuse for showing it to him. The printer had misspelled "Gorboduc." He could point that out to the Chief. He'd tell the Chief some of those stories he knew about typographical errors. That would be a good way with the Chief. Crack a joke with him now and then. Show him he was a well-rounded man of the world. A teacher ought not to be all book-learning. He ought to know something about life. That list of publications certainly ought to strike the Chief's eye.

Too bad the baby wasn't in the report. . . . Joanna Marian Jebbs. . . . That would have looked nice. Some of the other men in the class had already had babies when the report went to press. Marian would be disappointed. She would pout a little when she saw the book. "It doesn't say anything about my baby!" she would say.

Marian was going to be a wonderful mother. If only he could be worthy of her. He failed her so many times that

he was ashamed when he thought about it. At that party for the new members of the faculty when they were all called upon to introduce themselves, Marian said he should have made more of a speech about himself. She said nobody ever could have guessed how clever he was from the way he talked that night. And he was so negligent about writing to Marian's mother, too. Marian wrote to his mother twice a week regularly. He really wasn't fair to Marian. Here she was bearing him a child and going through all that horrible suffering because of him. It wasn't fair at all, a woman's having to suffer like that for a man's pleasure. Men were cruel, ravishing, selfish beasts.

Jebbs's little red eyes felt fiercely predatory as he glanced about at the women in the car. They were such helpless yielding creatures under the iron of a man's will. He would protect Marian and their child. It was the instinct of the male in him, the male of the forest defending its mate and its young.

There was a poem in that thought, a sonnet in the Shakespearian manner. No; the Petrarchan would be better. It would set more restraint upon the powerful overflow of his emotions.

Prehensile man, thief in the virgin night. . . .

Ah, that was it! "Prehensile man. . . ." That would set the tone of the whole poem.

"Illinois Lying-In!"

Jebbs got up automatically at the conductor's call, still rejoicing over the first line of his poem.

"Hey, mister, you forgot your book!"

One of the fat women was pointing at his class report on the floor. All the other passengers were staring at him. Goodness, he had almost walked off without it! Marian would never have forgiven him. And he wanted to read about the fellows, too, sometime, learn what they were doing. Good old gang!

"Watch your step!" the conductor said.

Jebbs stepped down into the rain and began to struggle with his folded umbrella. The hospital was just across the street, but Marian would notice if his shoulders were damp.

Walter Crane
 Occupation: United States Consular Service.
 Permanent Address: Aguas Rojas, Nicaragua.

He lived in Washington, D. C., for two

years after graduation, employed as secretary to his father, Congressman George P. Crane, at the same time studying for the foreign service at George Washington University. He entered the service and for the past two years has been the only representative of the United States at Aguas Rojas, a sea-coast town in Nicaragua.

Jesus María Bartolomeo González y Flor sat in the red dust of the road examining the leathery ball of his big toe. He had heard the summons, "Muchacho," from the house behind the bougainvillea, but experience had taught him that Señor Crane was never angry until he had called three times. With his subconscious mind, which for his master's affairs was the only mind he used, Jesus María Bartolomeo González y Flor reckoned the chances of removing the splinter favorable and continued to probe his big flat toe unperturbed.

"Muchacho!"

This time rapid explosions of profanity propelled the word to Jesus María's eardrums. Getting up reluctantly, he collected the handful of mail which he had dropped in the road and went into the house.

Jesus María was not skillful at deductive reasoning. The mailboat from the United States had steamed into the harbor that morning. Señor Crane kept a photograph of an American señorita on his dresser. For his stupidity Jesus María received a cuff on the head.

Crane, thin and brown, with deep burning eyes, ran through the mail eagerly. There was nothing but a bulletin from the State Department, two advertisements from New York haberdashers, and the sixth annual report of his college class.

Tossing everything but the class report on his desk, he dropped into a chair and ran his finger indifferently under the brown wrapper.

It was six weeks now since he had heard from Mary. The mailboat had docked twice in that time.

"I don't understand, Walter. You say you love me. Why can't I come down there, or, if not that, why can't you get transferred? Last night at the Roosevelt I was dancing with George Crosby. He said he was pretty sure you could get transferred if you tried. Maybe you are trying to break our engagement and I don't understand. I have been rather foolish about you. I wish you would speak out plainly. . . ."

That was the argument of her last letter.

Crane turned to the C's in the report. George Crosby had gone to Europe, got a job on a newspaper in Paris, and was now in Washington in publicity work. That probably meant lobbying.

Transferred. . . . Of course he wanted to be transferred out of this dump. He was sick of that fathead of an Englishman with his braying voice and stupid talk about "keeping one's end up, my dear fellow." He was fed up with El Club de la Independencia, where you played endless card games with the natives. And there was no one else to talk to but the girls in the cantinas with their fancy notions about the refinements of prostitution. If Mary thought he was contented, she was crazy.

Of course he hadn't gone into such detail with her. He could only write vaguely about the heat and the living conditions. He had even lied a little about the importance of his job. But she ought to understand. If only she would wait another year, he'd get a place where she could join him.

His eye fell upon the name of John Albert Jebbs. The little runt was married . . . and teaching in a college.

But college towns were pleasant places. He remembered his own college town, and then he thought of Washington. It was spring now in the States, and in Washington the cherry trees were in bloom. He saw George Crosby strolling with Mary along the Basin's edge, just as he himself had walked with her two years ago. Mary had been enthusiastic then about his going to Nicaragua. Now he almost wished he had brought her down with him.

He tried to picture her in his house, chasing lizards out of the tin bathtub, eating the heavy fried foods that Luisa slung together, sitting indoors all day because there was no other woman of her kind to visit and because the sunlight outside glared as if the air were afire. Mary was delicate and white, and she was timid with animals. What would she do when a stray goat got into the house, or when there were bats on the canopy above the bed in the morning?

But if she were here, there'd be no George Crosby to worry about. Or if he were in the States again. . . .

He began to study the occupations of his friends as they were listed in the report. He couldn't teach school, like

Jebbs, or run an office like Mort Philbrick. That would be hell, sitting in an office all day, telling a lot of gum-chewing stenographers what to do. But there was Curt Prentiss. Curt's old man had apparently done well by him. Maybe Curt could scrape up something. By God, he'd write to him sometime.

There was a sharp knock at the front door. Looking up, Crane saw a man in white behind the screen.

"Muchacho!" he called. "La puerta!"

Jesus María appeared from the back of the house and went to the door, letting in a short thin man whose black hair stood high on the back of his head. The man smiled obsequiously, rolling the brim of his panama between his dark fingers. Crane did not get up.

"Hello, José," he said. "Que pasa?"

José Cristóbal was the owner of the most flourishing cantina in Aguas Rojas. He spoke English with a strange mixture of Bostonian and Spanish accent. He professed to have spent a year in a New England preparatory school in his youth.

"I have a gift for you, señor."

Crane knew what the gift was, and he was in a mood to accept.

"The new girl from Panamá. . . ." José was saying. "Muy hermosa, no? Una fenomenal!"

"You mean the blonde who did the Chinese dance?"

"Sí, la misma," José nodded, grinning.

"She'll do. . . . Here, have a drink, José."

Crane got up and went to a cabinet where he poured a glass of rum for the cabaret owner and one for himself.

"But you tell this puta," Crane said, as José tilted his glass to his lips, "that if she's looking for something permanent, she'd better pick on the Englishman, because I'm leaving this dump very soon. Sabe?"

José lowered his glass and grinned. His laughter was a soft gurgle in the back of his throat.

"Sure," he said.

Curtis Ausland Prentiss
Occupation: President, Prentiss Airways.
Married: Constance Van Cortlandt Clarke.
Permanent Address: New York City.

Went abroad after graduation. Returned to New York. Has since been living here. Licensed pilot.

A young woman stood at one end of the long library. Her beauty, in the

somber atmosphere of leatherbound books and heavy furniture, was fragile. Her figure, while it was full and splendidly erect, seemed delicate, brittle. She stood, with confusion in her deep sad eyes, looking down at three stacks of letters and papers assorted on the broad flat top of a desk. In her mind the three stacks were labelled, "To Be Burned," "To Be Saved," "To Be Given To The Executors." They were masculine papers; long white envelopes and large sheets of stiff stationery. At the other end of the room, hardly audible, a fire crackled. The whole house was empty still. Outside the long curtained windows, there was a continuous faint rumble of traffic.

Picking up a pamphlet in a brown wrapper from one of the piles, the young woman started to put it down on another beside a silver model of an airplane. But noticing the words "Class Report" on the paper, she stopped and ran her finger under the wrapper, ripping it in a jagged line and letting it fall to the floor. Then she opened the report and began to glance over its pages. At first her eyes moved rapidly, but finally they tarried. She read one entire page before she flicked through a dozen more. After a time, without looking up, she began to move toward a deep armchair. The dead whiteness of her face was gone. Her blue eyes were coming to life.

A half hour later, when a servant came to announce dinner, he could see no one in the room; but from behind the high back of the armchair came the faint sound of sobbing.

George Crosby

Occupation: Publicity.

Permanent Address: Washington, D. C.

After a year as a reporter on a small paper in Ohio, I went to Europe and got a job with the Paris edition of *The Tribune*. Since returning to the United States, I have been employed in publicity work in Washington.

". . . And were you plastered!"

George Crosby's head was dry and hot. It seemed to him, as he opened his eyes, that he heard his eyelids creak on their hinges. At the foot of the bed, Hector Newman's round grinning face was swimming toward him like a moon breaking through racing clouds. Hector had a right to be there. He shared the apartment. He slept in the other bed. But Crosby resented his presence. He hated him.

"What do you mean—plastered?"

He tried to sit up suddenly, but fell back on the bed, drenched in cold sweat. It was as if a heavy beam had struck him across the forehead.

"I mean cockeyed!" Hector said. "Soused! And you still are!"

"Don't!" Crosby groaned from his pillow.

"Oh, it's all right," Hector persisted. "You've got friends everywhere to look after you . . . classmates . . . little school chums to pick you up out of the gutter."

Crosby saw the man again, standing at the curb in the sickly light of the streetlamp which was still burning in the dawn. He saw his thin sharp face and shabby clothes and remembered his own drunken surprise when the man stepped up to him and said, "Hello, Crosby; let me take you home." He, too, had been standing on the curb just before that, but with his hands before him ready for a dive, half convinced that the wide wet street was a river.

"Who was he, Hector?" he asked, without opening his eyes.

Hector's laugh rasped across his nerves.

"An old pal, name of Hardy, said he was a classmate of yours, said he'd been out of work for two years and it was awfully nice to see some one he used to know, glad to help you out."

Hector laughed again, and Crosby dug his head into the pillow, wishing he would go away; but he became suddenly alert when Hector continued.

"That wasn't who you thought it was, though, boy! You kept calling him Crane. 'Good old Crane, I'm so sorry!' you'd say. I thought you were going to kiss him. . . . And did you bare your love-life! Say, if this guy really had been Crane and everything you told him about yourself and his girl friend was true . . . !"

Crosby opened his eyes and looked at Hector Newman, who grinned back at him lewdly. He felt sick and weak. Why did he have to go out and get drunk after he left Mary? Conscience, probably. If he had known how much she cared for Walter Crane, he wouldn't have. . . . But that was a lie! He had known all along, and he'd been working up to this for six months. She'd get over it, but it was a hell of a note to talk about her last night when he got home.

"What did I say?" he asked.

Hector held his hands before his face.

"Am I blushing?" he said.

"Come on, Hector! Drop the humor!"

Hector took his hands down, folded them in front of him, and began to twist back and forth like a small girl reciting.

"Mary had a little . . ."

"Oh, go to hell!"

Crosby turned over on his face and folded the pillow about his ears. He wished he could go to sleep. He wished he had a drink. He wanted to forget the look in Mary Atwill's eyes when he left her. He wanted to wake up with the whole night wiped out of his memory. But now he could never forget it, because he'd gone and blabbed it all to Hector, and to that bum he'd picked up on the street.

Hardy. . . . He'd never known any one in college by that name, and he must have known almost everybody. But the fellow had called him "Crosby." Still, a lot of people in Washington knew his name. What if the fellow were a blackmailer? By God, that was his racket, of course!

Seized with panic, he sat up in bed, forgetting his headache.

"Hector!" he called to his roommate, who had left the bedroom. "Hector, throw me that class report that came in yesterday's mail. It has a green cover."

Hector Newman appeared in the doorway with the booklet in his hand and tossed it on the bed.

"Still sentimental about your old buddies?" he said.

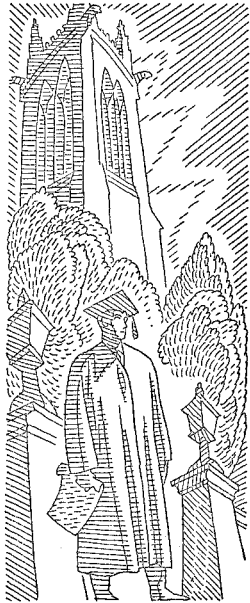
Reaching eagerly for the class report, Crosby ignored him. With shaky fingers, he turned to the H's.

Hackett . . . Haines . . . Halpert. . .

Alan Hardy

"Lost."

Crosby dropped the report on the bedcovers and sank back on the pillow. His head throbbed from the effort of sitting up, but his panic had left him. He felt a definite security in knowing the man really was a classmate. A classmate could be trusted not to betray him. There was something soothingly reassuring, too, in the word "lost." Now, if only he didn't come around asking for a job. . . .

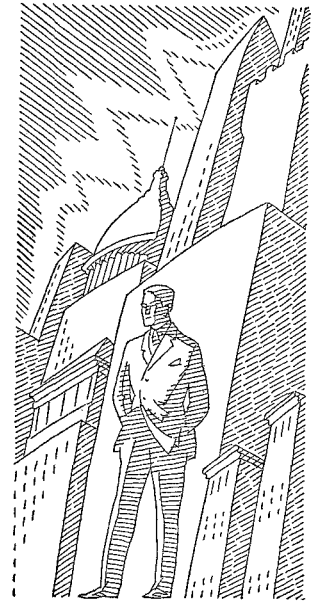


Off the Record

*What Business Wants
in the College Man*

By William L. Fletcher

Fletcher of Boston is an expert on jobs. Big corporations retain him to help them fill positions. He knows thoroughly the employer's point of view. Hundreds of college men, too, come to him for jobs and he understands the difficulties facing those who are leaving the academic halls this month. In this article he interprets employer to job-seeker and helps the employer to crystallize his own policy



WHAT does business want from the college man? This month one hundred thousand graduates from five hundred colleges are seeking the answer. Very few of them have it already; in fact, many college men of ten or fifteen years ago have not yet been able to solve the problem to their own satisfaction.

For sixteen years I have been co-operating with some of the largest corporations in the United States, and hundreds of smaller ones, finding for them the men needed to fill various positions. During this period hundreds of young graduates have come before my desk. I see the problem from the viewpoint of the employers, as their representative; but I see it also as it looks to the young graduate. Between the campus and economic security I have discovered that there lies a no-man's-land over which the collegian must pass, alone.

This is not a subject peculiar to depression years. Economic conditions have intensified the search and introduced new factors; but the problem of the young graduate getting into business has always been with us. Why can't he find out what business wants from him by asking? Well, there are several reasons: One—the employer is often none too sure himself what he wants. Two—personnel men who analyze and hire new talent are simply scouts. They do not have the time or the inclination to explain to thousands of individuals just what they need. Three—some executives cannot express what they want, although they are able

to recognize the presence or lack of desirable characteristics in applicants.

There is still another important reason, which is seldom mentioned lest it be misunderstood. Many concerns, even if they wanted to put all their cards on the table, *cannot*. At times there seems to be a conspiracy of industry to keep its specifications for man-power secret. To interpret fairly the viewpoint of executives in this regard, I am going to talk "off the record." Naturally in years of co-operation corporation executives have told me many things about their requirements in confidence. To respect this trust I must quote anonymously.

What does commerce want from the college man? It's almost easier to tell what it doesn't want. Definitely some things are no longer desired. Executives at present, if indeed they ever did, do *not* want the star athlete, the captain of the football team, the social light or the most popular man in his class, as such. Even the college man *per se* doesn't mean a whole lot. This may seem contrary to the general public's idea, but it is the inside fact.

I find that employers, today, look at college in three ways. Some privately or openly condemn higher educational systems for failure in preparing students for work. Others in examining and comparing college production, concede that some institutions are more likely to turn out commercially successful graduates than others. While a third group says, "What of it?" Colleges in their opinion are not supposed to function primarily as training schools

for business, but for the business of life. Let me be definite. There are employers who feel it is unnecessary for a college man to come to his job with any particular business knowledge or experience. Department heads do not want their new help to have to "unlearn" a mass of preconceived notions. They prefer to teach the beginner their own methods as developed by practical experience.

Perhaps some of this discounting of the value of the classroom in the office, may be traced to the fact that there are two lines of books on business. Publishers frankly admit that they must produce one type, written as textbooks and collateral reading in colleges, and another series designed to sell to business men on approval through the mail. With students absorbing theories from one class of books, and commercial management making practical applications in agreement with another, is it any wonder that graduates misunderstand signals and sometimes even run the wrong way of the field?

Many employers believe that every man should have some technical training as preparation for his work. One personnel man writes me that every one who is not studying for the professions should have stenography, typewriting, and bookkeeping, "somehow working these subjects into their high school course with the regular work. If necessary they should spend an extra half-year to finish." This executive further explained: "A young man so equipped will have the broad general