How M Quad Started In Newspaper Work

"When I first knew Charles B. Lewis, who signs himself 'M Quad' and is the creator of Mr. and Mrs. Bowser, the various members of the Lime Kiln club and the 'Arizona Kicker's' editor," said Robert Barr, the novelist, the other day, "he was writing about all these people of his brain for the Detroit Free Press, and besides was contributing extensively to almost every department of the paper, from the editorial page to the local columns. His work appeared in every issue, daily, Sunday and weekly. Some of it was humorous, some pathetic, some picturesque, while some was 'just plain copy,' and there was a tremendous lot of it.

"Yet, despite the variety and volume of his work, Lewis used to spend less time in the office than any other man on the paper. Each member of the staff had a room to himself and so could work in perfect seclusion if he were sensitive to the presence of others. M Quad was more sensitive in this respect than almost anyone else I have ever known, and did not like to be around the place at all when the full force was at work. It was his practice, therefore, to appear promptly at noon, just as everybody else was going to lunch. I was then a new man on the paper and my room was just across the corridor from his. I soon learned that M Quad's key would be heard turning in the lock of his door invariably on the stroke of 12; that for a solid hour after that time he would work like a steam engine; that on the stroke of 1 he would begin to prepare for departure and five minutes later would shut up his room for the day and go away.

"Quad and myself became very good friends after a bit, and for some reason he didn't mind having me present when he was at work. I admired him intensely then, as I do now, and I used to go in and watch him put up the copy. He had a daily department entitled 'Currency' to make, and this was always his first task. He would begin by glancing hastily over half a dozen of his favorite exchanges, occasionally cutting out something that especially attracted him, and then he would write the required number of 'Currency' paragraphs. I don't remember just what his standard was, but he never wrote more and he never wrote less—save when, for some reason, one or more paragraphs had been dropped out of his contributions of the previous day. If the standard was twelve and only eleven had been printed, he would write only eleven. If the number was diminished the next day by two, on the following day he would write only nine. When the number would dwindle too much, Mr. Quinby, the editor, would suggest a return to the old standard, and then Lewis would begin all over again. After he had finished the 'Currency' copy he would turn out a 'Bowser,' or a 'Lime Kiln Club' sketch or perhaps a seemingly truthful account of an amusing local incident.

"In those old days the Free Press fairly bristled with little 'single heads,' two or three sticks in length, telling how some stranger or citizen had said or done some funny thing. Each of these little sketches was cheerfully located on some well known street or square or in some prominent building, and, though almost always wholly imaginary, the stories were told with such realism that the readers invariably believed them. In consequence it was the general impression everywhere at that time that more truly funny things happened in Detroit than in all the rest of the United States.

Quad's Introduction to Quinby.

"Mr. Lewis had been on the paper a long time when I joined the staff, and was known far and wide as the Detroit Free Press man. You have probably heard how he got his job. He was a printer by trade, working somewhere in the west, but not in Detroit. One day he got a letter asking him to go to some place south and set type on a paper there. He went by steamboat and the boat blew up. He was laid up for some time, but arriving at his new place of employment he set up an account of the accident, in which pathos, humor and the picturesque were happily combined, and signed it 'M. Quad.' An 'em quad,' as you may know, is a bit of metal of a certain size used by printers in 'spacing out' a short line, and Lewis signed as he did so that printers who read his effort should know it was the production of a fellow craftsman. The owner of the paper had sense enough to print the sketch and it was copied far and wide. Mr. Quinby of the Free Press was among those who gave it circulation. He also wrote to Lewis and asked him to join the editorial staff of the paper.

"Lewis didn't answer the letter, but pulled up stakes and hastened to Detroit. On the evening after his arrival a rather queer looking chap lounged into the office and laid a roll of pencil written manuscript on the city editor's desk.

"'Account of a dog fight I saw today,' said the stranger, and lounged out.

"The city editor read the manuscript, and as he read he laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. When Mr. Quinby read it in the paper next day he sent for the city editor.

"'I made a find last week,' said Mr. Quinby, 'in a man who wrote up a steamboat explosion for a country paper, and I sent for him, but he hasn't come. I guess you've made another find in the man who wrote that dog fight story. Who is he?'

"'Haven't the least idea,' said the city editor. 'Stranger came in last night, left it on my desk and walked out.'

"'Send him to me when he comes in again,' said Mr. Quinby.

"Next night the stranger appeared with another story.

"'Mr. Quinby wants to see you,' said the city editor.

"'Oh, yes,' said the stranger, 'Had a letter from Quinby and he hired me to write for the paper, but I've never seen him yet. Hope he liked what I wrote.'

"That was how M Quad and Mr. Quinby met the first time. Next day a room and a desk were provided for Quad and for years he was the original and only 'Detroit Free Press man.'

The Once Famous Bijah.

"One of Quad's best known characters in other days was 'Bijah,' the janitor at the central police court in Detroit. Unlike most of the people Lewis wrote about, 'Bijah' had a flesh and blood existence and was a real court attendant. He was a fat, rather stupid chap, who often said funny things without knowing it, and whose odd personality appealed to Quad. He seldom said or did the things Quad described, and at first was much put out because of the notoriety which had suddenly been thrust upon him. Later he became reconciled, largely, I fancy, because many strangers in Detroit used to go to the police court and ask to see him. In time the visitors who wanted to see Bijah became too numerous for the convenience of the court, and he was transferred to a station near the periphery of the town, where he couldn't be found easily. In time Bijah came to believe that he was really as funny as Quad made him out to be and undoubtedly used to half believe that he had been the making of the writer.

"In these old days, whenever any part of the paper got dull, Quad used to be asked to liven it up a bit. His contributions bearing on the civil war, then recent, and in which he had played a part, were commonly known in the office as 'thrillers,' and properly so. They used to thrill Mr. Quinby even, despite his long experience as a newspaper man. Sometimes Quad was extremely valuable in the local columns. He could make an interesting story out of something that would degenerate into a list of names or worse in other hands. But he wasn't particularly strong on facts. I shall never forget the account of a certain fire from his pen. It was one of the most lurid reports ever handed over to a city editor, but it didn't contain the names of the burned building's owners or tenants or a word about the insurance. So a man who had a nose for facts was sent to gather the details. Combined, the two reports made a remarkably fine local feature, but after that Lewis was rarely or never expected to do the whole of any news story.

Wonderful News Specials.

"While on the Free Press, Quad acted as Detroit correspondent for a big New York paper, and the things he telegraphed to it were marvels. Each had a basis of fact, as a rule, but the 'filling' was mainly fiction. Not often was one of his dispatches less than two columns long and the telegraph tolls made them pretty expensive to the New York paper, but they were eagerly accepted and printed, and more would have been taken readily could he have furnished them, for they made circulation and caused the paper to be copied everywhere the English language was read. One of the most remarkable of these specials appeared the day after the great railroad accident at Ashtabula. The special told the personal experiences of an old man and his wife who had survived the catastrophe and had been interviewed in Detroit on their way home by the correspondent. The story was nothing less than a human document. It related the sensations of the couple as they went down with the bridge, of their terror as they disappeared under the ice in the frigid waters of the creek, of their struggle to the surface, of the burning cars and the dual peril—fire and water—that threatened all hands, of their ultimate rescue, of the scenes about the wreck and of the kindness of strangers to them. No other paper had half so absorbing a story of the wreck and the correspondents of all the other sheets were brought up with a round turn by their managing editors for missing the old couple. There was one point about the story that none of the fault-finding editors knew of, however—there wasn't a grain of fact in the whole thing, the old couple and their thrilling experiences being creations of Quad's imagination.

"Quad used to be constantly on the lookout for good pegs to hang his long and picturesque telegraphic fiction on, and on one occasion he got all ready to write a corking account of an expected execution in Canada, not far from Detroit. He didn't propose to see the execution, his intention being to supply the details from his own fertile imagination. But, working through the Free Press, I managed to have the proposed victim of the law reprieved, and so he wasn't executed. The day after the reprieve, Quad said to me, almost with tears in his eyes, that I had played him a low down trick. Then he asked me a lot about the layout of the jail in which the condemned was imprisoned.

Jollying a Disgruntled Sheriff.

"I gave him the information and a day or two later the New York paper he wrote for printed the most extraordinary special it had had from Quad for a whole year. In brief, it told how the condemned murderer, on the night before the day set for the hanging, had opened his cell door in his sleep and walked to the end of the corridor with measured step.

"There he had gone through the motions of mounting a flight of steps, had bent his head as if to receive the death cap and afterward the noose, and then had jumped into the air, strangled, as if actually hanged, afterward falling down apparently lifeless.

"All this was witnessed, the dispatch said, by a jail attendant who was rendered speechless with horror by what he saw. The special continued with the statement that the man believed himself dead on regaining consciousness and for a long time would not be convinced otherwise. At the winding up it was stated that a broad, black mark was found round his neck, as if he had actually been hanged, when he was taken back to his cell. 'Scientists may scoff as they will,' ran the concluding sentence, 'but this is fact and it is exciting much comment here.'

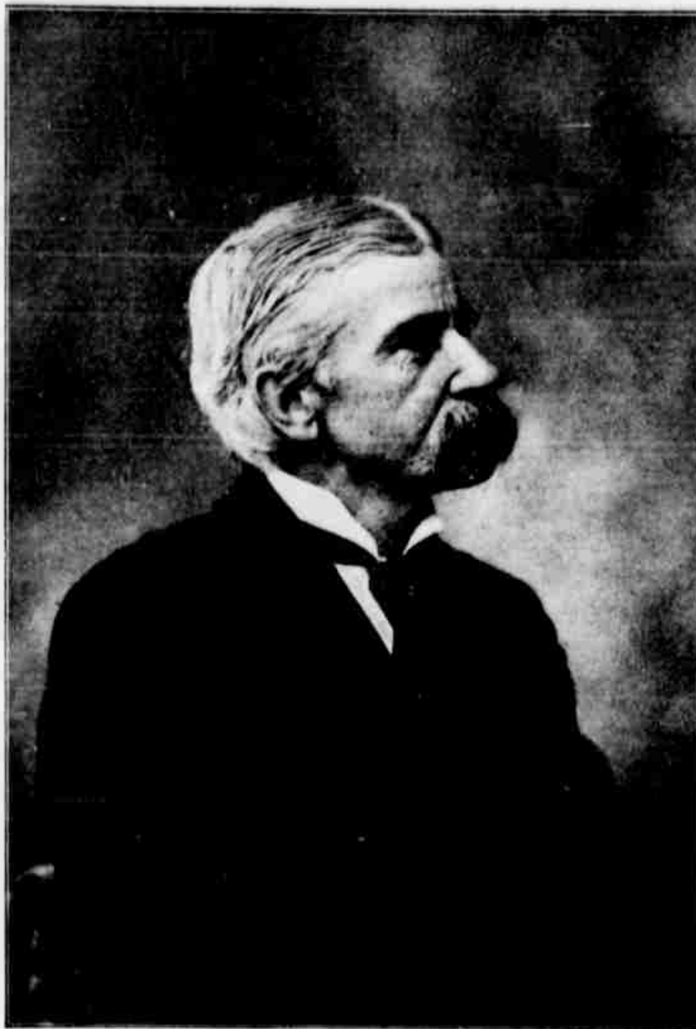
"The story attracted no end of notice, not only among the people at large, but also among those who thought themselves thinkers. One, a professor in Yale college, wrote elaborately to show how it was quite within the scientific possibilities that the man's belief in his own execution could actually cause a black mark around his neck. Of course, all the other papers were scooped and all the other correspondents were severely berated by their employers. Moreover, the sheriff in charge was severely reprimanded by the Canadian minister for allowing the cell door to be left unlocked. Had Quad told me why he was asking about the lay of the jail, I'd have told him that the cell doors were always locked and that no condemned murderer could get out into the corridor at night.

"The sheriff asked me to help him disprove the story and I took him to Quad for advice, without explaining that he was the correspondent. Quad gravely read the account he himself had written and the letter from the minister of justice.

"'It's all a frightful shame,' he cried, with tears in his voice, 'and I don't wonder you want a denial printed. But really you shouldn't have any such thing done. You are a man of some dignity—the highest official in your county, and you can't afford to pay any attention to a low down, scoundrelly scribbler like the fellow who did this. It would be sadly infra dig. Just say nothing and hold your head high.'

"The sheriff agreed to this, and that's why the story was never denied."

I. D. MARSHALL.



M QUAD—C. B. LOOMIS—From Latest Photo.

ROBERT BARR—From Latest Photo.

Lenten Gossip Parties

About the very word gossip there is to many ears a certain smack of something interesting. Of it men are quite as conscious as women, and, therefore, it is not a matter of surprise that the invitations to gossip parties which are now flying about are being accepted with alacrity. In fact, for informal affairs during Lent hardly any jollier form of amusement could be devised.

The advance preparations for a gossip party are simple enough, and yet, a little ingenuity is required. After it has been ascertained through the invitations that an equal number of men and women are to be present, a small amount of arithmetic comes into play. For as long as it is desired that the game continue, topics of conversation or gossip should be chosen, always allowing five minutes to each subject, or planning twelve points to be discussed to the hour. These subjects of conversation should then be written upon cards which, all in good time, are handed around to the guests.

The selection of the topics should be witty and above all, up-to-date. As an instance of subjects that usually go are, "Brown eyes, or blue; historic atmosphere; any startling bit of news the town or city has lately afforded; flirtations and salads." Places then must, of course, be provided that these respective subjects may be comfortably discussed. On a sofa, therefore, will be attached the number one; chairs in another cosy corner will be labeled two, and in a similar way as many places are numbered as there are couples expected. In the beginning these numbers are drawn for, and the girl and man that pull out one, or two, or three will hunt about until they find a resting place marked with the like number. Usually the hostess acts as mistress of ceremony. When all have taken their places she taps a little bell and announces that the first subject of conversation on the cards is to claim the attention. All then begin and for the next five minutes it is chatted about mightily. At the end of that time the bell again rings; the men arise from their seats; bid au revoir to their companions and pass on to the seat next to their's in number. Throughout the game the women always remain seated in the same places; it is only the men that progress. With each change of places the next subject on the cards is taken up and talked about and so the game is played until the entire circuit is made. Every man has then visited and chatted with every woman in the room; every woman has had her share of opportunity.

A merry time then follows with the voting. Slips of paper and pencils are given out and the women vote for the men that have gossiped the most brilliantly and the men vote for the women that have particularly enchanted them. To the successful ones in this contest prizes are awarded. Tapers, either for sealing wax or with which to light cigars, are pretty to select for the men, or some of the new silver mounted shaving straps that seem now to be in high favor. For the women a graceful prize is a plaster head—such as that of the laughing girl, etc.

Stories About Notables

Before Amos J. Cummings was a congressman, relates the Philadelphia Post, he was managing editor of the New York Sun, editor and founder of the Evening Sun and president of the New York Press club. During his many years of active journalistic work Mr. Cummings' paper was first and foremost in his mind. That is one reason why he was always at the top of the profession. He unconsciously illustrated this characteristic at a social function of the Press club. There were several amateur and two or three professional entertainers present. One of the latter was reciting a dramatic incident with marked force and finished elocution. Mr. Cummings sat at the head of the table deep in thought over the next day's paper.

"The murderer crept up to my bedside," whispered the elocutionist tremulously. "He thought I was asleep. But I was awake. Oh, awake! Hours passed between each tick of the watch under my pillow. He looked into my face and raised his keen knife above my head. Just as he was about to strike I heard a low whistle and the desperado leaped from the room and disappeared out of the window. Now, sir, what do you suppose I did then?" he asked in thunderous tones.

Mr. Cummings came to for a moment. "I'd have hustled down to my office and written it up for my paper," he replied in a matter-of-fact way.

Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the National Woman Suffrage association, is almost as domestic as she is clever and progressive. One day some years ago, relates a New York paper, when the women suffragists were storming the capitol at Albany in order to change the fifteenth amendment of the constitution to their liking, a young newspaper woman was sent to interview Mrs. Catt. The young reporter traveled out to Long Island where Mrs. Catt lived, and was duly impressed by what she saw and heard. She was a violent suffragist when she returned. Her "story" was solemn and eulogistic and her city editor didn't like it. He was no respecter of persons and especially of women more strong-minded than himself. He liked gayety and flippancy and fun, and he professed to be able to find them in the most solemn conclaves of progressive women.

"You've described the house and never said a word about the catnip growing in the garden," he said as he looked over the manuscript, "and you've never mentioned that she purred—but never mind; if you're so much in earnest you needn't change it. I'll make a nice head for it," and she went away pacified. Her state of mind was not exactly pacific the next morning, however, when she picked up the paper to find her learned article crowned with the following caption:

CLEVER MRS. CATT.
SHE LIVES AT THE SEASHORE WITH MR. CATT AND THE KITTENS.

Magurgee, in the Philadelphia Times, tells this one about Colonel Jack Chinn of Kentucky: At the close of the regular racing season in which Leonatus had won more successive stakes than any other horse on the American turf, his owners, Chinn and Morgan, found themselves possessed, in the form of profits, of the sum of $60,000, or possibly $80,000 each; as to that unimportant detail the narrator being uncertain. They determined upon a pleasure trip in celebration of their success, and in the course of their peregrinations they reached the city of Chicago, and visiting its many sights of public interest they naturally were taken by friends to the Chicago Board of Trade, and there permitted to look upon the swirl of that maelstrom known as the "Wheat Pit." After having been introduced to several of the most prominent Chicago brokers, one of them said, "Colonel Chinn, I am surprised that a man of your nerve in and inclination to gambling does not take a flyer in the wheat pit. Compared to it roulette is for suckling babes, faro a child's play and the race track a merry-go-round for striplings. Here you can make a fortune in a day if you have the capital to begin with and the courage to act. What you call gambling are petty games of chance. A man of your ability and resources should test fortune here."

"Well, gentlemen," said Chinn, "if I did as you want me to I'd feel just as if I'd been walking along, say Broadway, New York City, and that I heard a voice above me say: 'Is that you, Jack Chinn? Where did you come down from Harrodsburg?' and that I looked up, and, leaning from a third story window, saw the face of an old Kentucky friend of mine and that I said to him: 'What you doing up there?' and that he said to me, 'I'm running a faro bank,' and that I said to him, 'Put me a hundred on the ace,' and that he stuck his head back into the room and in three seconds stuck it out again and said, 'You've lost. Send me the money.' No, gentlemen," said Chinn to the Chicago brokers, "I play no game where I can't see both the cards and the shuffle."

Inconvenient

Detroit Journal: Once upon a time the Anglo-Saxon had occasion to take up the White Man's Burden under circumstances which caused him to blush violently.

Destiny, who was attending to the checkroom in person that day, was at once rendered suspicious.

"You are not very white!" she objected, sternly.

This fable teaches how inconvenient are personal qualms of conscience in racial affairs.