

How "Insane" Man, Mourned as Dead, Built Up Fortune



NEW YORK—Here is the life story of Ralph A. Clarke of Brooklyn, N. Y., who disappeared from a madhouse five years ago and was mourned as dead until discovered as a prosperous manufacturer in Richmond, Va., where he was known as B. R. Benton. On April 14 Justice Blackmer, in the supreme court, Brooklyn, signed his name to a document declaring that B. R. Benton of Richmond and Ralph A. Clarke of Brooklyn, missing these five years, were one and the same man.

The same stroke of the judicial pen passed from Clarke's life the stain of insanity that had been placed there by the supreme court in June, 1906, and restored to him \$27,737 that had been held in trust for him since that day.

The story of his career as Ralph A. Clarke and B. R. Benton was written by him for the New York Sunday World, from which we copy.

CLARKE'S REMARKABLE STORY.

I had foreseen the amount of publicity that has resulted from my reappearance as Ralph A. Clarke. I should never have revealed my identity. As B. R. Benton I was happy and successful; the Ralph A. Clarke of the old days was forgotten. In all probability I should have lived the rest of my life under my new name not Rowland J. Simes, an old Brooklyn friend, discovered me. Even he was pledged to secrecy, but he prevailed on me to clear up the mystery of my disappearance and claim the sum of \$30,000 which has been lying in the Hamilton Trust Company's vaults since I was declared insane in 1906. I have done so, with the result that I am a man with two names and in a tangle of complications. Of course, my real name is Ralph A. Clarke, but for nearly five years I have been known as B. R. Benton, and the associations I have made under that name in Richmond are the happiest in my life. I have not decided whether to remain in Richmond or return to New York.

Before I tell my story I want to make one point clear. The only person I ever harmed was myself. In having me committed to a sanitarium my family did what they thought best, and I bear no grudge against them. But the fact that I was committed reveals a condition that ought not to exist. No man is safe from being placed in an asylum by his relatives and his fortune confiscated by them if they happen to be unscrupulous. My fortune was not touched, but if I had not escaped from Dr. Parker's sanitarium and changed my name nearly six years ago I might have remained there until this day. Once in a sanitarium it is extremely difficult to be released, and the associations there are apt to make one insane even if one is of sound mind, as I firmly believe it was when I was placed there one sad day in July six years ago.

Head Turned by Success.

I was born in Tennessee forty-six years ago, but moved to Brownsville, Jefferson county, N. Y., at the death of my father in 1879. I attended the public schools there, and at the age of twenty came to New York to seek my fortune. I obtained employment in the office of H. L. Judd, brass novelty manufacturer, at No. 59 Chambers street, where I remained for five years. In that time my salary was increased from \$5 to \$25 a week. I lived simply and made several fortunate investments with the money I saved from my salary. With this capital I started in the clothing business at No. 542 Dean street, Brooklyn. Again I was successful and for ten years my business prospered. I became well acquainted in Brooklyn, joined several clubs as well as the Elks and the Masons. A flattering offer was made for my store however, and I sold out. It was the time of the Yukon gold

Hope of a Leader.

"Have you secured harmony in your party organization?"

"Not exactly," replied Senator Sorghum. "But I think we have found a man whose voice is big enough to drown the discord."

Best of Evidence.

Suburban Girl—Do you really love me, George?

George—Do I? Don't I have to wait in a cold shed every night for the owl car home?—Country Visitor.

His Reason.

Rural Voter (decidedly)—Ah'm votin' for 'other mon.

Candidate—But you say you're never seen him.

Rural Voter—No, but Ah've seen thee.—M. A. P.

It Sure Is.

"What you need is outdoor exercise."

"But a man can't take outdoor exercise at this season, doc. It's too cold to sit on the bleachers now."

I was now in the heart of New York without a cent and without the power of appealing to any of my friends for aid. Fortunately I had a gold watch for which I had paid \$200 the year before. It never occurred to me that I might pawn it until I saw the three balls on a pawnshop at Third avenue and Fourteenth street. I entered the shop and "hocked" my watch for \$15.

With this money in my possession I regained confidence. I had always been able to make my own way in the past. In fact, I had always been a money-maker. Why not again? So I determined to start anew in life. I would forget that I had ever been Ralph A. Clarke. In the future I would be B. R. Benton. The name came to me like an inspiration.

I read of my escape from the Knolls, and I even dropped into a police station to see if a general alarm had been sent out for me. Finding out there was a general alarm for me and that I might be arrested at any moment and returned to the sanitarium, I decided I had better leave New York.

Practically all of the \$15 I had obtained for my watch had been spent for food and shelter during those three days. In fact I had less than 70 cents when I crossed over to Jersey on the ferry and took the trolley to Trenton. At Trenton I managed to get a freight train, which landed me at Perryville, Md.

There a contractor was tearing down an old railroad bridge, and I applied for work as a laborer. The boss scanned me for a moment. He told me frankly that he didn't think I'd do, but that, as he needed men, he'd give me a job. So I started to work at once for \$2.50 a day. I found a cheap boarding house across the river and began my career as B. R. Benton. For four weeks I worked at this job and saved enough money to buy a ticket for Richmond, Va., where I expected to get a position at the American Locomotive Works.

Succeeded in Business.

I was successful in getting employment at the locomotive works in Richmond, and I remained there until April, 1907. By that time I had accumulated a nest egg from my savings, and I began to look around for some better way of making money. I answered an "ad." and got a position as a salesman with the Columbia Shoe company, but left its employ for a better position as a traveling salesman for Smith & Hemenway of New York. I sold safety razors for this concern all over the middle west and south. I gave my name as B. R. Benton and my home as Richmond.

While working for this concern I met a man who was traveling for the Parker Chemical company of Chicago, and through him I got a job as salesman for that concern. My headquarters were located at Richmond, and my business brought me into contact with prominent and influential persons there. I made good commissions as a salesman and constantly added to my savings. Two years ago I determined to embark in business for myself. With Dr. W. H. Parker, one of the leading physicians of Richmond; Dr. Ferguson of the state board of health, and two others I organized the Chemical Supply Company. I became its secretary and general manager, and later, upon the withdrawal of Dr. Parker, its president.

As B. R. Benton I became acquainted with Miss Annie Proffitt of No. 314 East Cary street, Richmond, two years ago, and on March 30 of this year we were married in Washington by the Rev. E. H. Swem of the Second Baptist church. So determined was I to forget that I had ever been Ralph A. Clarke of Brooklyn that I did not even reveal my identity to my bride until after we were married. Then when I was induced to come to New York and reveal my identity it was no longer possible to keep my bride in ignorance.

During the five years I lived in Richmond I saw many of my old friends, and one of them, Will Ketcham of Brooklyn, stopped me and asked if I was not Ralph Clarke. I met his eyes calmly and told him he was mistaken. Rowland J. Simes, another old friend, was not so easily deceived. He saw me in the grill room of Strumpf's Hotel in Richmond on the 7th of last January and immediately hailed me as Clarke. I tried to throw him off, even insisting that I had never heard the name Clarke before, but he knew me too well and I was forced to admit my identity. We had dinner together and spent an evening talking over old times. Before he left me he was pledged to keep my secret on condition that I meet him in Washington on Jan. 30.

Returns to His Aged Mother.

When I met him at the Raleigh hotel on that date he pleaded with me to release him from his pledge of secrecy. He argued that it was unfair to keep my family, especially my aged mother, in ignorance of my fate. So, principally for the sake of my mother, I agreed to let it be known that Ralph A. Clarke was still alive. Simes interested Bernard J. York, a New York lawyer, in my case. He had known me in the old days in Brooklyn, and when the necessary affidavits that I was alive and sane had been prepared he had no difficulty in having the courts set aside the commitment and return the \$27,737 in cash which the Hamilton Trust company was holding in trust for me. Justice Blackmer in the Supreme court, Brooklyn, signed the necessary papers on April 14.

What next? I don't know. I am too well known in Richmond as B. R. Benton to discard that name, but of course Ralph A. Clarke is my rightful name. I haven't had time to solve the perplexing complications which have resulted from my strange career.

Well, Hardly.

"Are you a friend of the groom's family?" asked the usher at the church wedding.

"I think not," replied the lady addressed. "I'm the mother of the bride."—Yonkers Statesman.

Might Spoil the Match.

Suitor—'I would like to see the photo of the lady with the \$500,000 dowry.

Matrimonial Agent—We don't show photos with the large dowries.—Fiegendee Blaesetter.

IN THE PUBLIC EYE

BEGINS WAR ON CONSUMPTION



with the white plague, a war of which he will take personal charge. He believes the disease can be stamped out in a few years.

Mr. Patten was prompted to take up this great fight for humanity by the death of his brother, and later his son, who succumbed. He will abandon all business and devote himself and his immense fortune exclusively to the battle which he has taken up. He declares that "a man should dispose of great wealth for the benefit of the community, social service being the one great thing in life."

SENATOR STONE OF MISSOURI

One of the best parliamentary tacticians in the United States senate is William Joel Stone, of Missouri. He is a veteran in legislative experience, having sat in the house from 1885 to 1891. Then he was elected governor of his state and in 1903 was sent to the Federal senate.

Senator Stone is an uncompromising Democrat and believes that his party will be successful in the next presidential campaign. However, he believed the same thing in 1900, when he managed Bryan's campaign.

The senator is one of the most picturesque figures in congress. He is six feet in height, is as slender and straight as a poplar, and wears dress characteristic of himself. His face is wrinkled, his skin somewhat like parchment, his speech, when he is calm and without excitement, slow and deliberative. But when stirred by anger or emotion, his words flow with the dash and fury of a mountain torrent. On such occasions his words are strong—sensationally strong.



PLEDGES IRELAND HOME RULE



hope that King George would open the Irish parliament and so hasten the day when Ireland, reconciled, would become a loyal unit of the British empire.

JAMES MARRIES FOURTH WIFE

Although past his 80th birthday, General Thomas L. James, once postmaster of New York and postmaster general of the nation under Garfield and Arthur, recently married his fourth wife. The bride is Mrs. Florence Gaffney, of Rochester.

General James was born in Utica in 1831 and served his apprenticeship as a printer. After serving this apprenticeship he published a Whig organ at Hamilton, N. Y., and took an active part in opposition to the Know Nothing movement. In 1861 he entered the customs service and in 1872 was appointed postmaster of New York by President Grant. Later he became postmaster general and soon after the assassination of President Garfield became president of the Lincoln National bank. His investigations while postmaster general resulted in the "star route" trials and in ten months of administration he saved the government \$2,000,000.

General James' first wife was Emily Ida Freeburn, of Hamilton, and a year after her death, which occurred in 1895, he married her sister, Jeanne, widow of Dr. E. R. Barden, of Aiken, S. C.



The Child and the Bee.

Charity is a naked child, giving money to a bee without wings; naked, because useless and simple; a child, because tender and growing; giving honey, because honey is pleasant and comfortable; to a bee, because a bee is laborious and deserving; without wings, because helpless and wanting. If thou deniest to such, thou killest a bee; if thou givest to other than such, thou preservest a drone.—Quarles: Enchiridion.

Originality.

Strictly speaking, it is impossible, of course, to be original. Originality consists in perceiving the permanent behind ephemeral, he old behind the new, in tracing the ever-living spring of human motive from its latest modern faucet deep down and back to its hidden source in consciousness and will.—Allen Duvall, Atlantic.

The Way of the Laundry.

"I had my office coat washed last week," said Mr. Blinzon, "and now it's an office jacket."

Webster's Most Profitable Book.

"Noah Webster," says the book of copyrights, "probably got more for his spelling book than was ever paid for any other book in the United States. We are unable to state the entire sum that was paid him for the copyright of that little book, but think it must have been more than \$50,000. His large dictionary, a work on which he spent the greatest part of his life, did not yield him a tenth part of the profits of his spelling book."

Bachelor's Misfortune.

It is the misfortune of the bachelor that he has no one to tell him frankly his faults; but the husband has this happiness.

Superiority of Reason.

There is no opposing brutal force to the strategems of human reason.—L'Estrange.

Where, Oh Where?

Where is the man who has the power and skill to stem the torrent of a woman's will?—Old English.

Musical Note.

A music teacher in a New England school was trying to make the children in the fourth grade understand the value of a triplet—to get them to know that three quarter-notes under a brace were equal to two quarter-notes.

She couldn't make them understand; and finally, in despair, she asked: "What are three little babies born all at the same time called?"

"Accidentals!" shouted a small boy, with a vague remembrance of the lesson of a week before.

Sincere Prayer.

Teacher—Now, Tommy, suppose a man gave you \$100 to keep for him and then died, what would you do? Would you pray for him?

Tommy—No, sir; but I would pray for another like him.—The United Presbyterian.

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Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup for Children, soothing, softens the gums, reduces inflammation, allays pain, cures wind colic, etc. a bottle.

A bachelor is a man who thinks it wise to view matrimony from a distance.

More Palatable.
Mr. Benham—I'll eat my hat!
Mrs. Benham—Try mine, dear!
There's some fruit on it.—Judge.

Are You Poorly?

If your digestive system is weak, the bowels clogged, the liver sluggish, you cannot wonder that you feel "half sick" all the time; but listen—

Hostetter's Stomach Bitters

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WHAT, INDEED.



Marion—Caroline says she paid \$18 a dozen for those photos of herself.

Maxine—But they don't look a bit like her.

Marion—Of course not. What do you suppose she paid \$18 for?

Nowadays.

Grandmother—And now would you like me to tell you a story, dear?

Advanced Child—Oh, no, granny, not a story, please! They're so stodgy and unconvincing and as out-of-date as tunes in music. We should much prefer an impressionist word-picture, or a subtle character sketch.

—Punch.

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Probably there is nothing so insincere as the struggle between two women to see which shall pay the car fare.

Garfield Tea keeps the bodily machinery in order; it regulates the digestive organs and overcomes constipation.

The love of a man for his wife may be the real thing, but it doesn't seem to interfere with his appetite.

Lewis' Single Binder cigar. Original Tin Foil Smoker Package, 5c straight.

Some people seem to make a specialty of thinking only near-thoughts.



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