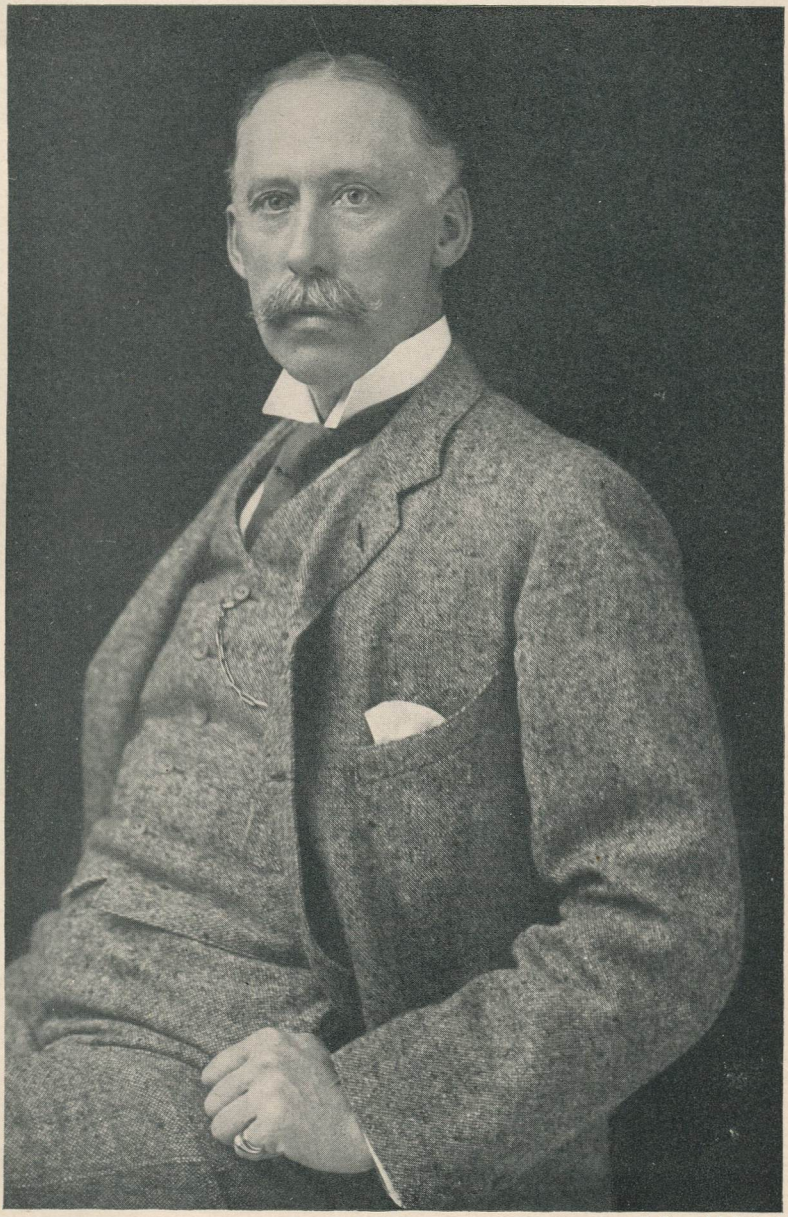
FORTY YEARS—
FORTY MILLIONS

The Career of

Frank A. Munsey



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FRANK ANDREW MUNSEY

FORTY YEARS—FORTY MILLIONS

The Career of

Frank A. Munsey

By

GEORGE BRITT

Illustrated With Photographs

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FOREWORD

THE LATE Gamaliel Bradford made a preliminary approach to writing a life of Munsey and gave it up.

He would not go on because, having been sought out and given access to the private papers after Munsey's death, having been assured a legitimate wage of some $10,000 for the job, he found that what was desired was eulogy. As Mrs. Bradford put it, "he felt that if he did it, he could not be untrammelled."

In this book I have labored under no such disadvantage. I have had neither the help nor the restraints which define an officially authorized life.

On the other hand, never having known Munsey by personal contact—a lacerating experience, often—I have written with an unbiased mind and no grudge in my heart. I don't think I could have endured working for him. But from a distance I can sympathize with him—lonesome and frostbitten, a killer who wanted to be a creator, surely as ironic a hero as ever stalked through a success story.

The method used here is a newspaper reporter's, not a historian's. My documents are the memories of the men who knew Munsey at first hand. My research largely was interviewing them and then verifying their words from other men and from the printed record in books, magazines and newspapers. The process was a revelation to me of the generosity of the men in the newspaper craft, and outside it as well, without whose help this data never could have been assembled.

Among those of greatest helpfulness I want to name Major John W. Fogler, Stuart Olivier, William Lincoln Palmer, John A. Hennessy, Arthur Brisbane, William M. Chenery, Walter Davenport, Kenneth Lord, the late H. J. Wright, Paul Patterson, Frank Hofer, Gordon Mackay and Frank Crowninshield. Others no less helpful asked that they be not quoted by name. And there were many others, more than I can list, some of whom are mentioned in the text, who made valuable contributions. I gratefully acknowledge my debt to them all.

I particularly thank Henry L. Stoddard for permission to quote from his rich original source-book of history, AS I KNEW THEM.

I had indispensable help from the library and files of the New York *World-Telegram,* and personally from Matthew Redding, head of the reference department. I received the most courteous coöperation from the libraries of the Boston *Globe,* the Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin* and *Public Ledger* and *Editor and Publisher,* from the New York Public Library, the Roosevelt Memorial Association, the Boston Public Library, the Philadelphia Free Library, the Baltimore Public Library, and the Library of Congress.

The figures on newspaper circulation are from the A.B.C. Reports and the old statistical department of the New York *Evening Post.*

G. B.

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Chapter I

THREE DINNERS

Mr. Munsey, the publisher, journeyed down to Washington to the President's dinner. He was traversing familiar ground, from New York through Philadelphia and Baltimore to the capital, for by this route only Boston remained untouched among those cities once linked in his peerless chain of newspapers. It was a way continuously stimulating to his memory—a *via dolorosa* of discarded hopes but nevertheless a triumphal way also, for in each of these cities like an emperor he had showered his money, had made his monumental gesture of money to burn, and he would not be forgotten soon.

The ordinary fellow traveler, stealing a glance, would have perceived in him at once a personage of large affairs and, furthermore, bustling about his affairs. He was a dry and brittle man without fancy touches. Yet there was a touch, too, or rather a line of quality, in the self-conscious mastery of his bearing and the surface built up as of his own native Maine granite. Austere and formal, he yielded to no impairment of his original restlessness and permitted no stoop to his broad shoulders.

Long ago in Paris his flavor had been caught in a word by Elinor Glyn. She chanced to meet alone on the boulevard Frank Crowninshield, then Mr. Munsey's European agent and traveling companion. Narrowing her green eyes she let fall the pungent inquiry, "And where is your weary gray wolf to-day?"

Mr. Munsey was a tall gaunt man with high forehead and

long equine face, thinning white hair, snow-white mustache neatly trimmed and twisted, quick bold blue eyes which many observers remembered as gray, concave cheeks a rosy red. He was immaculate, flawlessly turned out in stiff collar and gray business tweeds. His temperature was low. His handclasp was fishy and gave nothing.

"Chief," his nearest lieutenants called him when they ventured a familiarity, and that was the definition of him—a big Indian, a formidable lone hunter, ponderous under his wampum, with many a scalp at his belt. He strode forward as to the cadence of tom-toms. He spoke in deep and measured tones, borrowed somewhat from the Great Spirit.

In the ripeness of his life, the early ungainliness entirely polished away, Mr. Munsey looked every inch the part he had chosen for himself. He was a winner. He had grown up in America's greatest age of business, the flower of a lush culture which even yet endured without visible flaw to canker the perfection. Starting penniless, he had played his game hard, obeyed the rules, defied competitors and brought home a prodigious score.

Progress was his precept and guide. Repeatedly he had pulled down his barns and built greater, and now at seventy-one he still was indifferent to any siren whisper of, "Take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." Pleasures of such a character he always had rejected and still rejected. And yet he was a striking example of George Santayana's remark that "Idealism about work can hide an intense materialism about life."

He was surrounded now by trophies—dollars by the million, newspapers prospering and newspapers done to death by his hand but remembered still, magazines created by his pioneering and made to pay by his daring, grocery stores richly profitable, a hotel, a bank, skyscraping office buildings, estates and lands. He had been entertained by crowned kings, was a

knight of the French Legion of Honor, a philanthropist, an honorary doctor of laws and of letters. He might say with a tinge of wistfulness, as he did once, looking at the skyline in Fifth Avenue, "If I had devoted most of my time to real estate, I should now be one of America's richest men." Even so, he clinked with acquisitions. A genius for money, he cared for it mightily; he cared much more for its momentum, by which ever to push on toward his vague goal of things bigger and better.

Mr. Munsey liked to think that his greatest work, his newspapers, represented the same giant activity that Commodore Vanderbilt had performed among the railroads, by a process of mergers building up stronger lines, buying rivals wholesale, scrapping, consolidating, eliminating duplication, feeding the strong upon the resources of the weak or the weak upon the strong, killing whenever it became necessary, ignoring sentimentality, inducing a new point of view. Mr. Munsey's vision had recognized newspapers as just so many miles of rusty track. His romance was in the bold unification of a system and likewise in junking it again. He had made a contribution in his application of industrial principles; he had sped the day of efficient business overlordship in the newspaper shop.

For all his wealth, Mr. Munsey was a lonely man. Through the years he had gone without wife or partner, without even that bluff comradery which warmed other men and was their narcotic. Always he had been alone by temperament and choice, an outsider looking in, compelled jealously and sometimes plaintively to find different interests.

Just ahead now lay Christmas, black across his pathway, a lonely day. He set great store by Christmas as a gift-giving festival. Hundreds of names were on his list. He sent presents to them regularly. But when all the packages were off and the checks mailed, the day itself would descend upon him, a family

day overtaking the perpetual stranger and sending him out to hunt for such conviviality as he could command with his purse.

A bleak parched rock of a man, still the main currents had swirled near him. He had been whole-heartedly of his times, a conscious imitator and mirror. The actors in star rôles had been his close associates. . . . J. Pierpont Morgan, the money king, his inspiration. . . . Theodore Roosevelt, the flamboyant reformer, his hero. These two he adored in foggy idealism. They were the great antagonists of their day, but Munsey felt no struggle between this worship of God and Mammon. Both represented the obvious power which he admired. George W. Perkins, a Morgan partner, had been his friend of friends. . . . James Gordon Bennett the younger, master of the *Herald,* his model and guide. . . . Lord Northcliffe, his remote counterpart . . . all were gone. But still surviving was his rival of the early days, S. S. McClure, top among magazine editors.

Jaunting down to Washington alone now, Mr. Munsey kept the familiar companionship of his thoughts. He would have enjoyed the company of some person—banker, bus boy or pretty woman—to whom he might tell over again his life story, to himself a narrative of tireless fascination, "Forty years, forty failures, forty millions." He would seize a chance listener sometimes, as did the Ancient Mariner, and go through his story to the end in spite of struggle or indifference. A hoary legend at the *Sun* office, probably apocryphal, tells of an editor who listened to this recital for thirty-eight consecutive days, and on the thirty-ninth was honored by an invitation to dine with the Chief. He declined with an authentic plea of illness. He knew his limit.

This trip to Washington was an act of grace. Mr. Munsey wanted nothing from the White House any more. He stood so high he was called in now by Presidents when they wanted something from him. Harding once had asked him down for

the night to beg his support on joining the World Court. Sitting in the study with the President and George Harvey, then Ambassador, he had told both of them fiercely he'd see them in Hell before he'd help a scheme like that. Presidential invitations nowadays were either of that sort, bids for his influence, or else a recognition due him as a citizen.

Mr. Munsey remembered coming to the White House in the days of the genial McKinley, a man he understood and who made him feel appreciated in his burgeoning success . . . and Roosevelt, no one had spent more money or worked harder than himself to put the Bull Moose back in the White House . . . fat Taft he had little use for, he wouldn't have given him a job in his own business. . . . Wilson, a Virginia-born Democrat, bookman, a woozy radical to his way of thinking, very far removed from the State of Maine; no man more effective than himself, Frank Munsey, in turning the country against Wilson and his League of Nations. . . . Coolidge, now, came from New England, no figure of magnificence but a practical man; the Munsey papers had fought the soldiers' bonus, Coolidge vetoed it.

Nothing of consequence happened at this particular Presidential dinner which, incidentally, honored the cabinet and opened Washington's official social season. Nothing ever seemed to happen now for Mr. Munsey. However, the event was dutifully recorded the next day, December 4, 1925, in Mr. Munsey's New York *Sun* and his New York *Telegram.* All functions that he attended were "must" assignments on his newspapers.

And so one of the dispatches from Washington noted the "forty-eight guests, representing many millions and considerable prestige in politics, literature, the professions and society . . . seated around a great table in the White House state dining room according to their official and personal impor-

tance." An eye for fashions saw that bright colored chiffons were the prevailing mode. Mr. Munsey, himself, we may be sure, was appreciatively aware of the gold-plated Dolly Madison dinner service, fine old gold-framed table mirrors and epergnes, flowers and smilax. Later there was music, for which additional guests of lesser rank came in.

Grandeur and glitter, parties far more lavish than the President's, were no new thing to Mr. Munsey, but in his soul they retained significance. He was not jaded. Forty-three years before, when he emerged hungry and gaping into the city, he had been sure of what he wanted, and according to his breathless category it was "riches, power, position, the world, the great big world!"

The very thought of such things then was "one great, dizzy, dazzling, glorious intoxication."

Now he had possessed himself of every item. "However," as he said, "to do this successfully—to make the wheels go round—one must himself become a kind of human dynamo."

* * * * * *

The week after the President's dinner Frank Munsey sat at his big desk in his handsome, dark-panelled office on the top floor of his building, the windows looking out upon the treetops of City Hall Park. An oil painting of Theodore Roosevelt hung upon the wall, and also a portrait of himself. A globe stood within arm's reach, where he might turn it with a cosmic absent-mindedness as he talked. Red roses blossomed in a silver vase on the desk. A pretty secretary worked busily in the same room. It was a point with Munsey that his office girls should be pretty.

The integrity of all the world, to judge by his bearing, was concentrated in his own person. By telephone and conference with his staff, he personally directed his far-flung enterprises.

He gave crisp orders and expected swift response. If not, the whip was ready. He was a master of the chill insult. Few visitors came in without overhearing his barbs fall upon one, two, a dozen subordinates.

Into the office now was ushered George Henry Payne, a genial diplomatic politician, once secretary of the Roosevelt-for-President campaign, a man radiating the magnetism and assurance which Munsey coveted.

"There must be a great many men in this town," said Payne, breaking the ice, "who have known you a long time and liked you, who would enjoy the opportunity to shake your hand and say to you, 'Well done.' "

"What's that?"

"I say that many men feel a warmth and affection toward you. I know they do. And I think they would like a chance to express their feelings toward you."

Munsey was suspicious.

"I've never done anything for you," he said.

"You've been my friend. And besides that, we fought the battle of 1912 together."

"Yes, yes. Those were the days of glory."

"Well, Mr. Munsey, I came over to tell you that some of your friends want to give you a testimonial dinner. There's nothing unusual in a testimonial dinner. There's no catch or ulterior motive in it. There are many men of prominence who have known you a long time and men you have befriended who would like to do you this honor. But they knew your reticence and were afraid you wouldn't consent, so they sent me to ask you very sincerely to attend our dinner."

The hard man relaxed. He lowered his sharp eyes and leaned forward.

"Who could you get to a testimonial dinner for me?" he said. "But I'd like to have one. I've never had a dinner in New

York. It would please me very much. I appreciate the thought."

He was silent.

"Payne, come back and see me about it next week. I think if you wait a little while, perhaps, there might be an occasion that you could use as an excuse. There is a matter coming up, in the offing, but coming up, which would not make it such a strange thing, giving me a dinner. Just wait. Thank you and come back and see me about it next week."

So he spoke, and Payne departed. We may only surmise what Munsey expected. We do know, however, that at exactly this time, he was considering the purchase of the Chicago *Daily News,* another of the foremost newspapers of America to be added to his ownership for whatever purpose he might ordain.

Death had taken Victor F. Lawson, owner of the *News,* four months before, and the paper was for sale. Munsey had just visited Chicago to look over the property. Rumor said he had bid $10,000,000 for it. Its purchase would be, indeed, an event worth celebrating.

* * * * * *

It happened, furthermore, this same week, that Munsey invited Governor Alfred E. Smith to dinner in his rooms, the two of them alone.

Munsey lived at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel. He had a huge living room carefully and substantially furnished in Louis XV style—American antiques he despised, for he suspected them of being counterfeit—a room deep with Oriental rugs, with a wide marble fireplace upon which he kept a log fire burning.

A conversational evening at home was the entertainment he had come to enjoy most. And he liked Al Smith. Having overcome a prejudice of his humble origin and Tammany asso-

ciations, he admitted him as a personal friend in high favor. Smith was a practical, self-made, first-class man. Munsey remained a stiff Republican at elections, but mid-season he gave the Governor valuable support.

Munsey dressed formally for a dinner, invariably when having company, usually also when alone. He ordered a good dinner for the Governor. It was Friday and they ate fish. Then, in deep chairs on either side of the fire, they talked until late.

Saturday morning Munsey called Frank Hofer, the waiter who regularly served him.

"Frank, the Governor likes whisky so well, I want you to go downstairs in the cellar to my storeroom and get out three quarts of Scotch and three of rye. Send them over to him with my compliments."

Later that day, Saturday, he complained of indigestion. "It's that fish you ate," said Frank Hofer.

"Yes, the fish," said Munsey, making a little joke. "It didn't hurt the Governor because he drank so much. The fish just swam around in him and was all right."

The waiter went down to the drugstore and got a laxative, and the lone millionaire swallowed it. But it was not indigestion ailing him. It was appendicitis. He went to the hospital on Sunday, was operated upon immediately. Ten days later, after great and unusual suffering, he died. The country was booming amidst the Coolidge prosperity and Munsey's properties were in splendid order. He escaped by three days the loneliness of Christmas, but he never attained his testimonial dinner.

Chapter II

THE RIPENED PERSONAGE

"Poor dear Frank!" Colonel Theodore Roosevelt used to exclaim in these feverish spring days of 1912 when Munsey was one of his innermost circle, along with George Perkins, Henry L. Stoddard and W. L. Ward, motoring down to Oyster Bay several times a week to talk over their strategy and golden dreams and bitter hates as they fought the renomination of President Taft.

The Colonel hoped frequently that "poor dear Frank" would be too busy in town to get away. Munsey irritated him. Under heavy obligations for his devotion and financial support, Colonel Roosevelt still was unable to enjoy his company. His warm temperament and Munsey's cold one were too far apart. But Colonel Roosevelt always met him on equal terms and found it no trouble to overawe him—being almost the only man of moderate fortune who could, since Munsey as a rule yielded no precedence except to the few who were richer than he.

A great ice barrier kept men away from Munsey, a defense against intrusion but hopeless for himself when he had to break out. Assembling a distinguished guest list for a formal Munsey dinner would have been no great feat. Finding an hour's real companionship for him was a task, and there was many an experience to evidence the fact.

A Wall Street lawyer came upon him in Paris one evening, alone at the doorway of the Ritz-Carlton, gazing into distance

with that sad scowl which almost represented repose on his face.

"Having a good time, Frank?" said the lawyer. Munsey shook his head.

"Did you ever have a good time? Come on with me and my crowd this evening and we'll show you Paris."

They went to a cabaret in Montmartre, small, intimate and lively, and were installed at a choice front row table. Wine flowed, conversation brightened and coaxing music was played. Munsey sat quietly in his chair alongside the dance floor. The principal danseuse, with sure instinct for a moneyed man, made her play. Her eyes and smiles were all for him, she danced nearer, finally stepped directly up to him and, with a bold kick, described an arc immediately over his head.

Munsey, without changing expression, reached into his vest pocket and tossed a gold piece toward her on to the floor.

The danseuse delightedly ran for the money, then hurried back, kicked above his head again. Another coin jingled upon the floor. She came back again and again, a dozen times perhaps, her agile legs in a rhythmic flutter above his head, and Munsey sat frozen, not looking up, responding only by reaching each time for another coin and tossing it upon the floor.

And this ends the story, because absolutely nothing else happened. Munsey made no other response.

Irvin S. Cobb once visited the *Sun* building to see Bob Davis, the invaluable large-hearted editor who directed Munsey's magazines for more than twenty years. Even Davis moderated his joviality in the presence of his employer, but he got along. Davis was in Munsey's office when Cobb was announced, and Munsey had him ushered in. He wanted to meet him. First, the two friends joyously swore and pounded each other on the shoulder. Then came the presentation to Munsey, and Cobb

departed. Munsey sighed to Davis, "I'd give anything if I could express myself spontaneously as you and Cobb do."

But bright and tripping words stuck in his throat. He spoke words that were heavy.

A story has come down from early in Munsey's career, before success, which would have been equally typical at any stage. He was buying the work of a promising illustrator with whom he wished a better acquaintance.

He invited him to dinner and afterward the two young men sat together in a hotel lobby until conversation ran dry. Then Munsey had a thought, "Would you like to see me ride a horse?"

The guest was agreeable and they went over to Durland's Academy. There the artist was given a seat beside the ring, with an excellent view and undisturbed leisure for thought, while Munsey mounted a horse alone and rode solemnly around and around the tanbark.

His personal triumphs were those of frigid self-possession. Arriving home from Europe one summer, he was met at Quarantine early in the morning by one of his own reporters sent on board with the regular ship news men. The reporter went directly to Munsey's cabin, and the valet answering his knock, being told he was from the *Press,* threw open the door and bade him enter.

The visitor thereupon discovered his employer in the process of dressing, just stepping into his trousers, while around his chin, the mustache absurdly protruding, was strapped a rubber mask for the treatment of wrinkles and complexion. The reporter halted in embarrassment, but Munsey was not feazed.

"Step outside, Mr. Bond," he commanded severely. "Wait for me outside. I will see you when I am ready."

Not until the door clicked behind him did the reporter hear

the master's voice upraised within, angrily lashing the valet's stupidity.

Munsey was a hard man, to himself included.

* * * * * *

The explorer's reason for putting on flannels and a fur coat and studying this arctic personality is that, all in all and underneath the surface, Munsey exemplified very completely the self-made success fostered by his native soil.

He was wholly American, alike in his old colonial blood and in his mind's satisfaction with the basic symbols of the flag and the dollar mark.

His life pattern was the favorite plot of rags to riches. His ideals were shared by millions of his fellow-citizens, his accomplishments home-grown and local, his virtues those of the copy book in the little red schoolhouse.

In Munsey were to be seen an extraordinary number of those qualities considered most characteristically American. He had a knack for mechanical gadgetry, was a pioneer automobilist and one of the very early passengers in an airplane. He craved things modern and up-to-date. His thought was practical as dynamite. He was a man who got things done, a pep-talker, a go-getter, a bit of a show-off. He craved things big and expensive. He maintained his rugged individualism at any cost. The American quality which he did not have was a sense of humor.

Few persons ever paid the price of success across the counter in plainer sight than Munsey. To it he gave all of his youth, and although he sought diligently to compensate for it in the gray years, youthfulness forever eluded him. At forty he joined the leisure class. A single phase of his activity then, his course among the New York newspapers, was a matchless demonstra-

tion of Veblen's theory, conspicuous waste. But he never enjoyed his leisure.

Munsey's wild, fantastic, lyric eccentricity was personal to himself, but his life was a type. In his very starkness he stands out from among others who were better able to throw bright-colored draperies around their similar lives. By almost superhuman effort he achieved the most that materialism had to offer, only to sense finally that it was not enough. Strive as he might, he could grasp nothing beyond.

* * * * * *

It was Frank Munsey's ambition to be thought of and remembered as a newspaper man. That wish came true. Such fame of his as lingers on in the afterglow of his journalism—the one venture for which he was least talented, in which he encountered the most stubborn disappointments, by which he aroused a countless host of ill-wishers. Newspaper men as a class cursed Munsey's name while he lived and were glad when he died.

By his newspaper career he will be judged, for that translated him from a man of money into a shaper of life in his time. There he struck those characteristic blows of his, equally unlike those of other business men and other publishers, which set him apart from every rival.

Munsey owned eighteen newspapers. Some were cut off at once by the process of merger, some declined and expired in his hands, a few he sold, more than half went to death because of his touch.

But these newspapers nevertheless imparted something of their eminence to him. Before he identified himself with them he had lived a busy life and *Munsey's Magazine* was a household word, but he remained little more than just another

climbing self-made newly-rich business man, an amateur in politics and a negligible figure in society. His ownership of the *Sun* and of the *Herald* at the end and climax of his career constituted an item for the national chronicle.

His kingdom of newspapers, with its tributary provinces of magazines and grocery stores, he ruled for a dozen years from a flamboyant chamber on the eighteenth floor of the Flatiron Building in New York. That skyscraper, in 1905 when he moved in, was the best-known address in America. Munsey sat in a long, dim room at the prow of the triangular building. From the door at the wide end, all lines converged upon his desk directly in the apex, against the windows, upraised upon a red-carpeted dais—a huge mahogany desk habitually swept clean save for telephones and a row of push buttons. The visitor admitted to the presence must walk down a vista of exaggerated distance the length of the room, the light in his eyes, while from above he was inspected by a silhouette, inscrutable, silent and motionless. During his career, Munsey had many offices, but none so expressive as his old throne room in the Flatiron.

Here were stage properties for editorship just as a dude ranchman might look his part after buying a sombrero and six-shooter. But Munsey never learned to ride his way surely among the prairie-dog holes and sandstorms of the breaking news; to lasso, throw and tie the significant event while it was young and kicking. He remained to the end a dude journalist, owning a herd, dressed for the range, talking the language but not of much use around the outfit.

However, in his editorial trappings he proceeded to exercise authority. In some fields he would acknowledge ignorance. The law, he often said, was Greek to him, so lawyers found him reasonable and considerate. But in newspaper publishing

he bowed to no one. He was forever reaching over the shoulders of his editors, baffling and infuriating them, driving them to tears and to drink.

Munsey was hated because of his unfortunate personality, his autocratic manner, the effect of his lumbering blows; further, for a certain crass mental attitude. He saw himself only dimly, if at all, as the trustee of great public institutions. He was the owner of the property.

With Munsey actively working out his own destiny, newspaper work was like tending the vineyard upon a volcano's slope.

"What kind of man is Munsey?"

A man spoke from experience, "He's the kind that you never know what he's going to do to-morrow, but you know damned well he's going to do something."

As an employer he was one of the most trying human beings who ever lived. He dominated most men, and those he dominated he despised, while those who refused to be dependent he pursued with a puzzled esteem. The formula for getting on with Munsey was to be either a doormat or a fighter. With his vast business organization he was forced to lean upon others, and the most useful he rewarded generously. But they ran a great risk of being warped into a barren cynicism or dehydrated into juiceless shells of acquiescence. Small resisters quit with a popping of fireworks. Munsey was not a leader but a steam roller.

However, he had an eye for ability. Many of the best in their day worked for him. He kept and traveled with an executive staff of quality, a cabinet whose advice he loved to receive and disregard, such men as W. T. Dewart, R. H. Titherington, E. J. Ridgway, Robert H. Davis, Matthew White, Jr., and Keats Speed.

When Munsey died, the newspapers carried reams of polite

comment, not omitting the cryptic lines from Senator George H. Moses, "His death is as great a loss to the country as to his profession," but it remained for William Allen White to pull the cork on resentment and win the cheers of thousands with his sparkling brevity:

> Frank Munsey, the great publisher, is dead.
>
> Frank Munsey contributed to the journalism of his day the talent of a meat packer, the morals of a money changer and the manners of an undertaker. He and his kind have about succeeded in transforming a once-noble profession into an 8 per cent security.
>
> May he rest in trust.

* * * * * *

Were there any persons at all who liked Munsey? Of course there were. Some of his upper ranking employees enjoyed a sincere friendship with him. Ridgway and Titherington wrote utterly convincing tributes of grief after his death. Stuart Olivier preserved the intimate human memory of coming upon him once as he was packing for a trip, sitting on the floor, his finger thrust through a hole in his sock, saying quizzically, "Stuart, it's Hell to be a bachelor." Charles M. Schwab, Will H. Hays and Louis Sherry, to name but a few, held him in affectionate regard.

Munsey was capable sometimes of a fine loyalty. One of his Washington *Times* reporters, youthful and rash, wrote a sharp attack upon a member of Congress, drawing from the victim an insulting reply upon the floor of the House. Immediately upon adjournment the reporter entered the chamber to engage the member in a fist fight, and was arrested.

The executives in Washington, fearing the Chief would be shocked by a brawl, immediately telephoned to give him a sympathetic first-hand account of what had happened.

"We must stand by our young man," Munsey pontificated. "Has he a lawyer? Be sure he has the best legal talent. Spare no expense. And go after that Congressman in our editorial columns until he apologizes. We mustn't let our young man be unsupported."

One man was stricken ill within a few weeks after coming to the *Herald.* Munsey had him placed in a hospital's most expensive room, called in specialists, paid all bills and at his death earnestly besought the family to let him meet the funeral expenses.

J. Edwin Murphy, managing editor of the New York *Press,* similarly became ill in his hotel almost as soon as he arrived in New York. Munsey took charge. He commandeered the hotel physician, requiring him to drop all other calls for the sake of Murphy. He sent out for a second physician, then for his own personal physician, then for a famous specialist. Almost by his own dogged will, he refused to permit Murphy to die. But within two years Murphy was so badgered and beset that he leaped at the chance to go to the Washington *Times.*

All his papers had strict rules against smoking, most often honored in the breach, but a constant irritation to the staffs. On the old *Press* there was a spy system of elevator boys and doormen, subsidized by baseball tickets, who shouted "Gas Alarm" when the owner approached. At the signal, pipes and cigarettes were stamped out, windows thrown up and the stage set for the grave duty of receiving Mr. Munsey.

On election night, 1916, Munsey had the grace to deal with the smoke problem at the *Sun* with a flash of human intelligence. The entire staff, presuming on excitement and overwork, was puffing contentedly over the task of getting out extra editions, making the atmosphere blue with their smoke, when Munsey stepped through the door. The effect was practical

mutiny. Everyone ignored him, kept on smoking. For a moment Munsey stood ill at ease, then with a flourish he took out a gold case and lighted a cigarette himself.

Munsey's strength was not in men but in money; he had been selected providentially, he felt, to be rich. He would say, "It is inconceivable that I should die poor. Destiny has carved a path for me. I have got to be rich, man, and you to be poor. I am like Rockefeller."

When the will of Lord Northcliffe was made public, an editorial writer suggested it as a subject.

"Mr. Adam, are you a very rich man?" he inquired.

"No, Mr. Munsey, you know I am not."

"Well, this is a matter about which only a very rich man can write with understanding, and if anything is written about Lord Northcliffe's will, I will do it myself."

His good deeds most often were expressed in terms of money, and in that medium he possessed a poignant eloquence. Among his papers he held the notes of many a newspaper man who had gone to him in emergencies and received help, notes which he never pressed for collection.

He indulged in violent outbursts of generosity, some of them certainly of a penitential nature. When he humiliated or petulantly discharged an employee, often his idea of an apology was to send a check.

Never inclined to waste money on a mediocrity, he was free-handed toward the men he valued. Star reporters were on his roster for gifts. A rather minor city editor regularly received an annual check for $1,000. To Louis Seibold, after some performance which pleased him, more than once he said, "Add two hundred dollars to your expense account."

He had a liking for George A. Brakeley, Sunday editor of the *Sun,* later vice-president of the University of Pennsylvania. The worry in Brakeley's life in those days came not from

Munsey but from William C. Rieck, the former owner, who continued with the paper.

"Has Rieck been bothering you again?" Munsey stormed to him. "Don't pay any attention to him. Don't do anything he tells you." And again, "Mr. Brakeley, you have been recommended by Mr. Wardman for an increase in salary from eighty to ninety dollars a week. Mr. Rieck says your salary should remain at its present figure. Accordingly, I am making it a hundred a week."

One editorial writer on the *Sun,* a veteran with the paper long before Munsey bought it, was receiving a salary of more than $5,000 a year, a sum which Munsey considered excessive. It distressed him, and for months he criticized and belabored the man to distraction, finally driving him to resign. Then to a favorite who remained behind he remarked, "I let him go and gave him ten thousand dollars. Don't you think that was a generous way to dispose of the matter?"

There is another story of a man who fell ill and was ordered to a Western sanitarium. He remained a year, while his salary was sent him and his bills were paid. Then he wrote that he was well enough to return to work.

"I remember that man," said Munsey. "I can't stand him. Send him a year's salary and have him find a job somewhere else."

He made a friend of Albert Keller, manager of the Ritz-Carlton. Once or twice a week the millionaire would telephone to the hotel office, "What are you doing this evening, Albert? Come up. I want to talk."

He invested in Keller's company to help build the Ritz-Carlton at Atlantic City, and shortly before his death Keller told him that temporarily he needed an additional $25,000. "All right, Albert," he said, "I'll give it to you. Anything you want." The loan was never made, but during his illness he re-

membered and carefully left instructions for Keller to be given it if he wished. He also directed that the hotel servants should receive their Christmas money as usual.

* * * * * *

In Munsey's New York apartment, above the piano hung an oil painting of a beautiful blonde girl. He was fond of pointing her out to visitors and making his pleasantry, "I've lived with that girl for twenty-five years."

It would be an easy explanation to say that he had this picture blonde and no other woman in his life. There was much of the old maid in him. He was cast temperamentally for a virginal rôle. But to attach all his oddities to his bachelorhood would be an over-simplification.

Women of all classes, indeed, were highly important to him at all periods, from his beloved mother to Mrs. Whitelaw Reid, who symbolized his final defeat when he sold the *Herald*.

It was Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish who first recognized him as an eligible and sponsored him in society, trying upon him her wiles as a match-maker. Munsey once sent to Washington for his star political writer, Judson C. Welliver, presumably for a conference. Arriving in New York, Welliver was asked to write very carefully and elaborately an answer to a note from Mrs. Fish. That was all. Apparently it was successful, for at their next meeting Munsey said approvingly, "You ought to be my secretary."

Why did Munsey never marry? The question arose continually in the rumors that he was to be married. He was reported engaged to Miss Katherine Elkins, heroine of a famous international romance; to the beautiful Mrs. Rita d'Acosta Stokes Lydig; to Fritzi Scheff, the actress; to Mrs. Edward H. Coy, divorced wife of "Ted" Coy, the football player, the latest young woman to whom he was attentive, to whom he left

$50,000 in his will. To Mrs. Coy, probably, he was the most devoted, for the longest time.

Why didn't he marry? His own answer was, "When I was young I was too busy. Now that I am old, they would only marry me for my money."

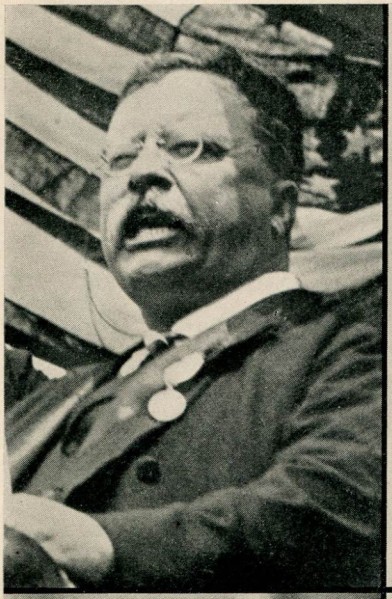
He remained the weary gray wolf of Elinor Glyn's phrase. Yet he developed an engaging punctilio. No one could escort a lady to her carriage more gracefully. He arranged splendid entertainments for the young daughters of his friends, and liked to invite women of wit and distinction to dinner. To many of them, without suspicion of scandal, he gave expensive presents. Often the favored recipients would meet and compare their gifts, finding that each had been treated with exact equality, all at one period receiving fans, or cigarette cases, or jeweled pins, identical and bought by the dozen by the systematic bachelor.

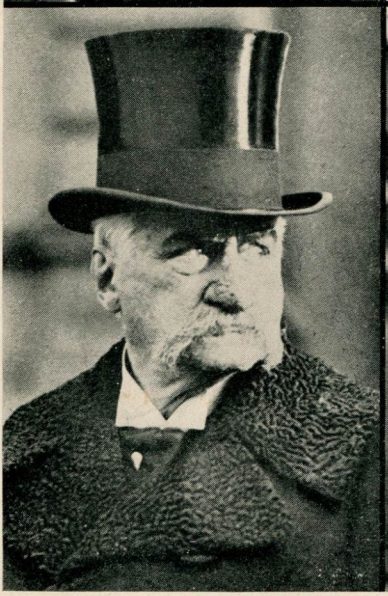
For the friendship of women he was genuinely eager, sometimes coming out with the surprising appeal, "Will you do me a favor, please? I want you to call me Frank."

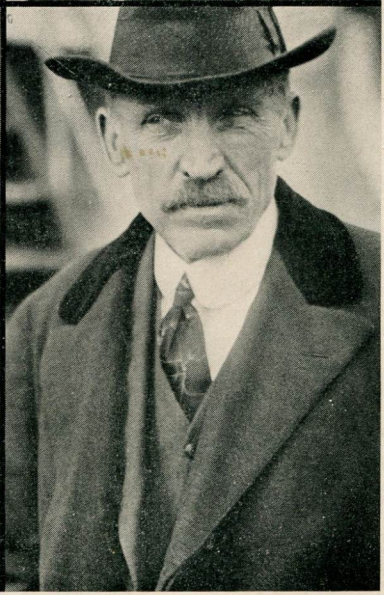
The attention of society women flattered him. Often at the *Sun* he would interrupt an editorial conference in his office for a quarter of an hour's telephone gallantry with some dowager or débutante while his bored staff sat listening.

Munsey liked also to invite to his apartment chance acquaintances among working girls, provided they were young, pretty and mannerly. He had dinner served, listened gravely to their opinions and sent them away early with a present of money or a small piece of jewelry. He confessed that they often disappointed him, "Girls don't want you to make anything out of them. As soon as you pay them any attention they always say, 'Oh, give me $5,000 or $10,000. I want to go to Paris.' They don't know the value of a dollar."

The old-maidish Munsey on one occasion invited Frank Crowninshield and two young women writers to tea at







THEODORE ROOSEVELT

J PIERPONT MORGAN

GEORGE W PERKINS

S. S. MCCLURE

MRS. STUYVESANT FISH
© Marceau
DON MARQUIS

LOUIS SHERRY
ROBERT H. DAVIS

Sherry's. Later he showed them his quarters, leading them all into his bedroom, a heavily furnished sombre chamber with a high, wide, square bed covered with a lace spread.

One of the young women, a sprightly prankish creature, seeking to enliven a party which had been none too gay, skipped across the room, shouted, "So now I'm in the bachelor's bed," and leaped into the very middle of it.

She landed with a thud, for Munsey was not amused. His face lengthened. He said not a word. The culprit picked herself up and the whole party retreated into the living room. But Munsey tarried behind and patted the mattress into shape again and smoothed the bedspread, lest any chambermaid misunderstand.

Before the war Munsey, one summer in Paris, was interested in a certain Princess. One day a friend at breakfast found him silent. With apologies, after a while Munsey brought out a letter and asked advice. It was from the Princess, who was in distress. She had a weakness for speculation on the Bourse, and after two previous disasters had promised her husband never to do it again. But she had yielded to what seemed a certainty and once more had lost, and now her brokers were pressing for cash, threatening to go to her husband, and her husband was a violent man, and she saw no course but to ask her dear good friend Mr. Munsey for a loan. The amount was about $6,000.

"Well, if you like her so much, give her the money," said the friend, "or else say no, and end it all."

"I had thought of a middle course," said Munsey.

He proposed to say that loans often destroyed friendships, but since he was sympathetic he would like to make her a modest gift. He would advise her that business men were reasonable if given a partial payment on debts, and he thought his gift would enable her to postpone any further demands.

The friend agreed, the letter was written, and with it was sent a check for $2,500. The response was silence.

Three evenings later, Munsey and his friend were dining together on the balcony at the Ritz and noticed a most distinguished company in the garden below. There were bearded old King Leopold II of the Belgians, the King of Portugal, the Grand Duke Nicholas of Russia, the Crown Prince of Greece and others. Munsey inquired who was giving the party?

"Ah, the Princess!" said the waiter. Munsey looked hurt.

"The waiter is wrong," his friend put in. "It isn't the Princess. The one who is giving that party is yourself."

The Princess now looked up and recognized Munsey, and a few minutes later a waiter brought a note of explanation, and wouldn't he join the party? Munsey begged to be excused.

Next morning came a more studied letter. The Princess had hesitated to accept his wonderful act of friendship, but the brokers were so insistent, she would. However, it was only a loan. And—the Princess added in gratitude—her dear benefactor stood first of all men in her affections, she was his slave, and if there was anything at all she could give him in return, however great it might be, whatever he might desire, she could never say "No."

Munsey's friend exploded into a tirade, specific and practical, lewd and profane.

"No, no," said Munsey. "You do her an injustice. That is just her extravagant expression. I don't doubt her integrity for a moment. She is a Princess."

* * * * * *

No man of small dimensions could have sustained the self-indulgences which were Frank Munsey's.

He had magnitude. His motions whether of pettiness or

grandeur were exaggerated; his indignation over a postage stamp dropped on the floor was as personal as scuttling a dozen newspapers. His casual gesture was to the tune of forty million dollars.

When he erected the Munsey Building in Baltimore, although never visiting Baltimore until it was completed, he gave every detail his closest attention. Samples of the materials, down to the smallest tile and fixture, were submitted for his inspection in advance. At last he went to see it. As he stepped across the threshold, he pointed to the marble wainscoting in the lobby and corridor. It was not the same, he said, as the sample.

"It is the identical marble," the architect protested. "Maybe the grain in these larger slabs appears different from that little piece you saw. But it is the same, I assure you."

"It will have to be ripped out and the right marble put in."

"But Mr. Munsey, no court would sustain you, that is certain. You would have no action against the contractor on a claim that a different marble was substituted."

"No one said anything about a lawsuit," said the owner. "I merely remarked that this was not the marble I ordered. I want it taken out, all over the building, and the right marble put in."

The bill was $96,000.

During his lifetime Munsey saw, approved and assisted a great change in newspaper shops. Cyclonic attics with desks gerrymandered into disorderly clusters for sulphurous editors were supplanted by modern city rooms as regimented as a real estate office. He had a personal passion for neatness. To his same Munsey Building in Baltimore he went one Sunday morning, having telegraphed to his editor that he wished to see him early for important discussions. As he passed the

paper's advertising department he closed an eye and sighted, then paused. He pushed a desk slightly to one side. Then he began pacing off distances. With his editor's help he lifted and shoved desks into mathematical lines. He made diagrams on paper and revised them. After luncheon he hurried back to work. When he had to leave for his train late in the afternoon, no desk was more than six inches from its starting point, but Munsey was radiant with accomplishment.

To his own mind he was a better architect than the masters. For four or five years at Garondah, his estate in the Adirondacks, he kept a resident architect, advising him daily by telephone. A regular recurrent guest never need sleep twice in the same room, for the whole wing would have been torn down between visits. Munsey's friend, Stoddard, gave an explanation for this stir, which included levelling hills and replanting forest trees, by quoting his saying that it was done "to keep things moving around here." Without him, no doubt about it, many a workman would have been idle.

"What if his fooling around does cost $5,000 or $10,000 a month?" remarked one of his New York executives. "It's just chicken feed to him. It keeps him happy, so he doesn't put in his finger so much at the office."

One of his out-of-town editors, summoned in a rush to New York for conference, found himself detailed outside the Chief's door all morning, then kept waiting all afternoon until four o'clock. Finally he was admitted to find Munsey harassed and perspiring, the room piled up with samples of wood, stone and brick.

"I've had a terrible day," he complained. "I am building a house for my sister at Lewiston, Maine. I have been trying to decide whether the base board of the bookcase shall be four inches high or six inches. It looks better at four inches, but that would make it possible for a careless person to tilt up his

toes and cause a stain above the base board. However, I think now I have solved the problem to my satisfaction."

When Munsey bought his last automobile, he gave his assent only after weeks of try-outs, consultations, sending the car back to the factory for rebuilding, sending it back again, until he achieved what was, for his own balance and rhythm, the perfect car. The springs, he insisted, should be more rigid. "I do not wish as I grow older to become soft," he said. "I want the sensation to be the same as when I was a young man and rode a buckboard."

Visiting his friends he would outline the complete rearrangement of their houses and grounds—in between specifications for the upbringing of their children. He blandly sketched Mediterranean cruises, with exact advice as to hotels and foreign exchange, to penniless employees who had remarked that they were starting for Coney Island.

He pinched pennies, squandered millions. He haunted his offices to turn off lights not in use, and once disturbing the desk of a belligerent newcomer who didn't recognize him, he was soundly scolded and retreated with apologies.

Of suits, jewels and accessories he was lavish, rotating without special favoritism through all his sets of watches, cuff-links, shirt studs and cigarette cases. A wondering question came often to the eyes of his valet, amazed that a farm boy in one lifetime could attain such fastidiousness. A whim of his was that the bottom seam of his underwear, around the edge of his drawers, was uncomfortable; he had his garments tailored with the seam turned outward instead of in. His valet daily pressed his shoelaces with an iron, to keep them unwrinkled. For his Long Island estate he had towels with his name woven in the fabric in the design of his signature.

Yet Munsey's taste inclined in part to the homely. In traveling he used a single Pullman berth, protesting that a compart-

ment was extravagant. In Maine he chose the day coach and ate at the station lunch counters, lest old neighbors think he was putting on airs.

He wore spectacles only for reading, keeping half-a-dozen pairs, horn-rimmed, scattered where he might need them. He owned few books, these in large sets, kept behind glass doors. He outgrew a mild interest in baseball, gave up even occasional golf, played no cards, kept no pets, was a frequent first nighter at the theater, considered music dismal but the opera a social decoration. His diversion was Europe in summer, Carlsbad for the cure, the Ritz in Paris. He never learned either German or French.

A food faddist, he was an abstemious eater and drinker. Ridgway once noticed in surprise that he was having a sip before dinner.

"For your appetite?"

"Yes, I have been trying to smuggle food in all summer."

Munsey shaved himself with an old-fashioned straight-edge razor. He slept not in pajamas but in a long white linen night-shirt.

Every afternoon before dinner he took a brief nap. "My cocktail," he called it. And for this he undressed as if for the night. His valet was curious that he should disrobe for so few minutes of sleep.

"I do it," explained Munsey, "because Napoleon always did. Then he would get up with renewed vigor and vitality."

* * * * * *

Concrete fact was the grist of Munsey's mind. He was quick at figures, carried voluminous schedules of advertising rates in his head, had an excellent memory for detail, was up to any genius in capacity for taking pains.

He believed in his mind as a separate entity, habitually trust-

ing his subconscious to work while he left it alone. He referred to it impersonally, "I'll put the mind to it." It was a mind that sped along none of the lovely elliptical curves of analytics; its progression was entirely arithmetical. It moved forcefully according to a few principles. It delighted in asking poser questions, throwing responsibility upon the other fellow, but not in working out the answers.

In conversation, Munsey was a poor listener, appearing so obsessed with himself that he was impervious as a duck to what anyone else had to say. Flights of fancy left him on the ground, intangible and æsthetic appeal could not hold his attention a moment, subtlety was wasted on him. He laughed little.

Once in a rage he sent for the managing editor of the *Sun* and pointed to a flippant headline over a paragraph from Paris.

"Chenery, do you want to wreck my properties? Don't you know I own a paper in Paris and that this will alienate my friends there?"

"Why, Mr. Munsey, I can't imagine very many of them reading it, but in any event it seems to me a harmless bit of satire."

"Chenery," barked Munsey—heir to the sparkling *Sun* tradition of Charles A. Dana, "the front page of the *Sun* is no place for satire."

Even when Munsey intended to be funny, he could get small credit. No one expected fun from him, and the quality of his effort was deceptively prosy. Don Marquis of the *Evening Sun,* a cherished star, once stirred him to a mathematical pleasantry.

Columnist and owner happened to be riding up in the same elevator.

"Second floor," said Marquis. But the operator misunderstood and went past.

"I said second, not seven," said Marquis. Munsey looked over from his corner, smiling with his large teeth.

"Mr. Marquis, the operator misunderstood because you did not pronounce clearly. Because of that fault extra electricity will be consumed to carry you to the top floor and back, you will be occupying valuable space, you will be wasting time which the *Sun* is paying for and causing additional wear and tear on the building. I shall have the auditor compute the damage and deduct it from your salary."

"You're quite right, Mr. Munsey—and thank you for being so lenient."

Don Marquis told the story and added, "The old man winked at me, I grinned at him. But in five minutes the incident was being repeated around the building as further proof of Munsey's unreasonableness."

Munsey's mind was undisturbed by reading, for he did not indulge in it. He glanced at the headlines, usually stopped there. For his further information, secretaries read aloud to him. He received by ear, not by eye. Back in Augusta, Maine, as a youth, he was fond of Dickens—almost his last favorite author. He did admire the writings of Orison Swett Marden, the prolific specialist in homilies on success.

Beauty to Munsey could be represented as warmly by a column of figures, favorably significant, as by any other object. His restless search through the world, from the farm, to the city, across the ocean, was prompted by no hunger of the soul and led to not many spiritual fruits.

Such a matter-of-fact person could not be expected to respond to Eleanora Duse, and he need not be reproached on that score. On her unhappy final tour, Duse was a disappointment to many. At most, on that visit, she represented a haunting spirituality, shadow more than substance. But Munsey went to see her. The next morning he marched into the office of the man who had recommended her.

"Why did you send me to that damned thing?" he said.

"She's just a bunch of old rags and old bones. I stayed about ten minutes."

Munsey spoke his own mind often and clearly. The writing which appeared over his signature he penned himself. It had style. The march of troops was in its cadence. No one could read it and doubt its sincerity or doubt that it was uttered by a truthful man. And in the eager rationalizing of the work in hand, the platitudes, the weakness of bombast and the naïveté of hope always almost triumphant, no one could miss the distinctive flavor of the author's personality. He made a constant public demonstration of his will power, grinding out determination as from a machine.

Munsey loved to speak in large type on the front pages of his newspapers, solid cannonball editorials, aimed point-blank at "Mr. Citizen." From the haystack of his pronouncements, some of Munsey's staff gleaned a collection of aphorisms and reprinted them in large ornate type, each on its separate card, for the ranking executives. Framed and hung on the walls of their offices, these mottoes remained years later as clear windows through which the passer-by might look into the mind of Frank Munsey. One of them says:

> When one is up against it, there is virtue in doing something. Inactivity—just plain, hopeless drifting—is the limit of imbecility. In trying something new one has a chance. However remote that chance may be, it is a long way better than passive death.

And again:

> Conservatism and skepticism play their part in the world, but they don't blaze new paths or pull off victories. The mistakes of progress are much more worth while than the inertia of the sure thing."

The rich verbal anthology of Munsey anecdote runs in re-

markable consistency. The stories all might have been sliced from the same loaf. They show a single separate person, a lanky gray man of restless impulsive energy, seeking to amalgamate life's multifarious confusions into the simpler patterns of his own understanding, a dazed soul notwithstanding his boldness of manner, stalking forward alone, holding up conspicuously the jewel of his success but not sure what to do with it.

Chapter III

ACQUIRING A PAST

In late middle life, after he had feasted long at the table of wealth and power, Munsey turned to a new satisfaction in which he was encouraged by the precedent of many another plebeian elevated to greatness—the exciting and reassuring subject of genealogy.

His agents for a dozen years pursued ancestral names on both sides of the ocean and at last presented to him a family tree inferior to none, a tree in which the most rare and exotic shoots were grafted onto his original gnarled trunk, with many a name in bright-colored plumage nesting in the topmost branches, all supported by full and impressive documentation, which he published himself in a handsome volume, A MUNSEY-HOPKINS GENEALOGY. Not merely did the genealogists trace the family line but they collected the dust of ancestors from remote graveyards and brought them together in one Munsey burial plot. And also, as they discovered distant cousins in need, they were instructed to give money and to place them on a private list of regular pensioners. More than two dozen of these were maintained by Munsey.

Whatever Munsey might want or need, he had the money to pay for. It was no more strange to his mind that he should spend his money for a family than for a newspaper.

For this genealogical service he went to Dr. D. O. S. Lowell, who had been his boyhood teacher at Lisbon Falls, Maine, and

now was headmaster of the Roxbury Latin School, a man of learning, a devotee of the universal language, Esperanto, a contributor to the first issue of Munsey's first magazine, the old *Golden Argosy,* above all a friend with whom he kept up warm and lifelong ties. Working with Dr. Lowell was the expert genealogist, William Lincoln Palmer of Boston.

"Why do I engage you to study my ancestors?" Munsey said emphatically and a trifle defensively. "It is not that I care to join any of the historical societies like the 'Mayflower,' 'Colonial Wars,' 'Sons of the American Revolution,' and such things. I want to know my history as I would know the pedigree of a horse I was going to bet money on. I study myself for purely selfish reasons, to know the stuff that is in me, the inherited characteristics that I must either fight or improve. I believe that you can't get more out of a man than God Almighty put into him when he was born."

As the record began to take definite form he would say again, "Two streams are flowing through me; one strong, broad and at a full tide, the other petty, fanatical and diverted into cross channels."

Through the unusual relationship of this work, Palmer came to a personal friendship with Munsey such as few men on his payroll ever enjoyed. His status invited and required confidence. During the final illness of Munsey's father at Livermore Falls, Maine, Palmer was summoned there to collect family memories from him, and was with Munsey the night before the father's death. In a helpful letter he recalls:

"Mr. Munsey said to me, 'The doctors tell me he won't live twenty-four hours more. I feel nervous. Do you mind walking with me? I may walk you all night.' On that long tramp in the darkness, he poured out to me his opinions on religion,

philosophy, finance, mankind, with an intimacy he never had done before."

* * * * * *

Until these researches, Munsey knew little about his family past, perhaps less than the average man.

He was born, Frank Andrew Munsey, on August 21, 1854, on a Maine farm in what was called the Sandy River region, about two miles from the village of Mercer, about thirty miles north of Augusta, in a rather unprosperous part of the state, a pond-studded sandy rolling section between the wooded mountains and the sea. He was the fourth child among his parents' four daughters and two sons.

He knew that his father, Andrew Chauncey Munsey, a farmer, carpenter and worker with his hands, a veteran of the Twentieth Maine Regiment in the Civil War, had been born across the border in the Province of Quebec. There wasn't much more to tell about the Munseys, except that the name occurred not uncommonly in New England.

Always there had been a scarcity of money in the home. The elder Munsey had been unable even to join his other war comrades in the G. A. R. until his son was making money to give him. In later years the son urged him to move into a larger house and surround himself with greater comforts. As Palmer recalls, the old man answered with dignity:

"Frank, if it's just the same to you, I'll live on in this old house. I'll just have a cot in the kitchen as I always have had, and I'll cook my own food. That is what I am used to, and I like to live that way."

He knew that his mother's father, Grandfather Elisha Hopkins, a farmer "comfortably off," spoke lightly sometimes about being descended from the *Mayflower,* from Stephen Hopkins,

the merchant, one of an even dozen on the ship entitled to sign his name with a "Mr." He remembered that his mother, Mary Jane Merritt Hopkins Munsey, took the story seriously and wished she might know for certain she was a *Mayflower* descendant. But never had there been positive assurance.

Munsey's family interest, sentimentally, had been pretty much confined to his mother. He spoke of her often. Although feeling cramped and caged in Maine as a young man, "as a tiger yearning for the boundless freedom of the jungle," he did not come to New York so long as she lived. Doubtless he would have left Maine in time anyway, but he tarried. She died in August, 1882. He started out in September. Nearly half a century afterward he wrote of her with engaging tenderness: "My mother's soul craved all that was best in life. God gave her imagination and ambition—not frivolous ambition, but the kind that rang true to her Puritan ancestry—the ambition that made New England the dominating and leavening force of all America and the inspiration of the world. God gave her, too, a strong religious nature and the instincts and character of the true woman, qualities that made her the devoted, loyal, and helpful wife and the loving, thoughtful mother, able, resourceful, an inspiration to husband and children alike; self-sacrificing, patient, sunny."

His father lived on. He was more than a year younger than Mrs. Munsey. Fifteen months after her death he married a widow and survived until almost eighty-six, dying in 1907. There was no deep interest between son and father. Munsey's old acquaintances recall that in his conversational references he sometimes even expressed wonder that such a mediocrity as his father should have produced a son so unusual.

The old man in his turn never thought Frank would amount to much. His hopes, he once admitted to a reporter from the

Lewiston *Journal,* had leaned to Frank's younger brother Willie, his favorite, but Willie died in boyhood.

Munsey's father married at twenty-six. Starting poor in a backwoods community, he had saved no money beforehand, and with a wife and regularly increasing family he never was able to get ahead. "How far my father had progressed . . . I do not know," the son wrote in his introduction to the GENEALOGY, "but I do know that marriage put an end to it. . . . He could embark on no venture, could take no chances, and so he lived out his days and died without knowing—save for his own consciousness—the quality of the faculties he had in him."

The father married early and again late, and got nowhere. The son never married.

Was this avoidance due to his father's example before his eyes? Not unlikely, the memory caused him to hesitate, and delay was final. He gave himself to success, which became more important than any woman.

The son, writing in the GENEALOGY, contrasted his parents: "My mother in a womanly way had a well-defined and positive individuality; my father had a much stronger, more definite, more positive individuality. My mother was conventional in viewpoint and gracious in bearing; my father, while not ungracious, was rugged, clean-cut and of the type that hews straight to the line. He was not a round-cornered man; he was distinctly a square-cornered man, who stood rigidly for square-cornered honesty and square-cornered uprightness. Nothing so annoyed him as pretense and hypocrisy. Halfway-right things were not right at all in his eyes. His was a critical, painstaking, analytical nature—but withal a sympathetic, generous, tender nature. He had in him little of the spirit of compromise. The best within his means was the only thing he would tolerate. It

did not make him unhappy to go without the things he would have liked to have. He preferred this to any compromise with his well-defined taste, and in the matter of friendships the same spirit ruled him, though he loved people and had essentially a social nature."

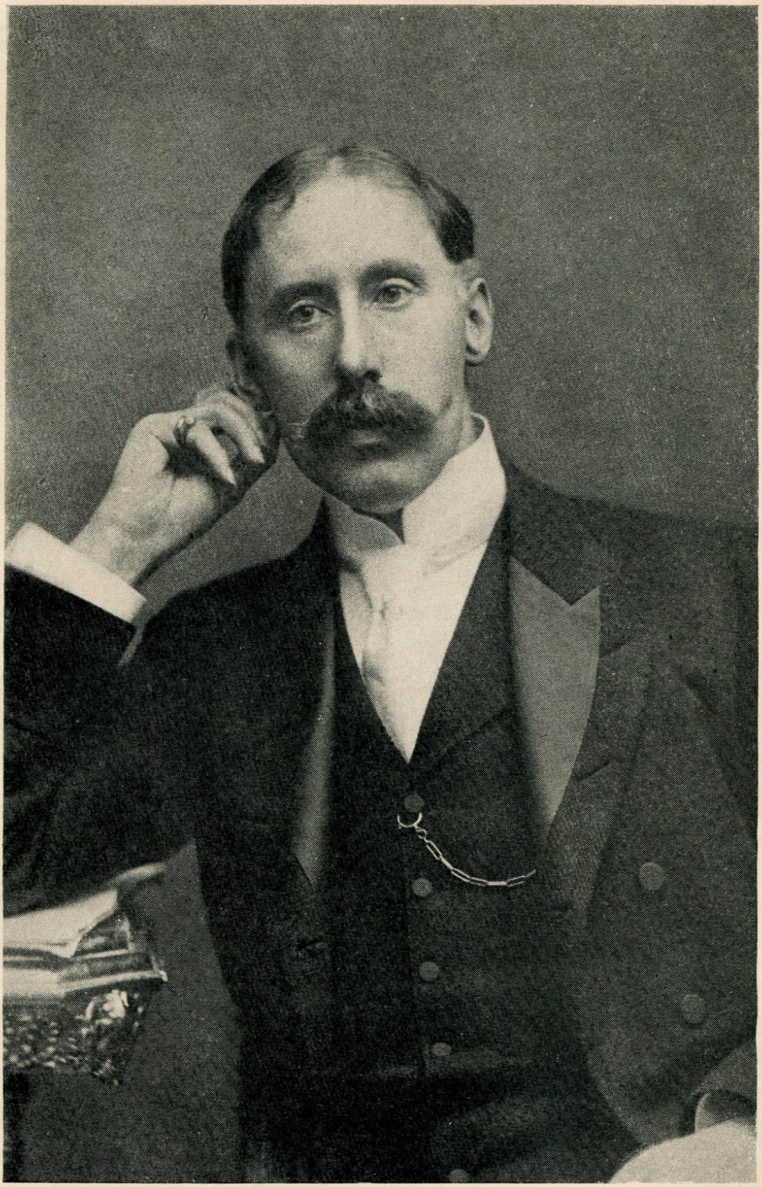
* * * * * *

Such were Frank Munsey's family memories, and they were almost the entire knowledge he had concerning his ancestry, when he undertook the genealogy. He had no crest, no family tree, yet he had accomplished in his own right far more than most men. In his fifties then, already possessed of everything else, he remembered his mother's interest in the *Mayflower* ancestry of her family.

"It was the thought of doing this little thing for her," he wrote, "that prompted me to have the Hopkins genealogy worked out. . . . I had no other purpose in the undertaking."

Seldom have scholars justified more perfectly the aspirations of their patron than did Dr. Lowell and Palmer. For more than half-a-century, in 1920, Munsey had been taking care of his present with success increasingly conspicuous. At that date, one may surmise, he was turning over in his mind that provision for the future which he was to write into his will the following year, perpetuating his name by posthumous generosity. But thanks to Dr. Lowell, he was provided further with that even more difficult reinforcement to the personality, an illustrious past.

Dr. Lowell was given the modest assignment to solidify the family connection with Mr. Stephen Hopkins, one time merchant of London, who crossed in the *Mayflower* in 1620. But pursuing through long New England generations the dividing



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THE ANNOUNCEMENT WHICH BROUGHT SUCCESS

and subdividing branches of many family trees, checking up on hundreds of available ancestors, the genealogists brought back a lineage dazzling in its copious flattery.

They traced the Munseys unmistakably to Timothy Munsey, a soldier of the Revolution, and to his wife, Mary Pitman Munsey, who was a great niece of Sir William Pepperrell, hero of the capture of Louisburg in 1745, lieutenant-general in the British Army, commissioner to the Indians of New England, president of the Massachusetts Council and governor of the province, a great merchant and financier. The name Munsey was French originally, the blood for centuries, English. A certain Monceaux had been with William the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings, and one of Napoleon's marshals was Bon-Adrien Moncey. There were Munseys in America in Ipswich, Massachusetts, as early as 1659.

But untangling the Hopkins' line was the brilliant accomplishment. The genealogists found Munsey's mother "of illustrious ancestry on both her paternal and maternal lines." Setting out to discover one *Mayflower* ancestor, they canvassed the famous "Mayflower Compact," and out of its forty-one signers located five as Frank Munsey's forebears. Mr. Stephen Hopkins was but the merest beginning. Mrs. Munsey's father was a lineal descendant of four *Mayflower* passengers, her mother of no less than eight.

Following all lines both direct and collateral, Munsey was connected with Alice Carpenter—the famous Widow Southwark who married Governor William Bradford; with Robert Treat, Governor of Connecticut, who hid the charter in the oak at Hartford; with the Prescotts and the Bassetts, with the families Wadsworth, Bartlett, Peabody, Sprague, Brewster and Warren, all of colonial distinction, with scholars and men of affairs, seamen and soldiers, fighters in the Revolution, the

War of 1812, and the Indian Wars. Among his early relations also were John Alden and Priscilla Mullens of romantic memory.

* * * * * *

Distinctly there were two streams flowing through Munsey, as he realized.

There were these distant glamorous names on the family tree to be reached, many of them, by a tedious backward climb and only by taking precisely the right turnings, and there was the immediate family into which he was born, the rustic yeomanry of a harsh north country, a sound basis, worthy folk—but not decorative.

The latter imparted to him their own wholesome fiber, and it was their environment exclusively which sent him forth—a setting of poverty, against which he revolted as a barefoot boy and from which he set about escaping with the leap of an incurable revulsion.

Root and branch warred in Munsey's nature.

He was a Puritan who wished he were a cavalier. He was a practical man of business who found himself seated among the intellectuals. He had a simple conventional mind, but he longed to go adventuring with independent thoughts. He was a backwoods pioneer climbing into gilded society, a countryman putting on the ways of the world, a superlative money-maker but a poor hand at spending.

Munsey was a circus rider standing upon the backs of two horses, and so he was tense, unsure, violent, pompous and changeable.

All his life, Frank Munsey wanted to be different. His original endowment included a demoniac capacity for work, rugged health, financial shrewdness and honesty. When he

employed these gifts he triumphed, and when he tried to be not himself he suffered.

* * * * * *

The GENEALOGY was published in 1920, a splendid year for Munsey. It saw his purchase of the New York *Herald,* his crowning achievement, and the defeat of the Democrats by Warren G. Harding, which he ardently desired.

He then was sixty-six, a man thoroughly set and arrived. The book removed his last suspicion that he might belong outside among the new rich instead of with the blooded aristocracy. He might talk about having traced the record for his mother's sake and about studying his own pedigree as a handicapper in a horserace, but he was none the less overjoyed, as a sentimental luxury, to be introduced to those famous personages, his remote great grandparents, great uncles and aunts, cousins distantly removed. Most of all he was pleased to meet Sir William Pepperrell, big business man of the eighteenth century, a collateral strain by which he saw an explanation of his own astonishing success.

The GENEALOGY came from the press singularly complete. All lines focussed upon Munsey and there reached their conclusion for all time. Surviving him was no son, no daughter, no Munsey nephew, no inheritor of the name to add any new chapter.

Chapter IV

THE SHAPING MOLD

The most important event in Frank Munsey's life, in the sense of giving design and point to the rest of it, occurred when he was twenty-three and was sent to Augusta, Maine—and not to any other place—to become local manager for the Western Union Telegraph Company.

Born in the next county, he was an indigenous product and could not but have felt at home in Augusta from the start and, indeed, soon he was heartsick at having to live in the overgrown village of eight thousand persons. He could never have suspected the forces here lurking and poised to influence him. Augusta was very much the town it remained for sixty years afterward, representing the same three-story red-brick business blocks along Water Street, built after the fire of 1865, merely an average-looking New England town of the lesser sort. But for putting its own precise stamp upon a hitherto blank outlook, the capital of the Pine Tree State was as effective as Paris, Naples, Singapore or any world city. Realizing now the violence and volume of nervous explosive packed into the young man's gawky frame, one may feel confident he would have gone off with a loud noise from any position. But Augusta aimed him. Augusta artistically is the key paragraph of his story, the one in which the main threads are indicated. So it is justifiable here to delay and glance closely at this important environment.

It had the usual cotton and lumber mills, ice schooners that went down the river on the tides all summer long, shaded old

residences on the hilltops and a normal share of conservative, stubborn, sound business men. But it was unique for two industries—politics and publishing.

As State capital, it was frequented by the periodic, enlivening, free-spending gatherings of the legislature. The members, along with the Governor and State officials, created an exciting atmosphere of great affairs by day, and of self-centered and exclusive social preenings by night. Politics were important in Augusta. The State's most prominent citizens paraded through the town, spreading all the sails of their prestige. And parochial glamours were touched up by the presence of Senator James G. Blaine—no less—a national figure, Augusta's own Presidential possibility, "the Plumed Knight," a personality so magnetic that few could be near him and resist.

In the fall of 1879 politics simply boiled up and overflowed because of the memorable "count-out" or "State steal"—when the third-party Greenbackers cut down the normal Republican preponderance and there were shouts about Democratic ballot frauds, and earnest farmers rode into town with their shotguns in hand to guard against trickery. Blaine took the plunge into this fiery furnace, diplomatically brought about peace and, reinforced by a court decision which satisfied the Republicans, emerged more of an idol than ever.

But more impressive than the politicians were the publishers. They were established men, free from the uncertainty of elections, leading citzens year after year. In publishing, Augusta shared honors with no rival. Through its little Post Office sluiced a freshet of print, lifting it to rank in receipts with the largest cities of the country, requiring whole freight cars every month to carry off the magazines. As reading matter these publications were trash unmitigated, pulp-paper fiction, Nice Nelly tabloids, thick with blurry woodcut illustrations, sold on the incentive of premium chromos and serving principally as ad-

vertising catalogues for gold-filled watches, bosom pins, rings, music boxes, card tricks and books on beauty and pugilism, all of which were to be ordered by mail from the publishers themselves. This development pointed straight toward the later vast national mail-order institutions of Sears, Roebuck and Montgomery, Ward. As business ventures the magazines were gold mines.

The originator of the industry was Edward Charles Allen, a man only five years older than Frank Munsey, who began early, piled up the largest fortune in town and died at forty-two. He launched his *People's Literary Companion* in April, 1870; an incredible success which ran until 1894, then was merged into *Comfort.* For one dollar the subscriber received the magazine for a year and also a set of colored chromo pictures, "perfect gems of art," which "in the large cities already . . . have found their way into nearly every refined home." The chromos embraced such subjects as "The Monarchs of the Mountain" and "I Can See You Papa," and were the nearest thing on paper to the contemporaneous Rogers' groups of home statuary. The *Companion* was moral and cultural. It carried departments such as "Sabbath Reading," "Fashion," "Agriculture," and "Items of Interest." A typical story title was "An Old Maid's Romance."

A few years after Allen, competition arose from the printer, Peleg O. Vickery, who brought out *Vickery's Fireside Visitor,* "Devoted to Literature and the Entertainment of Its Readers." The field was ample for both magazines. Vickery grew one of the most tropical and unrestrained black beards in the State of Maine, was elected mayor in 1880, and duly advertised his title in all his subsequent publications. He took in his son-in-law as a partner, and the latter, years afterward, became Governor. *Vickery's Fireside Visitor* proclaimed itself "the cheapest paper published in the world." It was a more lively *Literary Com-*

panion, with more pictures—reproductions of travel scenes and famous paintings—and stories such as "Sadie Haladean's Lucky Escape, or the Sham Marriage," and "Under a Cloud, or the Love that Lasted."

Such was Augusta, a vest-pocket metropolis seething with its own statesmanship, aristocracy, finance and literature, a town of earnest aspirations but no very keen discrimination, in which the brummagem was flashy and infectious, but where also there was a rugged old-fashioned code of business honesty. It was a town in which politics and officially recognized society would seem great, in which publishing was the overshadowing commercial enterprise, a town of intense provincialism, without high or subtle intellectualism, where the tests were pragmatic. Nevertheless, Augusta was the nerve center of a proud old State. Its final standards were Maine standards, and therein lay its strength. These qualities in Augusta were the fingers which shaped young Frank Munsey's plastic ambition.

* * * * * *

Munsey, to begin with, was good Maine clay, and to the farthest swing of his orbit he never got away from this original content. Bob Davis told him once that he discounted all men who didn't come from Maine, that he wouldn't give them a chance or listen to them. Munsey dissented and Davis made his point clear with this story:

A young man came into the crossroads store and remarked that the weather looked like rain.

"It ain't goina rain," said the merchant.

"But look at the clouds."

"No, you can't tell by that. Clouds don't always mean rain. They may over in New Hampshire. But not around here. No matter what signs you've got, I tell you, it ain't goina rain."

The young man was silenced, but he sat on a nail keg and

waited. Presently the merchant walked over and renewed the conversation. Where might the stranger have come from?

"I come from around here," said the young man. "Old Cap'n Ezra Wilson's my grandfather."

"What! Old Cap'n Ezra's your grandfather! Then you must be one of Bert Wilson's boys."

"Yes, sir, that's right."

"Well, I tell you, young feller. If Bert Wilson's your father and old Cap'n Ezra Wilson's your grandfather, come to think about it, it just might rain."

Munsey laughed aloud. There weren't many stories that could extract a laugh from him, but he admitted the old storekeeper had scored a hit. Months later, to Davis, in conceding a conversational point he would say, "Well, I guess it just might rain."

Munsey's boyhood in Maine before he went to Augusta was no experience to produce a gay, facile or urbane personality. It was hardening and narrowing. But always, whatever was his own, he cherished. He retained an outspoken respect for the school of hard knocks, just as he clung to his Republicanism and Maine loyalty and his settled faith in the New England character.

The boy lived on farms at Mercer, Gardiner and for a longer time at Bowdoin, the family removing when he was fourteen to the hamlet of Lisbon Falls. Life on a Maine farm was a battle—sub-zero weather in winter, and in summer such pressure on the farmer to take advantage of the short growing season that a twelve-hour day was mere loafing. Most farmers were poor.

By the time Frank was eight, his father went off to the Civil War, leaving him the man of the household, a group consisting of his mother, three sisters and a baby brother. They were not robust, most of them died young. Frank himself had a long

illness in his early teens, perhaps tuberculosis, surviving almost by miracle.

Munsey used to remark in his mature affluence, "I've earned my own living ever since I was seven years old."

"Why, Mr. Munsey," his hearers would exclaim, playing up to him, "you know you haven't done that."

"Yes, since I was seven years old. Down in Maine when I was a boy we milked and carried wood and worked in the garden younger than that. Youngsters were started out early. I figure that I did enough work every year after I was seven to pay my keep, so my father got back everything he spent on me from then on."

He enjoyed telling stories about his youth. Sometimes he talked about an early ambition of his to own a wallet such as he saw carried by men on the village street at Bowdoin, a large bulging wallet, seemingly the mark of importance and wealth. He saved and scraped his pennies until he could buy one. Then in the midst of admiring it as the most beautiful thing he ever possessed, the thought came to him—he had spent all his money and now he had nothing left to put in it. He liked to tack a moral onto the story and say the wallet taught him that "the box is nothing like as important as the sox."

He would recall that once he was troubled with carbuncles, but "Mother hung a nutmeg on a string around my neck for three weeks—I have not had a carbuncle since." And he never forgot the Adventist excitement of that period, when "every night I went to sleep expecting the world to crack open before morning." Religion was a large interest in the family, and the boy was taught the Bible to a degree of permanent familiarity.

He and a playmate, George Doyle, were fishing together when Frank slipped off a log into deep water. Being unable to swim, he would have drowned but for George's help. When he was past sixty, Munsey went back to Lewiston, hunted up

his old companion and every year afterward sent him $150 for Christmas.

Never perceptibly imaginative as others judged, Munsey always thought of himself as a visionary. He dreamed as a boy, but "everybody said that a dreamer was good for nothing, and I accepted the statement as gospel. Realizing that I was very much up against it, I set about trying to drive away these visions of a brighter and more beautiful world. But I made no headway. When one went out, ten came in. And yet it is to these very dreams . . . that I owe fundamentally much of whatever progress I have made."

His education amounted to little. He was not brilliant, but his father told later that "he cared more for books and the serious things of life than most boys of his age, and he was a hard worker and had a will to do things."

The first signed magazine story that Munsey ever wrote, published in his *Golden Argosy* weekly early in 1883, is a description of Maine boyhood, a story not fiction, not article, not anything as to literary form, but pleasing in its simplicity, into which may be read the familiar surroundings of the author's own youth. If it was not personal experience, it was community experience. It tells of two lads setting up a maple sugar camp in the woods, shooting foxes for their fur, having a fight with a wolf and, in four weeks, making $96. The more heroic of the boys decided to spend his money for further schooling.

After his family went to Lisbon Falls, Frank worked in a grocery. It was his New England Primer and Chautauqua Circle combined, the most useful preparation in all his boyhood. He was steeped in the talk of cracker barrel philosophers, village loafers and homespun smart alecs—a humanizing experience rare in his life. There could have been no better teaching for him in subjects of popular appeal. And he got also a laboratory course in groceries. The proprietor was a

man of worth, an inspiration to the boy. And since the Post Office was in the store and the telegraph station was connected with the Post Office, he had the opportunity to master the nervous dash-dot sputtering of the telegraph key. That was the pluck and push in him, the vision perhaps, without which he might have remained a grocery store checker player.

Within ten miles of Lisbon Falls stood Bowdoin College, and Munsey gazed at it hungrily. But it was not for him. Such formal instruction as he had was completed by sixteen, except for a few months at Poughkeepsie, New York, at a business college.

Already he was dabbling in printers' ink at Lisbon Falls. He sent news items to the Lewiston *Journal,* and for about six months he and a chum published a youthful story paper.

It was the telegraph key, however, which unlocked his door of opportunity. Before he was seventeen he left home to become operator at the Falmouth Hotel in Portland. Thence he moved on to a summer hotel at Rye Beach, New Hampshire, then to Boston. And next he came back to his home State, to Brunswick, Waterville and Augusta, back from seeing the world.

He had traveled as far as Philadelphia, on a pleasure trip to the Centennial Exposition, and among remembered wonders he had seen the exhibit of the New York *Herald,* a modern printing press in operation, gushing out finished newspapers. Then and there—so he said often after he bought the *Herald*—he resolved that some day he himself should be proprietor of that magnificent institution. It was one of many dim visions that came to him, beckoning beyond his telegraphy.

* * * * * *

An old neighbor of the Munsey family once observed that "they were strong in their likes and dislikes, were witty and

generous, and always had the courage of their convictions, and an abiding faith in their opinions, no matter what the world might say."

The young Frank Munsey coming up to Augusta was courageous and opinionated, we may be sure. Those were his qualities all through life. Probably not even then was he witty in characteristic Munsey fashion, and we may suspect that his generosity, although certainly part of him, was spotty.

And he was ablaze with ambition. Writing his very interesting brief memoir in 1907, THE STORY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE MUNSEY PUBLISHING HOUSE, he said of those Augusta days:

> I was so sure of myself that I would willingly have given ten years of my life, without compensation, for a chance with some of the big concerns of the country—railroading, steel-manufacturing, shipping, banking or any of the great staple industries. The thought of immediate money had no weight with me, no consideration. It was the future I wanted.

The same estimate of him has been written by Major John W. Fogler of Skowhegan, a loyal friend after five decades: "I am quite certain that at that time Mr. Munsey had no clear idea of embarking in the newspaper business. But whatever the case, his ambition to make money, a ruling passion of his life, led his thoughts into another field and one which he exploited very successfully in his later years, that of speculation in stocks. As a telegraph operator in listening to messages going over his wires, he frequently got valuable tips on the market. The subject fascinated him. He loved to talk about it and to give his imagination rein in that field of possibilities. Occasionally he made modest ventures, but his native prudence restrained him from going beyond his modest means."

Munsey when he went to Augusta was slender and stooped, sandy-haired and freckled, with a sandy mustache which he

stroked meditatively. In dress he was neat, and careful to be stylish, with a preference for gray. As a telegrapher, he was speedy and wrote out the messages in a notably clear and ornate hand.

"I vividly remember the first time I saw him," Major Fogler recalls. "The Augusta House, then as now the headquarters of party politics, was filled with members of the legislature and their wives and notables from all parts of the State. One evening during the dinner hour a tall, rawboned young man, wearing a long Raglan overcoat, a style then in vogue, with large plaited figures, strode into the dining room to deliver a telegraphic message while the diners watched with surprised and curious interest the striking figure."

Munsey's appearance in the hotel was significant for two reasons to Major Fogler's mind. It illustrated "his tendency to do striking things. It was his nature and the habit of his life. It also showed another strong trait—his strict sense of duty. He had an important emergency message to deliver and he would not intrust its prompt and safe delivery to other hands."

He did not drink or use tobacco, was in no sense a wild young man, left no colorful impressions. However, he enjoyed taking long country walks with other young fellows, went to dances and parties, was an usher in the Congregational Church.

"He was not what you would call a regular fellow," recalled Henry Sturgis, an Augusta business man, a friend in those early days. "He was not a mixer, not a talker, but a hard worker, rather ordinary looking. There was a night operator, too, in the Western Union office, but Munsey stopped in nearly every evening there and I used to hang around with him."

The society of sixty-dollar-a-month anonymous young fellows was the best available to him in Augusta. The soirées of the State officials, rich publishers and aristocratic old moneyed

families went on unaware of the young man's presence, and Major Fogler recalls that, "Proud and high spirited, he bitterly resented this discrimination and never forgave it. Many years afterward he told me that in all the years since he left Maine, he had never visited Augusta except as business called him there."

Munsey's old friends in Augusta, in personal conversation, have provided another incident of his stay there, a love interest in a girl, Annie Downs.

"He was dead stuck on her," they said, "but she wouldn't marry him. She thought he didn't have good enough prospect for success."

More than forty years afterward in his will he bequeathed an annuity of $2,000 to this same Annie Downs, herself long since married, and thereby he raised an unanswered query whether he was prompted by sentiment or bravado.

* * * * * *

Being sent to Augusta even as manager for the Western Union was small promotion, and Munsey soon realized it. He was a small man in a small town, a tiny strand in the line of communication, well placed to observe, with no chance to participate. He lived at the Augusta House, the best place in town, and along with the politicians he found as a fellow guest, E. C. Allen, the publisher.

"I lost no chance," Munsey wrote, "to make the acquaintance of men prominent in public affairs."

He met Blaine. During the "count-out" excitement the little telegraph office clattered with business. Staff correspondents for the Boston and New York papers were there, giving the telegrapher an intimate view of their methods. The blizzard of general messages included many for all the politicians and especially for Blaine, all of them requiring discreet handling.

Blaine quickly noted the young man's quality. When telegrams of special secrecy were to be sent, the great man flattered Munsey by calling him up the hill to his home, the lovely old mansion still standing beside the white granite State House, and giving him his messages there in person. The scintillating man of the world, who had a genius for making friends as well as enemies, took the trouble to add another to the Blaine Legion of admirers. Munsey bore him reverently in memory ever afterward.

Meeting Augusta's promiment citizens, however, was but an irritation to the youth. "Their lives had scope," he observed from his office at the foot of the hill, "mine had none." Furthermore, as he said in his memoir a quarter of a century afterward, "I was pretty nearly as good a business man at that age, even, as I am now, and the tantalizing part of it was, I knew it."

Slowly, however, the young man was acquiring a clear-cut character. He was making friends, learning business, getting acquainted with the stock market, saving a tiny capital. He looked from a distance upon the official balls at the Augusta House, discovering in them a glamour absent from the more clumsy entertainments of his own group. He appreciated the thrills of politics and he noted the secure wealth piled up by the long-bearded nabobs of the press.

The telegraph office in Water Street was only half a block from the E. C. Allen publishing house, a large building on the corner with annex and supplementary plant across the street. Munsey's table shook with the vibrations from Allen's presses. And Munsey, at the Augusta House, heard Allen talk about his career.

"My business here is a rope of sand," complained the master of the *Literary Companion.* "I have to build up anew every year or it will crumble away. What I ought to have done

was to go to New York or Chicago and use the money that came in from subscriptions to found a great daily newspaper."

So did Allen talk of his experience. His words could not have fallen upon more eager soil than the mind of Frank Munsey.

"The publishing germ gradually got into my blood," Munsey wrote in his anniversary memoir. "The earlier visions of railroads, steel and banking receded. My thoughts focussed more and more on the publishing business, until at last I lived and breathed in the publishing world. I did my work at the office mechanically meanwhile, dreaming great dreams to the tune of the printing press."

He became interested in writing, as E. J. Ridgway tells in his memorial tribute, THIS FOR REMEMBRANCE:

> One day while working in Augusta, the Chief was walking down street with the superintendent of schools and asked him how to acquire a correct use of the English language. The superintendent told him he could never hope to get rid of the colloquialisms he had picked up on the farm and in the small village. From that moment and for years, in fact until he felt sure of himself, the Chief never wrote a line or spoke a sentence that he did not consciously select his words.

Munsey had made a friend of young W. G. Boothby, who worked on the subscription books for P. O. Vickery, and Boothby often stopped at noon at the telegraph office. "He used to question me about all the details of the business with the greatest minuteness," Boothby recalled. By this time Munsey was so full of the idea of being a publisher and going to New York, there was no keeping quiet about it. He talked to everyone, serving a full apprenticeship conversationally. Among his confidants, one Howard Owen warned him, "The

sharks will eat you." Only Oscar Holway, in the bank, was encouraging. "You'll never be satisfied to stay here," he said. "Now is the time to take your chances. You have no one to look out for but yourself. If you fail, you can always go back to telegraphing."

He went to Blaine with his plan, and with an offer to give him half of all the money he should make in New York in return for being staked for six months. "Frank," said the statesman, "don't go to New York on any such hair-brained venture. It is easier to found a dynasty than to establish a successful metropolitan journal."

"I'm a man of my word," Munsey said years afterward, reciting his experience to Palmer, the genealogist. "I'd have given him half of all I made. I'd have given him millions. But he wouldn't do it. None of them would."

Still he went ahead, picking up daily scraps of information, planning his own paper, studying the local output and seeing no difficulty at all in being able to surpass it. Most helpful of all, he brought his own savings up to a comfortable $500, almost as much as his salary for a year.

As he went from one Augusta capitalist to another for help, however, he got invariably the same answer until he came to the stockbroker, a man habituated to long chances. Yes, said the stockbroker, he would put up $2,500. Already another young man from Augusta who had gone to New York had promised $1,000. With Munsey's $500 it totalled $4,000, and Munsey, for his effort and initiative, was to have a quarter interest in the business. He had a name for his magazine, the *Golden Argosy*. He had capital. Jubilantly, he began getting ready to go.

He knew his authors by correspondence already. Now he was at the delicious point of actual negotiations with them, a splurge in manuscripts, which used up most of his $500 cash

before he left Augusta—a mere formality, to be sure, since he still was rich with $3,500 in promises.

The gem of his collection was a long serial, "Do and Dare, or a Brave Boy's Fight for Fortune."

Its author was—and could have been no other than—Horatio Alger, Jr., king-pin of inspirational fictioneers for boys, and no title in all the Alger list could have been more suitable. Munsey himself was an Alger hero, complete, and with this story he was launching his own fight for fortune.

His final preparation was a new suit of clothes. It was of a greenish tricot which the country tailor botched in fitting. The sleeves were too short, and it hung so awkwardly the disappointed purchaser wailed in distress, "This doesn't look right to me." Knowing he had no money for another suit, Henry Sturgis encouraged him. "You look fine," he said. "Go ahead and forget about your clothes."

The *Daily Kennebeck Journal* interviewed him in his "Do and Dare" mood and gave him a send-off such as only a rural newspaper can bestow. This, from the issue of September 15, 1882, is what he had to live up to:

> From the executive ability, promptness and carefulness he has shown in conducting business for others, we may logically infer that he will be successful in his own enterprises. We have no fears for his future. From the outline of the plans, we judge that his paper will be successful from the start. Mr. Munsey proposes to publish the best juvenile paper in the country. It will be pure and healthy in tone, at the same time crowded with the most interesting and instructive reading for the young. . . . With his push, experience and business ability, Mr. Munsey can hardly fail of achieving success.

Chapter V

ALGER STORY

Presently Munsey said, "Maybe you don't know anything about me, Mr. Patten."

And he began to tell me how he had carried on with the *Golden Argosy* . . . how he had swamped himself with debts for print paper, printing, illustrating and stories . . . how he himself had written serials. . . .

I can see Munsey now, sitting across the table and telling me that story with a sort of cold egotistical pride and triumph. I didn't warm to him, even though his story was interesting. . . . I can't recall that he smiled once while he talked, and his talk was entirely of himself. . . . It seems to me that he was a completely self-centered person; a man with no thought for anybody or anything that did not contribute to his own advancement in some way. He was no booster save for Frank A. Munsey. . . . Maybe I was wrong. But anyway I just didn't form any liking for him at that meeting and didn't give a hoot in hell whether I ever saw him again or not. . . . Afterwards Smith said to me that it wasn't Munsey who'd walked the floors nights and sweated blood over the money he owed; it was the people he owed who did that.

Such was the personal impression Munsey left upon Gilbert Patten, a writer of juvenile fiction himself, the "Burt L. Standish" who created Frank Merriwell, here recalling a club conversation.

It is Munsey as many casual acquaintances saw him, clutching his man with an intent, "Maybe you don't know anything about me," reviewing his same story again in public speeches,

repeating it in magazine articles. Nevertheless, it was a wonderful American story of courage, determination and success. And that story of a young man's rise in a big city, brought together from his own words and from persons who knew him and from records of the time, is as follows:

* * * * * *

Frank Munsey arrived in New York on September 23, 1882, ten weeks before the appearance of his first *Golden Argosy*.

Tall, gawky, dour, hollow-cheeked, wide-eyed, with flowing mustache and sandy hair, his mother's wedding ring on his finger, in flight from country and poverty but hardened against city distractions, he cut a tortured figure in his greenish suit from the Augusta tailor. He was anxiously conscious of forty dollars in his pocket, and he clutched and guarded a satchel in his hand.

Packed in there among his shirts were the manuscripts. His Augusta-accumulated five hundred dollars was spent except for the forty dollars, the only cash he had in the world, but he saw the manuscripts as earning power, and by the time his promised additional capital should be gone, the revenue would have started rolling in. The young man within himself was utterly prepared for the plunge, his plans elaborated, his habits grooved to economy and hard work.

And this opens the story of the boy publisher's fight for fortune. It was to be a better story for obstacles overcome and final dazzling success than any manuscript in the satchel, a story of one whose own life out-Algered the model and made it significant with bitter commentary.

The tall young immigrant from New England properly might have been fêted, for he brought the city more than most newcomers. His energy, yet untested, was that of a giant. He had a precise, clear-cut vision of exactly what he wanted, even

though he was to discover that his knowledge of publishing was "just enough to be dangerous." He had character and a capacity for extending himself to meet emergencies, and in his country way he commanded a dignity sufficient for any of the city's pitfalls.

Oscar Wilde had arrived in New York for his sensational lecture tour the previous January, but lingering overtones of the æsthete's progress could have meant nothing to the practical young man from Maine. Johann Most, the Anarchist, arrived the same year, and his doctrines likewise would have been lost upon the owner of the forty dollars. During Munsey's first weeks in the city, unbeknownst to him, young Theodore Roosevelt was calling friends to his home to organize a City Reform Club, "to purify municipal politics." In November there was a clean sweep by Tammany Hall, putting into office those aldermen who, setting Reform Club ideals at nought, were to earn for themselves the name of the "Boodle Board." But Munsey had no mind for politics. During those early weeks of his in New York, Helena Modjeska and Lily Langtry arrived from European triumphs for their stage débuts in America. The theater was alive with names which now smack of old-time glamour—Niblo's Garden, Harrigan and Hart, Tony Pastor, and a rising young beauty by the name of Lillian Russell, who might have been seen then in "Patience." Our young man had no eye for them, nor for the attraction at Parker's American Theater, Third Avenue and Thirty-first Street, "Bashful Venus—Frisky, Fair and Fickle—A Voluptuous Feast Without Coarseness." Munsey was too busy.

New York in 1882: gas-lighted, built up of brown stone, telegraph wires festooned like tropical creepers from pole to pole along Broadway, the elevated trains drawn by steam locomotives; Brooklyn Bridge, unfinished, towering over the East Side; the Statue of Liberty, talked about but not to be set up

for another four years. Church spires were the tallest pinnacles in town, and so would remain until the *World* dome eight years later upraised a new standard, twenty-two stories high. Square-rigged ships still docked in South Street, wooden Indians marked the cigar stores, and bustles, beards and high-wheeled "ordinary" bicycles were so common no one was aware of them. James R. Keene was the exciting Wall Street plunger, General Grant the leading citizen.

But Manhattan was the mightiest city of the Western Hemisphere, capable of boundless stimulation to any newcomer from Augusta, Maine. It had attained 1,000,000 population by the census of 1880, and its growth was beginning. It boasted many a brand-new sensation with which Munsey was to be associated intimately. The Union League Club the year before had opened its new house at Thirty-ninth Street and Fifth Avenue, "the most elegant and luxurious" club yet built in America. Over at Thirty-ninth and Broadway the yellow brick walls of the new Metropolitan Opera House were rising. The Metropolitan Museum of Art had removed, just two years before, to its final location and comparatively modest building in Central Park at Eighty-second Street. The gems of the city were the Vanderbilt mansions, all new, costing $750,000 apiece or more, four of them on the Avenue, from just above the new cathedral onward to the famous château at Fifty-eighth.

The magazines were aloof temples of literature, of which the chief priests were Henry Mills Alden of *Harper's,* and Richard Watson Gilder of the *Century.* H. C. Bunner was editor of *Puck; Judge* had just been founded the year before; *Life* came on a year afterward.

And there was an abundance of juvenile publications to confront the new editor. Frank Leslie's widow carried on his ten illustrated papers and magazines, including *Frank Leslie's Boys and Girls Weekly,* a going concern something on the order of

the projected *Golden Argosy,* with good old Jack Harkaway as a stand-by author. *St. Nicholas* was the class magazine for youngsters, and in 1885, while the *Golden Argosy* was gasping in its struggle, *St. Nicholas* launched its most famous serial, "Little Lord Fauntleroy." Munsey's ideal of a magazine was tinged by the old *Youth's Companion* of Boston, smeared slightly by the Allen and Vickery impression, but his real model was the Philadelphia juvenile, *Golden Days,* published by James Elverson. Edward S. Ellis had been its editor and drew regular contributions from Alger, Harry Castlemon, Oliver Optic, James Otis and others of that enduring galaxy. The magazine Munsey hoped to produce was in fact an exact imitation of *Golden Days,* with but the single variation that the *Argosy* never published a weekly Sunday School lesson.

Coming to this fussy, bustling New York of the early 1880s was a shrewder move for young Munsey than going to the fabulous, booming West, for New York then stood upon the frontier of industrial modernity. The United States, released from the long panic of the '70s, was reorganizing itself into new patterns to which long oncoming generations must conform. The idea of monopoly control was beginning to prevail. The Standard Oil Trust agreement of 1882 completed John D. Rockefeller's conquest of that industry. Samuel Gompers was getting a firm grasp on labor, to be asserted in a new Federation four years later. The inventions which made the modern world were coming into use. Three weeks before Munsey's arrival, Thomas A. Edison, in Pearl Street, had thrown into gear his first dynamo for electric light current on a commercial scale. The city was fertile and challenging soil, undeveloped, and here Frank Munsey staked out his claim and waged his pioneer struggle.

At exactly this time, Edward Bok, another young man elected to fame by way of the ten-cent magazine, was making

his start in New York. Both Bok and Munsey had been working for the Western Union, and each quit in 1882, Bok to go with a book-publishing house. As a side line he started the *Brooklyn Magazine* for the young people of Henry Ward Beecher's church. Eventually sold, its name changed, passing through various hands, it was absorbed at last into the *Cosmopolitan.* Having started their flight the same year, each with his own magazine, Munsey and Bok touched earth together again in 1889, when the latter became editor of the *Ladies Home Journal,* the same year that Munsey launched his *Munsey's Weekly,* which grew directly into *Munsey's Magazine.* Their courses were parallel but the men were unlike. Bok did things easily, Munsey with gritted teeth. There is no sense of strain in Bok's autobiography. He understood other men superlatively, worked for them, let them supply the capital, had a jolly time, married his employer's daughter. Tension is the mood of Munsey's story. He missed the fun, got along with men poorly, always worked for himself, never married, but made money and after his own fashion arrived also at the goal.

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To turn back the yellowed crumbling pages of the old *Golden Argosy,* "Freighted with Treasures for Boys and Girls," to that initial Volume I, Number 1, of December 9, 1882, is an experience which brings one close to the living person of the editor, a young man of twenty-eight, fresh with the woods' tang of Maine, ambitious but uncertain of himself, soft-spoken and deferential, whose handiwork the magazine was.

Its clear simple theme—its own and its editor's as well—sounds across the years now as the notes of a far-away fiddle, "Do and Dare, or a Brave Boy's Fight for Fortune." The story filled the front page. Another serial, from the adventurous

pen of Edward S. Ellis, begins inside the paper, and there are short stories, an account of the dogs of St. Bernard, filler paragraphs including one about a cow with a wooden leg, puzzles and departmental forums. The mind and interests of the editor, little more than a boy and new to the city, were not far ahead of his table of contents.

For his great début, Munsey wrote a charming little editorial salutation: "We now make our most polite bow to you, our readers, and greet you 'Good Morning.' We are glad to meet you through the medium of the *Golden Argosy* and trust you will be glad to receive us. We feel sure you will like us as you come to know us better."

The paper is to be conducted for boys and girls between ten and twenty years old, and he is confident "there is abundance of room for another publication of high moral tone."

Such was Munsey at the start. Lowliness was his ladder. He might be a Yankee grimly on the make, not out for a good time or for charity, but to improve his condition in life, nevertheless the folk quality and the youth of the man assert claims upon our sympathy such as he was to reveal seldom again. Now turning forward sixteen years, let us take an appraising glance at him in his developed assurance, at a minor point of triumph, after he has fought his way upward to a firm grip on success. Here in October, 1898, in his magazine for women, the *Puritan,* is another statement in his maturer style announcing the absorption of the historic *Godey's,* the oldest magazine in America. The occasion, one fancies, was ripe for a mellow sentimentality; actually it evoked one of the most brutal statements that Munsey ever issued:

> "Notice—We have just bought *Godey's Magazine,* and have merged it with the *Puritan.* We bought none of its debts—none of its obligations of any sort whatsoever. We shall, however, carry out its subscriptions with the *Puritan.*

> We do this as a matter of courtesy and not because we are under any obligations to do so. *Godey's Magazine* was recently forced into bankruptcy, and we bought it in at a sheriff's sale. We purposely made this very plain so that the facts may be understood by all to whom the publishers of *Godey's* were indebted."

With this damning change in style, certainly there had been wrought also a transformation in the man, from no possessions to riches, from relatively negative personality to positive, brought about by grinding labor and sleepless nights and burning concentration upon one objective, and a Spartan driving of self such as few were able to command. All this fashioned Frank Munsey into the man that he became, whom the world was to recognize by his name all his later decades, and this man was a separate development upon the boyish editor of the start.

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That Indian summer day of Munsey's arrival in the city of his dreams was the day of his descent to solid ground. Without a breathing spell, at his first move, he found that his plans for dealing with printers and engravers, his estimates of cost, his whole prospectus so carefully built up in advance, simply would not work. Everything he had thought he knew, he didn't know. His facts had been hearsay, his hopes moonshine, his confidence a mirage. If he insisted on going ahead, he must start all over from the beginning.

"Back there in the early days," one of his first acquaintances has recalled, "I have seen him sit and look at a blank wall for an hour."

That first day in New York started the habit; gawky young Frank Munsey from Maine alone in the city and a blank wall suddenly shutting off his future.

Each step brought into view another discouragement. Requiring extra money now more urgently than ever, he wrote back to his stockbroker in Augusta for the $2,500. To this he never got an answer, nor to the other letters he wrote later. No answer! The broker had had time for second thought, and he wouldn't take the risk. There was no alternative but to release his other prospective partner from his promise of $1,000. This balanced accounts with a net total of forty dollars and not a cent besides.

And still the young man would not go back where he came from, although his good job as Western Union manager was unfilled and his again for the asking. He stayed on doggedly in the city of 1,000,000 strangers, walking the streets in search of a backer, writing letters to ask modest loans to keep him alive, waiting miserably for the replies, his thoughts fiercely searching for any expedient that might save him.

A farmer he had known in Maine wrote him his most favorable response, saying he felt guilty for encouraging him to come to the city, so he was ready to buy him a railroad ticket home. Three or four years later, writing his serial story, "The Boy Broker," he gave his hero no choice but "to acknowledge his city career a failure and return home with crushed spirits and shattered pride, a disappointment to his father and mother and the butt of rude rural jokes from his more or less envious neighbors." It was a situation about which he could write from the heart.

His New England stubbornness was his salvation at last. Goading himself to go in unannounced to strangers and lay his proposition before them, callous to rebuff, he went from printer to printer, still seeking a home for this thin waif of his brain, the *Golden Argosy*. And finally one E. G. Rideout, who had made a little money, decided to take a chance upon the eloquent hopes of the tall young man who would not be refused.

Rideout became angel for the *Golden Argosy,* giving it office space at 10 Barclay Street, in an old building which years later was to look out upon the back door of the Woolworth Building.

The weeks ran away from Munsey in that bitter high-speed initial nightmare in New York, but on December 2, dating it a week later, with Rideout as publisher and by his own sleepless effort, he managed to bring out his first issue. It was pathetically reduced from his first design, not organized as he had expected, with no assured future; nevertheless his own, putting up a brave show, carrying the proud name he had invented for it, the *Golden Argosy.* It was a second *Golden Days,* and it promised chromos to the subscribers, Augusta fashion.

Munsey's sole assets were office equipment he had bought, an eight-dollar table and two chairs, together with his manuscripts and his job with Rideout, for which he allowed most of his salary to be turned back into the business. They proceeded week by week, putting out the bright little *Golden Argosy* for five months. Then Rideout went bankrupt.

But the next week, regardless, the *Golden Argosy* appeared. Throughout its whole amazing, anemic, badgered existence, it never missed a publication day. In this emergency, as Rideout got out, Munsey stepped in. The concern owed him money; he would take the name, good will and subscription list in exchange for his debt. So now he was a publisher. One of his appeals back to Augusta bore fruit. Oscar Holway, the banker, loaned him $300. That must serve for capital.

About this time, too, he acquired an editor, Malcolm Douglas, who later was to become a theater manager and playwright. Young Douglas had sold him some stories. When he came asking for pay, he was informed that there was no cash. But Munsey made him the counter proposal that he accept the editorship, at $10 a week. Douglas agreed. In this

same period too, Munsey was to gain other associates who remained with him through life. In 1884, in a boarding house he met a young British teacher, Titherington, who helped at first without charge, then accepted a salary and never left him. Douglas was succeeded in 1887 by Matthew White, Jr., who remained as editor of the *Argosy* for forty years. And Charles H. Stoddart came in as an advertising man, went to Chicago in 1886 and always represented the Munsey publications.

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Munsey in spite of everything kept on putting out his *Golden Argosy*. Revenue arrived in driblets, bills piled up in mountains, there was no capital, no outside help. Walking before the world, Munsey straightened his shoulders beneath his well-brushed green tricot suit, but wearing out his eyes in the sixteen-hour, eighteen-hour stretches at his work table, doing every job in the place, his figure stooped, and he found it harder not to be interrupted by long ponderings at the blank wall.

Work was his life now, as never before. After he became a celebrity, newspaper reporters always were asking what was his favorite recreation. He had one stock answer, "Hard work." He got the habit in the office of the *Golden Argosy,* and for him there was no other answer, in fact or in fancy.

Munsey's play and relaxation, when he could drive himself no longer, consisted of his old accomplishment, telegraphy. He had moved to Jersey City for the sake of a cheaper room, but lingering in New York for a half-hour's breathing spell, he would seat himself alone in a big chair in some hotel and listen dreamily to the messages—business, love and miscellaneous petty communications—chattering through the lobby telegraph wires.

He moved the *Argosy* office for cheaper rent, too, finding a

second floor at 81 Warren Street, sandwiched between a cheese store and a maker of dessicated cocoanut. He and Douglas ate lunch in a German beer saloon in Greenwich Street, free lunch, supplementing it with cocoanut by the handful from the manufacturer upstairs. Over this fare week after week they talked about whether they could get out the paper one time more.

Twice, Douglas remembers, Munsey was ready to give up, and he lingered over his eight-dollar table to write Elverson in Philadelphia offering to quit and turn over the *Golden Argosy's* subscription list, provided he himself received a job at $50 a week. But he never mailed the letters, and next morning early he would be back again in fighting fettle.

English juvenile weeklies supplied most of their stories, Douglas would comb through them, clipping suitable material, rewriting and localizing it. One week found not a single clipping for his purposes. The English papers were a desert. He broke the miserable news.

"Never mind," Munsey answered lightly. "When I go home tonight, I'll write a story for you myself."

Thus, as Douglas tells it, was written Munsey's first story. He had it completed when he arrived at work the next morning, "Harry's Scheme, or Camping Among the Maples," the story in which he described hunting and sugar-making in the Maine woods.

Of all his performances, none is more extraordinary than this sudden turning to authorship. He was utterly inexperienced and untaught. But having no money to buy stories, prodded by necessity, he made himself a writer, just as he had made himself business manager, bookkeeper, advertising solicitor, credit agent, editor and proprietor. His heroic and effective labors of these days are Munsey's challenge to personal criticism.

He wrote regularly every night after doing the work of a whole office staff by day. He wrote inspirational editorials, arguing firmly against faltering and discouragement, a perfect hymn book of tunes to be whistled while walking past the graveyard. He wrote short stories, articles and serials, a continuous stream of narrative, "Afloat in the Great City" in 1886, "The Boy Broker" the following year. When he became rich he had these stories reprinted and handsomely bound, keeping a set on his office shelves and presenting copies to friends.

Alger was Munsey's model and guide. Munsey, too, wrote about country boys who succeeded, stories sterilized of sex, packed with New York glamour. They were localized formula serials for boys, exactly similar to localized sentimental fiction for women which the newspapers discovered as circulation-building magic thirty years later. Each one is authentic Munsey. The author never stated his personal philosophy more clearly than in "The Boy Broker," "Fortunately . . . he was thrown into the street. But for that he would have been a clerk still—a little three-dollar machine which bears no patent and possesses no especial value over the 10,000 other machines capable of performing similar work. His dream of wealth and position would in all probability never have materialized."

After the first year he announced there would be no more chromos—that Augusta touch was gone forever—but he would give prizes for new subscribers. It was a good *Youth's Companion* idea, and the *Argosy's* first anniversary number was a catalogue of jack-knives, skates, jigsaws, accordions, watches, to be won by getting subscriptions.

Of outside help he had one loan, $1,000 arranged for him in Augusta by his old roommate, John Fogler, now cashier of the First National Bank there. His subscription list varied from

low to medium, advertising was almost non-existent. Strange to see in a juvenile paper, along with little advertising notices concerning stamps, old coins and shorthand lessons, there was a regular group of patent medicine ads, remedies for "fits" and "Opium-morphine habit cured in ten to twenty days. No pay till cured."

Munsey in 1907, wrote of this period with justified pride, "With a determination to keep alive at all hazards, a determination that amounted almost to an insane passion, I went on and on and on, confronting defeat on every hand, and yet never recognizing it."

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Amidst these hopeless, penniless years of night-to-night despair, Munsey enjoyed one little three months when he could forget his worries in the thrill of being a person of importance and having money to spend—the money of other persons and for purposes not his own.

In the summer of 1884, less than two years after his arrival, the Republican Party nominated James G. Blaine for President and set up campaign headquarters in New York. The affable Blaine hadn't forgotten Munsey, he never forgot anyone. Many of the old Augusta House politicians flocked in, and headquarters teemed with rich Republicans, among them, Stephen B. Elkins, later Senator and cabinet member, ever afterward Munsey's friend. To headquarters also came the youthful Theodore Roosevelt, who had bitterly fought Blaine's nomination, who was as disappointed as Munsey was elated, but who came in now to register his political regularity.

At last Munsey had important friends. He held up his head among them as was becoming in a New York publisher, as one indeed very urgently needed by them, for the organization was weak in publicity. George William Curtis, one of the founders

of the Grand Old Party, had decided he couldn't stomach Blaine, and his *Harper's Weekly* was ripping into the Plumed Knight as bitterly as ever it had walloped the Democrats.

So Munsey quickly stepped forward with the prospectus for a counter-attack, *Munsey's Illustrated Weekly*. He obtained the Republican National Committee's endorsement, sent a copy of the first issue to every postmaster in the country and reaped a harvest of short-term campaign subscriptions. The paper had all the bold air of a thoroughly authorized and official organ. Upon the strength of that appearance, paper dealers and other sources of essential supplies now gave Munsey such credit as they never had allowed to his personal venture, and the weekly rolled along handsomely from September 6 to November 8.

"Nine days from the time we decided to start this paper, it was ready to go to press," the *Weekly* boasted in its first issue, lashing into Cleveland with a fury no less hot than *Harper's* jibes at Blaine.

Munsey's cartoons made Cleveland a fat Falstaff, smugly emphasizing the "purity" issue and picturing Blaine as a Galahad; *Harper's,* with Thomas Nast's cartoons, put a merciless droop into the knight's plumes and fired bitter and devastating queries.

The magazine was a cross between *Harper's Weekly* and the old *Fireside Visitor* of P. O. Vickery. In size, paper, type-face, cartoons and make-up it duplicated *Harper's.* In its non-political matter, running to illustrations of pastoral scenes, Arctic exploration and sentimental poses, it was an Augusta chromo sheet all over again. But it was a superior campaign brochure.

"The impression seems to prevail in some localities," wrote Munsey with a gravity at which he must have smiled, "that the *Weekly* is only a campaign paper. This is a mistake. We came to stay."

Throughout the campaign Munsey thus had two magazines

on his hands instead of one, and he put in valuable time at headquarters besides. But as compensation, the writers and artists of his old staff received additional work at ample pay, he sold advertising space for campaign lithographs and badges, and the *Golden Argosy* itself got publicity in the pages of the *Weekly*. Without this lift, it is questionable whether the *Argosy* could have survived 1884.

As soon as the campaign ended, of course the *Weekly* became merely old office furniture. Its subscription list was given to the *Golden Argosy,* its serial story was moved into the *Argosy* to be continued, its editor went back again to his struggle—but not in such dark obscurity. Thenceforth for nearly thirty years he worked no more at politics, and no cause interested him half so much as business.

To the *Weekly's* dying gasp, Munsey asserted his independence, saying in his final editorial, "The Republican National Committee has been said to have started this paper. It had nothing whatever to do with it, and has paid nothing toward its support. We went in as a business enterprise and with the purpose of doing all in our power to aid Mr. Blaine's election."

Not very credible, still the statement was substantially true. Doubtless Munsey received contributions from aroused party stalwarts in the heat of the campaign. But the *Weekly* was his own, and it was produced on credit—the credit of supply dealers who mistook it for a party organ. The campaign ended with the young publisher $8,000 in debt as his contribution to Blaine.

"That debt made me," Munsey told an interviewer ten years later. "Before, I had no credit and had to live from hand to mouth. But when I owed $8,000 my creditors didn't dare drop me. They saw their only chance of getting anything was to keep me going."

A diverting bypath of speculation opens up if we imagine

Blaine's election in place of his defeat. What an opportunity for the struggling young man from Augusta! How easily he might have slipped from under his burden then, accepted a political appointment, placed politics at the beginning instead of the end of his life—with what a difference in the history of magazines, merchandising, finance, public affairs and newspapers!

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From campaign excitement, hope and pleasant association with the famous, Munsey dropped back again to the dreary uncertainty of hard times on the *Golden Argosy*. For a period as long as the World War he held on, seeing no gleam that was not immediately darkened, held up by the excitement of his peril but with never a rest, never a cent to spend.

But, he wrote later, "The fact that the *Argosy* had appeared regularly week after week without a break, and that I had managed to keep it alive, began to inspire a mild confidence in the enterprise. And this credit was strengthened by the sincerity and energy I was putting into the work.

"No man ever guarded credit more sacredly than did I. I had waited a long time for it. It was capital at last, and with this capital I began improving the *Argosy* and reaching out for a wider circulation."

Bill collectors were the greatest menace of this period. They arrived daily.

"You have the nerve to ask me for cash," the penniless Munsey would roar at the man from some printer, engraver, supply dealer.

"You go back to your boss and tell him it would be fatal to his business not to carry my debts. Tell him I won't give him a cent to-day. I want more credit, and at better interest. I won't let him refuse me."

All this time, too, by the most reckless of financing, he was stretching his few petty hundreds of money to do the work of thousands. He kept a bank account in Maine, another in New York, another under the eye of the faithful Stoddart in Chicago. From one bank to another his checks went kiting.

"I kept thousands of dollars in the air between these three banks," he once confessed in a speech. "It was a dizzy, dazzling, daring game, a game to live for, to die for, a royal glorious game."

Munsey used to delight to tell about defying the banks. For weeks at one time he had been meeting his payrolls by borrowing, and still there was no end in sight, no cash income, no money with which to go on and he felt sure the bank would not carry him another week. But pay day arrived. Having no other recourse, he wrote a note for his weekly payroll and sent it to the bank. Then he wrote a check for the same amount and hopefully instructed an employee to go get the money. The man returned empty handed. The bank said there were no funds on deposit.

Munsey sat at his table facing extinction. He had no money. He could get no money. It was the finish.

"None but the brave," he said to himself. He got up and took his walking stick, which he seldom carried. He put on his hat at a jaunty angle, and swinging the stick he left the office with long strides.

Breezing into the bank he made straight for the president's private office. A stenographer at the door looked up inquiringly but Munsey brushed past, never hesitating a moment, and unannounced, burst into the office.

There sat the bank president at lunch, peaceably eating from a tray. Munsey wasted no time.

"How dare you?" he shouted, putting his stick down sharply on the desk beside the lunch tray.

The surprised banker opened his mouth.

"The effrontery of it," Munsey rushed on. "Do you know what your bank did this morning? It refused credit to me. It refused to honor my note. It sent back a check on me, saying I had no funds.

"What is this country coming to, I ask you, when men in your position can throttle young enterprises, actually strangle them, by refusing proper credit. You know me and my business, and still you refuse me credit.

"I am going to send my cashier back here at once with that same check, and don't you dare refuse to honor it. Don't you ever dare refuse me credit again."

Still talking, not allowing the banker a word, Munsey strode out and when his man returned, he was given the money.

After four years, by 1886, Munsey's debts stood at $5,000.

Those four years were his great heroic period, when he was flinging himself after success as a dervish might wade through blood into the gates of paradise, with no burden too heavy, no weariness too painful, no audacity too blind to undertake for the glittering reward.

The youngster was becoming a man, his reserve deeper, his experience broader, his cheeks more hollow, his tongue sharper as he berated men around him who couldn't comprehend. He was only an Alger story character intent upon money and position, but he gave his struggle the devotion of a poet.

By four years of slavish concentration he had advanced from $40 cash to $5,000 in debt, progress indeed, for not only had he defied the destruction which constantly snapped at his heels but he had gained a definite and free confidence from others which was a measure of his standing. It was a proud day of which he could say, "I had a little credit." He proceeded now to stretch this even beyond the breaking point in his first big fling.

He started writing his long serial story, "Afloat in a Great City." Business office duties and his hourly battles with the bill collectors were doubling and tripling by this time, for he was beginning to advertise. He never had advertised, never could afford it, but he had faith in his story and on it he made his plunge. Every night he wrote, 6,000 words a week to meet his deadline, packing in all the technique his midnight labors had taught him, making it a perfect tissue of selling points, hand-tailored to fit his promotion campaign. He flung out $10,000, credit, on advertising, running off an extra 100,000 copies of the *Golden Argosy* and sending distributors all over New York and Brooklyn, snowing under the two cities by house to house delivery. Here in every hand was his first installment. Would the readers follow? They did. They paid money for the *Golden Argosy* to read Munsey's story. Actual profits began coming in, a clean $100 a week, above the bills. The debts still overhung, but on current operations, for the first time, he was over the line by a comfortable margin. The earnings were turned back directly into the business. The oldest and sourest of the debts were paid off. And then in the fall of 1887, Munsey turned loose on the whole country as upon New York and Brooklyn, his second big splurge.

"I covered the country with traveling men," he recorded, "from Maine to Nebraska, and from New Orleans to St. Paul. Beyond Nebraska I used the mails. I kept fifteen to twenty men on the road, and each man employed from one to a dozen helpers in distributing these sample sheets."

Five months of steady campaigning he put in, broadcast eleven million, five hundred thousand sample copies, ran up a debt of $95,000.

"I bought paper on time, I bought everything I could get on time," he wrote. "The very audacity of it all gave me credit, and more and more credit all the while. But merciful heavens,

how the bills fell due, how the notes fell due! The cry from in town and out of town, from men on the road, and from all the four corners of the earth, and in a thousand voices, was money, money, money! The whole world had gone money mad. We were living over a powder-mine and every minute brought a sensation—brought dozens of them, brought one hot upon another."

In the midst of it all, because he himself knew the formula, and he could do it and he didn't know where to get a story otherwise, he began writing "The Boy Broker." He wrote it while the boom was on, when he was most crowded with everything else, and it added 20,000 to his circulation. He went into it with an income of $100 a week, came out with $1,500 a week.

May, 1887, was a landmark. The *Golden Argosy* was selling 150,000 copies a week, taking in $1,500 a week, net. Less than five years, and he had put over his dream by sheer determination and the resources of his own life. It was spun no less than a spider's web out of the inner content and stuff of his person. The *Argosy* was himself.

Out on a pinnacle at last stepped Frank Munsey. He was not to remain. A long toboggan slide waited just ahead, indeed a perpendicular drop, a jolt from which he was to pick himself up bruised and start again, but in May, 1887, he got his first heady gulp of prosperity and the onlooker should not begrudge his exultant shouts:

"Five years of poverty, five years of awful struggle, and now the earth was mine—rich at last, richer than I had ever dreamed of being—a thousand dollars a week net, and every week adding by leaps and bounds—fifty thousand dollars a year, and all mine—next week sixty thousand, then seventy, and a hundred—a million, maybe—great heavens and it was all real!"

Chapter VI

FLAGSHIP OF THE FLEET

The *Golden Argosy* prosperity of the spring of 1887 was fool's gold. The real gold strike was not to be until after six more years of endurance and travail. But the illusion sent Munsey off upon a delicious splurge.

He celebrated. He went around and paid off his debts, keeping up his credit with all those who had been pressing him for money and wondering whether they'd ever get it. He worked harder than ever at his office, planning another promotion scheme which should eclipse all previous efforts and lay in the shade his former distribution of a mere eleven and a half million sample copies. And he said a sober farewell to boarding houses. For his new residence he chose the Windsor in Fifth Avenue, a hotel conservative and correct but also a great meeting ground for speculators, financiers and industrialists. Living at the Windsor was the nearest he came to the primrose path after his enrichment.

The *Golden Argosy* prosperity was a powder flash, but Munsey never was the same again. He was to be thrust as near to his limit thereafter as before, even to feel so poor that he would walk past his old $8-a-week boarding house and wish he might reduce expenses by moving in, but he did not forget he had a position to maintain. He had the constant stimulation of needing to keep up a front, and unfailingly he looked and talked and acted success.

His old roommate Fogler from Augusta was impressed when he found him at the Windsor.

"I can't afford it, John," Munsey confessed. "But it is a means to an end. It gives me standing to have the acquaintance of the men I meet here, and I consider it a good investment."

Later, while the struggle still was in full and uncertain progress, Fogler happened to be in the city on Sunday and Munsey took him to a fashionable church. To the visitor's amazement, Munsey held a pew of his own, to which they were ushered with attentive bows. It cost $1,000 a year, Fogler was told, and he ticketed church pew and hotel room together among his memories.

After his happy summer of 1887—$1,500 a week pouring into his pockets was pleasure enough without any dissipations—Munsey charged into his new advertising campaign for the *Golden Argosy,* designed to serve notice on the whole country.

It was an immediate, persistent, incurable failure. The *Golden Argosy* had gone its limit and passed its saturation point. There was no more life in it. Munsey threw in $20,000, then stopped to consider.

Being in doubt he tried changes. Trial and error was his own way and, for better or for worse, it served him always. He dropped the *Golden* from the title. He cut down the size of the pages and increased them to thirty-two. He raised the price. Then he cut the price, enlarged the page size and decreased the number of pages again. But in whatever form it took and whatever stories Munsey might write for it, still the readers wouldn't have it.

Now as the *Argosy* refused to go ahead, he reasoned that all juvenile publications were on the wrong track. Their readers had no money to spend, hence were not interesting to advertisers, while every few years an entire new youth generation would grow up and take wing. Why waste effort on them?

Munsey determined while the *Argosy* still was producing income, although not so much, to launch a more substantial craft into the stream and trust it to save him by the time *Argosy* should sink.

In this experimental mood he made two bids for fortune—daily and weekly. The former, his New York *Continent,* was so barren and short-lived, it can wait for attention until the time comes to place it at the head of the parade of Munsey newspapers. It would be as fitting also to skip *Munsey's Weekly* for what it was, but not for what it became.

The *Weekly* was a comic paper, copied after *Life,* and apparently its destiny was to eat up any profits that *Argosy* might earn. After thirty months it had consumed all the money and dug itself impressively into debt besides. Munsey accordingly decided to change it. He converted it into *Munsey's Magazine* in October, 1891, a monthly of the same size as *Harper's,* making tall claims for itself but remaining a wan outsider amidst high-living company.

The money was gone. However, John Fogler, the faithful friend, by this time an official of the First National Bank of Leavenworth, Kansas, got Munsey a loan which was increased gradually to $8,000, half the stock of Munsey's company being posted as collateral. To tighten the strain now, the panic of May, 1893, suddenly broke upon the country, and as business men on all sides were skidding into bankruptcy, Munsey received his polite insistent notice from the bank that it must call his loan.

"He wrote me that he would convey this stock, half of his company, to me if I would assume the loan and cancel his note," Major Fogler recalled years later. "My faith was not as great as his, and I let the opportunity pass. He told me afterward that he had to pay 18 per cent for money to take up the loan. I have often speculated upon how it would have affected

the course of my life if I had become an equal owner with him."

And now Frank Munsey at thirty-nine, having dropped into the abyss, down, down, down, for six years after his brief pinnacle of 1887, looked about and discovered still another change to make, one more try before extinction. The country was gripped by depression. His magazines were failures. Starting eleven years before with $40, he had attained an indebtedness of $100,000. But the experience had tempered his metal and he had fight left in his heart.

As he looked over the magazine field, searching for readers, he saw a buying public of only 250,000 persons. The whole population was 80,000,000, but they were not interested in magazines. And to the eyes of this population, a price of 25 cents often was prohibitive, while ten cents was a small sum. Munsey, staring at the blank wall, decided upon his change. In the September issue, 1893, he announced a slash from a quarter to a dime, beginning in October. He informed his readers:

"These are the times when it is well to get down to bed rock —to get away down to the very substratum of things. At ten cents per copy and at a dollar a year for subscriptions in advance, *Munsey's* will have reached that point, a point below which no good magazine will ever go, but to which all magazines of large circulation in America must eventually come. The present low price of paper and the perfecting of printing machinery make it possible to sell at a profit a magazine at these figures—as good a magazine as has ever been issued, providing it is not too heavily freighted with advertisements."

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Munsey's announcement of his cut to ten cents sensationally exploded on impact amidst all the other magazines whose

iron-clad price was 25 cents and 35 cents, but there had been preliminary blasts pointing the way for him. The *Ladies' Home Journal* in its specialized field was prospering at ten cents and claiming the largest circulation in the world.

S. S. McClure had come along with a price of 15 cents for his new magazine which first reached the news stands May 28, 1893, and on July 1 the pugnacious John Brisben Walker of *Cosmopolitan* had cut his price from 25 cents to 12½ cents. It was more than two months later that Munsey took this same path after them, and went one step beyond.

The general ten-cent magazine idea was in the air, waiting for the man to make it happen. The half-tone engraving, just being perfected, suddenly placed the best of illustrations within reach of the newcomers; they could afford the best now, no less than the old-established publishers of ample capital. And the country's non-magazine-buying millions were ripe for anyone who could interest them in reading. As yet there was no popular literature for them, no middle ground of periodicals between the Augusta dreadfuls and the ponderous reviews dealing in subject matter the average man cared nothing about at a price he couldn't afford to pay. These readers were virgin territory, waiting to be exploited, ample to support many publishers, both originators and imitators. They were a rich lode at a level never worked before, just as were the tabloid newspaper readers, developed three decades later.

Munsey was a desperate gambler, up against his last chance. He realized that the essential element was circulation. His magazine at ten cents must have tremendous sales or else profits would be nothing at all. He went among his acquaintances preaching the new gospel of mass production, "We have passed the period and passed it forever when small volume and big profits will rule in the business world."

But how to get volume? There was the rub, for in the path directly ahead stood the Goliath of a rich monopoly, the American News Company.

This giant distributed practically all the magazines sold in America. Without its widespread outlets, experience proved, it was almost impossible to reach the public. It was the great middleman, and as such it dictated prices. Now it seemed clear that a magazine at 25 or 35 cents a copy carried an ample percentage for the distributor, whereas a price of ten cents compelled such narrow figuring above essential costs that there would be nothing in it for anyone. The American News tolerated the cut rates of McClure and Walker, but it could see Munsey's innovation only as a mosquito sting to be slapped.

One thing was certain if Munsey persisted in his rashness, the certainty of struggle and expense, and there was also an inescapable personal difficulty. Munsey had just reached midstream in his most ambitious novel, "Derringforth." Every month, no matter how tired he was from business emergencies, he must grind out thousands of words for his next installment.

So it was, with money gone and all signals red against him, Munsey announced a ten-cent magazine for October. He offered his output to the American News at six and a half cents a copy. The company laughed. As a favor they would take his magazine at four and a half cents.

Munsey raised his price to seven cents and there he kept it. That was his answer.

His next move was to try for customers himself, direct, single-handed, without further thought of the American News Company. He wrote letters to news dealers that he knew, several dozen of them. Then he printed and broadcast 10,000 copies of a manifesto, setting forth his fight as a matter of principle and calling for volunteers. In this, his offer still was

seven cents a copy, dealers to pay freight charges themselves.

Amidst the response he could have heard a pin drop. Not more than one hundred copies were ordered. A few dealers muttered that the price was too high; they wished to be supplied through their regular agency.

No one heeded the fight down in the office of an unread, unwanted little magazine. The city's interest centered upon a yacht race, Lord Dunraven's *Valkyrie* against the New York Yacht Club's *Vigilant.*

Munsey's last recourse was to call upon the great Charles A. Dana of the *Sun.* Munsey delighted afterward to tell of that interview. They had met before. Upon Dana's advice he already had organized his own distributing company, the Red Star News Company. Now Munsey was ready to give up.

"Not so," said Dana. He advised him to hold on, and meanwhile to advertise. Dana offered him credit in the *Sun,* half-page ads if he wanted them, with which to go to the people over the heads of the American News.

Munsey began in the *Sun* on Monday morning, October 2, with a four-column advertisement at the top of the page, the most conspicuous advertisement in the paper, employing the blackest of type for its emphatic words and the widest of white space borders, a good advertisement by any standard, blaring to the public:

> REDUCED from 25 cts. down to 10 cts. . . . *Munsey's Magazine.* . . . WHY WE CAN DO IT. Because we deal directly with news dealers and save two profits you pay on other magazines. No middlemen; no monopoly. On all news stands.

He followed up consistently, working furiously, directly attacking the system by which the news company lived.

"Then one afternoon a man from the American News came

in and wanted to know what would be my lowest price for 10,000 copies," Munsey recalled in later years, "—and that moment I knew I was a millionaire."

As between the original offer of four and a half cents and Munsey's seven cents, the American News now agreed to compromise on five and three-quarters cents. That was only three-quarters of a cent below his original six and a half cents. He said "No."

He had his full first printing, 20,000 copies of his October magazine, still left on his hands, hardly touched. And still he answered "seven cents."

The American News, he found out later, already had orders piling in for the ten-cent magazine, the fruit of the first announcement.

"On all news stands," said his broadsides, although none had laid in their stock, and Munsey knew so.

It was expensive, saying—"On all news stands." Munsey stretched his credit by $50,000 promoting this single October magazine, plunged into debt now $150,000, as deeply as he could go. And where were the orders coming from?

A few dealers yielded. Customers had been asking about the new magazine. In ten days the 20,000 were sold, another edition was run off, then another. Of this first ten-cent issue 40,000 copies!

And Munsey jubilantly told Charles A. Dana right then, as he recounted later, "I'm going to buy the *Sun* one of these days."

But, more seriously, he turned to getting out his November edition, 60,000 copies. And now a dealer in paper paid him a call. Every sheet of paper in the October issue had been bought on credit and still was unpaid for, every sheet for November was unpaid for, carried on four-month notes.

"At the present rate of increase in the editions of your maga-

zine, your account will very soon run up to a large sum of money," the dealer began gravely. "I have gone into your ten-cent magazine proposition pretty carefully and have talked with a good many publishers, magazine men and others, and without one exception they pronounce the whole scheme impossible. Furthermore I confess that I cannot myself see how it is possible for you to succeed in this undertaking."

And so on, and so on, the creditor expounding why the venture must fail, Munsey looking as solvent as he could. To have come so near and now to be halted for a contemptible paper bill! He began to talk back, a duel for life—over paper. At last the paper dealer surrendered. "If you are sure of your ground," he said, "if you have thought this thing all out thoroughly and are sure that you are right, sure you can win and can meet your bills as they fall due, then Mr. Munsey, regardless of all that is said against your undertaking, you can have all the paper you want from us. I leave it entirely with you to say."

"The conclusion that we were then doing business at a loss was quite right," Munsey wrote of the scene in his magazine.

"We were. The losing business of the moment was merely incidental to the great business I saw clearly ahead. I knew what the purchase of large quantities of paper meant in the way of lower prices. I knew what a printing plant of my own meant in the reduction of cost. I knew what a perfect equipment throughout meant in the way of saving. I knew too that the great big circulation toward which we were pushing with such tremendous strides meant that the advertisers of the country could not afford to remain out of *Munsey's Magazine,* and that from the advertising pages a big revenue must inevitably come."

This was the real success. Four months from the start, in February, 1894, Munsey printed 200,000 copies, at the end of his first year, in October, 275,000 copies, "without a precedent in the whole history of publishing."

After a year and a half, April, 1895, circulation was 500,000. In 1896 he estimated the consumption of paper "larger by more than 100 tons than the quantity printed at a single issue by any other publication in the whole wide world."

By April, 1897, he had increased from 112 pages to 160, "as big as the biggest and as good as the best."

In March, 1898, he had "the biggest circulation of any magazine in the world." In 1901 he claimed double the combined circulation of *Harper's, Scribner's* and the *Century.*

The high mark came about March, 1906, when he claimed a total monthly output of 2,100,000:—*Munsey's* 800,000, *Argosy* 500,000, *Scrap Book* 500,000, *All-Story* 300,000. The publisher about this time rated *Munsey's* first in the world in circulation and earning power, *Argosy* second.

Advertising came more slowly but it arrived. The twelfth issue at ten cents, September, 1894, carried sixteen pages of advertising; May, 1895, eighty pages. In March, 1896, Munsey reported his month's advertising revenue, net $30,323.92, and for the six months then ending, $163,273.95.

Munsey's success—substantial and secure, just as he had dreamed years before in Augusta—found him calm as a gargoyle. His judgment was not upset. The early dawn of fortune, he said of his magazine, foreshadowed "A future of astounding magnitude and dazzling brilliancy." He was not mistaken. In December, 1907, twenty-five years after starting the *Argosy,* he spread open his books and proudly showed net earnings from all his publishing ventures since earnings began. The figures are:

1894	$ 69,423.71
1895	172,405.58
1896	249,647.91
1897	326,276.32
1898	382,805.70
1899	473,928.98
1900	535,004.81
1901	681,315.90
1902	753,441.18
1903	912,475.23
1904	952,153.55
1905	1,014,008.73
1906	1,058,018.10
1907	1,200,000.00
Total	$8,780,905.70

And these huge earnings did not stop with 1907.

Munsey always said that *Munsey's Magazine* was the flagship of the fleet. More than that, it was the favorite of his harem, he held it ever in proper sentimental regard however he might neglect it as he grew older. The words he spoke of *Argosy* were true of *Munsey's,* "It came through because I came through; it lived because I lived. It was the vehicle merely of what I did." Equally true is it that Frank Munsey lived because *Munsey's Magazine* lived. It performed the miracle, finding him *in extremis* and lifting him to riches.

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Munsey, as soon as his ten-cent magazine caught on in October, 1893, was stepping high.

The United States was staggering and bleeding amidst hard times.

All around were breadlines of hungry men, without a nickel

in their pockets, surly vindictive men of whom the moneyed people were afraid. Populism grew strong. Prices fell. Banks closed. Farm mortgages were foreclosed. Ready cash was not to be had. The government itself was dangerously short of funds, and its credit was not good.

The country was tasting the bitterness which had been Munsey's daily bread for a long decade. The spring of 1894 saw Coxey's army of the unemployed on its march to Washington. That summer came the Pullman strike in Chicago, with Eugene Debs tagged an anarchist and the government intervening by troops and injunctions. Such disturbances had no part now in Munsey's life, nor could he ever picture himself as being, by any slip of chance, one of Coxey's men.

Amidst the suffering arose a forceful man who was never to lose glamour in Munsey's eyes, J. Pierpont Morgan. In February, 1895, when the crisis was at its worst, Morgan made his historic trip to the White House and dictated his own terms for that famous sale to the treasury of $65,000,000 in gold, by which credit was stabilized and, incidentally, the Morgan syndicate was said to have profited $7,000,000. All the denunciation heaped upon Morgan by Populists, Silverites and small men generally made no impression on Munsey.

The "gay nineties," indeed!

But Mrs. Astor was queening it over New York society. Early in 1892 she gave her famous ball for which Ward McAllister dashed off his guest list of 263 persons, the original "Four Hundred." In Detroit in 1893 Henry Ford built his first automobile. The Carnegie Steel works at Homestead, Pennsylvania, were going through their brutal strike, and after the union was thoroughly beaten the owner sent in the rising young Charles M. Schwab, to be superintendent. Ex-Judge Elbert H. Gary then was drawing the largest retainers in Chicago as adviser to corporations, and George F. Baker, already

president of the First National Bank of New York, with a firm grip on the country's industries, was making his reputation as a "rock." Unfortunately, Blaine had died in January, 1893, and could not witness his protégé's arrival.

It was a grievous time to be poor. It was a time of splendid opportunity for the rich, and money-making was unchallenged as the most honorable of careers. The Supreme Court in 1895 retired the anti-trust law for a period of innocuous desuetude and the giant mergers were at hand. Free competition was giving place to monopoly. "Trust" was the magic word of the day. In 1896 the stock market was to tilt upward in a beautiful long slant of increasing values.

Munsey stood on solid ground. Just as the country was shifting from rural to industrial predominance, so he was coming through to assured urban position. His battle with the American News Company monopoly had induced in him a fitful prejudice against monopolies which occasionally led him into unorthodox paths, which made him prize the words liberalism and independence, but his wealth was a thoroughly transforming influence. New to the rights and privileges of his status, he adopted the rule of safety, did not stress his origin by any too active commerce with past levels nor by too sympathetic a championship of the rabble.

* * * * * *

Munsey took a business office attitude toward his magazine. He loved to talk price. Reading matter was secondary. His magazines were the most successful business enterprises among all the periodical publications. They did not contain the best literature or the freshest ideas.

Bound volumes of the early *Munsey's* have little to offer the reader of a later day, but *McClure's* of the same period remains fresh from an inspired touch. *Munsey's* was filled with mate-

rial largely put together in its own office by indifferent writers. *McClure's* was loaded with Kipling, Stevenson, Conan Doyle and other young stars who endured. *McClure's* clearly was the better magazine, but it sold for 15 cents. *Munsey's* at ten cents was better than could be bought for a dime anywhere else, was propelled by a superior distributing organization and nourished by a superb advertising department.

So Munsey sped away from his competitors, taking the larger share of the money and the credit for pioneering, and when they attempted to question his claims to being the father of the popular magazine, he defended his title with trumpetings of defiance. He did not propose to share his laurels after fighting alone against the American News Company. The fact that the others reduced their prices in advance did not impress him.

"This is all very well in its way," he said, "but in racing parlance it is the horse that gets under the wire first that wins. . . . The vital fact is that they did not bring their magazines down to ten cents until about two years after *Munsey's* made its appearance at that price."

These penny arguments have significance for one reason—it was the price cut that brought the magazine of respectable quality through the door of the average home. It never had entered before. The effect of this purely merchandising idea was not only to enrich a new generation of publishers and elevate advertising to the peerage of big business, but to make the editing of a magazine an exciting and vital undertaking as never before. The popular magazines were yeast at work within the population. Into a field long resigned to the remote dignity of graybeards, they brought a journalism highly personal, intimate, vital and new.

Munsey's Magazine, all in all, was a mental autobiography of Munsey himself, but the observer may narrow his study

to a single story, the serial "Derringforth, or When Should a Girl Marry," and still obtain a revealing insight into the mind of the editor and author. Munsey wrote "Derringforth" during his most crucial period. It began with March, 1893.

The story, a success plot from Horatio Alger translated to adulthood, shows the author in his process of self-education, looking in upon life, making up his mind about society and Wall Street, fixing his gaze upon the bright decorations of the city, filled with sententious observations. It is also a prolonged lament for a lost love, a preachment that young love thwarted never can find compensation. Derringforth, the hero, "had learned to bear the grasp of Shylock's hand—had learned to know the ache of a burdened soul." His experience "had been of the kind that brings out the stronger elements of a man's nature." The author comments that "to have everybody's friendship is to be a dead level sort of man—a man without individuality, without fire. Derringforth had square corners, had directness." The story has no literary quality but it is effective factory-made fiction, and it is Frank Munsey.

The great rivals of those days were Munsey and McClure—great business man matched against great editor.

McClure himself rated Munsey "The greatest business man that ever entered the magazine field," not even excepting Cyrus H. K. Curtis. But William Archer gave a more penetrating verdict in a famous article in the *Fortnightly Review,* "the special character of the American cheap magazine as we now know it is mainly due to one man—Mr. S. S. McClure."

Munsey said, and perhaps thought, that he edited with an eye devoted only to what the public wanted. McClure, more accurate and more candid, edited to please himself. He believed his mind was a common denominator and that what he liked would please most of his readers.

"There's only one better editor than I am," he told Lincoln

Steffens. "That's Frank Munsey. If he likes a thing then everybody will like it."

The muckraking period, the zenith of popular magazine influence and its distinctive glory, the forerunner of the Roosevelt reform spirit and the Progressive movement, was begun by *McClure's* in October, 1902, with Steffens' "Tweed Days in St. Louis." *Munsey's* talked about cities only as centers of romance, as in the articles about Boston and Baltimore just after the publisher bought newspapers there. *Everybody's* and *Collier's* campaigned against Peruna, but although *Munsey's* promptly announced that it would accept no more advertisements for liquor or doubtful medicine, it crusaded not at all. *Everybody's* published Tom Lawson's "Frenzied Finance" with tremendous gain in circulation; *Munsey's* carried a series about "The Millionaire Yield" of Pittsburgh, Chicago, San Francisco and other cities, respectfully presenting acquisitiveness as American achievement. To Munsey's eyes, there was nothing frenzied about finance.

When muckraking had run its course and magazines were looking for a new fillip to public interest, *Cosmopolitan* introduced an inflammatory flaunting of sex in its promotion of Robert W. Chambers' "The Common Law," in 1910. Munsey printed no sex.

He finally delivered a funeral ovation over muckraking, "The people of this country have come to realize that prosperity rests on upbuilding, not in destruction." And in this he was thoroughly sincere and consistent with his nature, and the policy had the further advantage of being agreeable to advertisers and faithful to friends. He saw muckraking as an attack upon men of his own kind, whose philosophy he shared. He did not see journalism as a sword but as a great industry, selling in a wide market. His magazine was redolent of reassuring description, devoid of muscular criticism. With due exag-

geration in his own behalf, he stated his case to C. T. Dixon, an employee, when David Graham Phillips' famous attack on Chauncey Depew appeared in *Cosmopolitan.*

"Dixon," he said, "when I have to get circulation by assassinating another man's character, you can put a sign on the door saying that we are out of business."

Why was Munsey not a crusader? McClure once answered this in a phrase almost Munsey's own, speaking with a sad finality, "A man only puts out what is in him."

There was one subject, though, upon which Munsey, the stock speculator, preached with apostolic fervor—the greatness of United States Steel, the grandeur of Morgan.

Munsey, in signed articles, himself delighted to call Morgan "the plumed Knight of finance," "an uncrowned monarch," "a constructive genius." He carried glittering descriptions of Morgan's International Mercantile Marine, of the Steel Corporation, of the Morgan family, year after year presenting glories and accomplishments of the name. He stepped into the breach heroically when the government filed suit for dissolution of the Steel Corporation in October, 1911, having rushed through for the January issue a leading article giving a damning answer to the title question, "Has the Enforcement of the Sherman Law Accomplished Anything Really Worth While for the People?"

There is a story of those old days which recaptures the fever of rivalry so neatly it has almost the ring of fiction, but it is told by a first-hand witness. A group of magazine writers were sitting in the Holland House, talking about McClure and laughing over his caprices, when suddenly McClure himself came in. To turn the conversation, one of them spoke of Munsey.

"Munsey is a great man," said McClure. "A great man. I always like to see him, although of course he's a bit crazy."

The same afternoon one of the group was in Munsey's office.

"I just talked with McClure," remarked Munsey. "He's a great editor. But you know he's always been just a bit crazy."

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Munsey, the frigid, circumspect, straight-laced New Englander, unbent once in his early career to employ the lure of the flesh, and that was during the struggle of 1893 and 1894.

He discovered the nude. He was one of the first editors to commercialize her for the home, and although he quickly curbed his enthusiasm, the regularity of the appearance of undressed art studies in his pages can leave no doubt as to its conscious selection. While it lasted, the grocery store loafers back at Lisbon Falls must have found a continual thrill in Frank's magazine.

There was almost no issue then without its Bouguereau. Morgan glared superciliously at the Bouguereaus in the Chicago World's Fair art exhibit of 1893 and snorted that they must have been selected by a jury of chambermaids. But Munsey had his eye upon the ten-cent buyer. His magazine favored articles on the dance, artists' models, sculpture of the goddesses, legends of Wagner's operas, and the department, "Artists and Their Work," all of which lent themselves to illustration by Bacchantes, nymphs, goddesses, Magdalens and simple maidens clothed in innocence. The nudes became more rare as circulation increased, but flesh discreetly presented was one of Munsey's initial appeals.

Not merely nudes, though, but all kinds of pictures, excellent pictures, and many of them were for years distinctive in *Munsey's Magazine.* Munsey outdid all competitors in using pictures. While others dallied, Munsey accurately appraised the new half-tone process and put it to work, making visibly improved use of it from month to month. He started off at ten cents with the modern touch of a pretty girl on the cover.

As Munsey prospered his own editorial work became less, his helpers did more. But running through the pages, from first to last, may be seen the same old Munsey elements tirelessly repeated. Munsey, enamored of the great big world, strove to bring richness to isolated lives, to give the touch of glamour, success and importance. He adored articles about royalty, millionaires, Wall Street, famous personalities, clubs, palatial residences, tall buildings, together with numerous departments on the stage, books, art and finance. And thousands of miles away during the heyday, lines of people once a month stood at the post office or the village news dealer's, clutching their dimes, waiting impatiently, for it was *Munsey* day.

Munsey's touch became remote, but the illustrations remained for years a particular chore of his. He had precise ideas about them. Buildings he considered ineffective, "they had no eyes to look at the reader." He disliked photographs of smiling women, and among hundreds of actresses pictured in his magazine, it would be hard to find a dozen smiling. "Their smiles are all artificial," he said. He chose pictures not primarily for significance but by their looks.

He read almost none of his magazine, or of the material submitted. He made up his mind by conversation and, in appearance, according to the heft of a manuscript. One of his editors has described the grinding of the editorial mill, Munsey looking down from his high desk, the assistant presenting his selection:

"Here is a long story from Stanley J. Weyman. You remember we had 'The Castle Inn' from him some time back."

"Oh yes, yes indeed."

"It is a good length for about eight installments. It is a very good story."

"Let me see it," says Munsey, running his fingers through

the pages, lifting it, gazing off into space. "You've read it?"

"Oh yes. It is a very fine story. All about the time of the Huguenots in France, wonderful historical period, colorful background, great action in it."

Munsey, feeling the manuscript, lifting it again—"Heroine?"

"Oh yes, beautiful girl. Lovely pure character. They fight a duel over her outside the city walls."

"How much is it going to cost us?"

"Less than the last one, I think. It is quite a bit shorter. We ought to get it for $500 less."

"Hmm, hmm. You like it, do you?" weighing the manuscript again in his hands.

"I do indeed. It is a very interesting story. It would be popular with our readers."

The manuscript balances on a fingertip, drops onto the desk —"Very well. We'll accept it."

In the article "Boom Days in Wall Street," by Edward Lefevre, appearing in April, 1901, the magazine by a freakish chance achieved one of the most accurate predictions of tragedy to be found anywhere in print. The article told of the "election boom" of the previous summer when business, although fearing William Jennings Bryan, decided that President McKinley was sure of reëlection. It told that:

"They were so sure that Mr. McKinley would win that they quietly went on about their business and made plans which would in all probability have gone to smash had Mr. Bryan been elected. But they took enormous chances. For who could guarantee that some dismal day in September they might not see in huge type on the front page of the newspaper, 'THE PRESIDENT ASSASSINATED!'"

The author was referring, of course, to the previous September, 1900, preceding the election. But on the following Sep-

tember the phrase was fulfilled, and the morning of September 7, 1901, the readers did see in huge type on the front pages, "THE PRESIDENT ASSASSINATED."

Munsey's became one of the excellent popular fiction magazines of its day, although the owner's later policy of holding down prices lost many good names its editors had discovered. F. Marion Crawford was often in its pages. It published many stories by that imaginative woman, Mrs. Edith R. Brainerd, who signed her writings E. J. Rath. George Barr McCutcheon, Louis Joseph Vance, P. G. Wodehouse, James Olive Curwood, Zane Grey all wrote for *Munsey's*. Edgar Saltus was a regular contributor. Cultural articles were done by Brander Matthews, Walter Pritchard Eaton and Harry Thurston Peck.

Munsey himself, a demonstrated performer in fiction, wrote in 1895 one of the most widely quoted of prescriptions for the short story:

> We want stories. That is what we mean—stories, not dialect sketches, not washed out studies of effete human nature, not weak tales of sickly sentimentality, not "pretty" writing. This sort of thing in all its varieties comes by the car load every mail. It is not what we want, but we do want fiction in which there is a story, force, a tale that means something—in short a story. Good writing is as common as clam shells, while good stories are as rare as statesmanship.

The answer to this prayer, of course, was O. Henry. *McClure's* had published "Whistling Dick's Christmas Stocking," the first by "O. Henry," in December, 1899. *Munsey's* came about third in accepting "A Blackjack Bargainer," signed "Sidney Porter." For this, according to Arthur B. Maurice and Robert H. Davis, in THE CALIPH OF BAGDAD, he was paid $35, with $15 added months afterward. O. Henry was released from the penitentiary at Columbus, Ohio, on July 24, 1901, and

this first story of his in *Munsey's* must have been one of his early outside impressions, for it was published in August, 1901. When Bob Davis became fiction editor for Munsey in 1904, he contracted for a first reading of O. Henry's entire output. The last O. Henry story to appear before the author's death, "A Technical Error," likewise was in *Munsey's,* February, 1910.

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Never a reformer, always a changer—that was Munsey.

"We have been mighty busy here for the last four or five months, dynamiting conventionality out of this shop," he wrote in one signed editorial sales talk, and the listener even now may hear the echo of crashing plans, upset arrangements, exploded designs as Munsey on a rampage strides through his offices.

By gradual stages *Munsey's* itself, by the end of its existence, became a non-illustrated all-fiction magazine.

Long, long before, changing and re-changing the *Argosy,* Munsey in October, 1896, had become the inventor of the first all-fiction magazine. He changed also the paper, bringing in the use of rough wood-pulp paper, showing that the quality of a story is independent of the paper it is printed on, starting into the world the inexhaustible stream of popular thrillers which go on week after week, millions of copies, a living monument to the fertility of one experiment.

It was characteristic of Munsey that whatever change he made, he was able to support it by unassailable logic. When he reversed, he was equally ready to give a new reason. He was perhaps the world's greatest rationalizer.

When he changed *Munsey's* from a weekly into a monthly magazine, he expounded to his readers that the weekly field had been captured by the Sunday newspaper, that he had

"come out of a field of death and decay and entered one where there is succulent food in plenty. . . . We said . . . the day of the weekly journal has gone by. This wasn't prophecy; it was the statement of a fact, but to many eyes it was not yet unfolded." This particular assurance was not justified by fact, for in 1897 another man from Maine, Curtis, bought the *Saturday Evening Post* for $1,000, and built it up to a circulation of almost 3,000,000, in defiance of all the Sunday papers.

One of Munsey's sensational brief successes was the *Scrap Book,* a hodge-podge of reprinted articles and stories, "a granary for the gleanings of literature" launched March, 1906, with a sensational sale of 500,000 copies in three days, and continued amidst high approval for more than a year. Then Munsey began telling its editor, "we must broaden and deepen it."

"A great big change has happened to the *Scrap Book,*" he wrote in July, 1907.

Thereafter it was to be issued in two different sections, one all pictures, the other all fiction. It was, in the words of the announcement, "The Beginning of real Expansion. . . . And Another Epoch. . . . Still Another Epoch. . . ."

Under the impact of the epochs, the *Scrap Book* began losing readers in blocks of 50,000 and 100,000. The first section was dropped within a year, without leaving a trace, into the *Live Wire.* The second continued its lonely way until 1912.

"I keep on experimenting, creating and killing, till I happen to hit the public's taste," Munsey once said in a speech.

Change somewhere among his properties was in constant process, and always ahead was the threat of a merger.

Thus he bought *Godey's* and merged it with the *Puritan,* then the *Puritan* into the *Junior Munsey,* the latter into the *Argosy.* He bought *Peterson's Magazine* and merged it with the *Argosy. Ocean* and *Live Wire* and *Cavalier* and *Railroad Man's* and *Quaker* and *Woman* and *All-Story* followed the

pattern—all started by Munsey with throbbing tom-toms and later, "as conditions warranted," knocked in the head. It was a career to make a publisher not squeamish about death sentences.

Munsey claimed credit, without being disputed, for establishing the size of type, the unit, by which advertising space is measured and sold. It is a technical point but not unimportant within the trade:—"I changed the standard of measurement from nonpareil to agate, which meant fourteen lines to the inch instead of twelve. At that time the standard of measurement with every magazine in the country was nonpareil; to-day the standard with practically every magazine is agate."

Munsey's greatest change, one of his forlorn hopes, was when he went into the very lion's den of advertising strength, to a dinner of the Sphinx Club at the Waldorf-Astoria, October, 1898, and told the trade that its commission system of compensation was dishonest, and under it the advertiser could not expect fair treatment. His attack struck the practice by which an advertising agency collected from the publisher instead of from the clients.

The problem has remained without complete solution. But then, instead of the present theoretically uniform system of commissions, there was a variation from 10 per cent to 40 or 50 per cent, with bonuses and rebates additional.

Munsey told the Sphinx Club, "A commission is paid for a purpose, and that purpose is nothing more or less, in very truth, than bribery . . . a bribe to influence the advertiser's trusted agent to place advertising with the publisher."

Thereafter, he pledged, he would not pay one cent for commissions. The speech stirred up hornets, and courage is the only word to describe his attitude. But the entrenched system won. His business declined, while the cost of getting it increased, and within a year he quietly accepted the prevailing

method again. The commission system, modified and regulated, prevails to-day.

In still another direction Munsey innovated with unhappy consequences. When he had attained the magic success of his ninth year as a ten-cent publisher, when dozens of imitators were rushing in and still his tremendous start kept him beyond competition, he incorporated with authorized capital of $10,000,000 and offered to take the public into partnership. The occasion was appropriate for a brightly colored report of accomplishments and prospects such as he loved, and he concluded:

"Unlike most men who incorporate their properties and offer shares to the public, I am in a very independent position. I have no need of money with which to develop the business, or for any other purpose."

He offered his stock for sale, and dividends of 5 per cent were paid regularly; then, after several years, he bought back the stock and ended his venture safely.

Since magazine publishing seemed the road to wealth other publishers imitated him in stock selling and the public greedily bought, resulting in one of the great embarrassments and scandals of the business. Investors in *Success, Hampton's, Pearson's, Columbian-Stirling* and others which muckraked the rich and powerful, lost their money, hundreds of thousands of dollars, while prosecutions overtook some of the promoters.

Besides discovering a new class of readers, for whose favor there was no competition whatever, cultivating some with all-fiction entertainment and others with success stories and pictures, Munsey built up his magazine through a keen sense for advertising. He preached constantly to his readers that he would not permit advertisers to interfere with his magazine, that he was making enough money without them; in practice he shrewdly brought in a huge and untouched class of new

advertisers, susceptible to cut rates in the same way as were the new readers. The advertising trade knew him for his famous rate of $1 a page for each 1,000 of circulation—$400 a page for 400,000 copies a month, $700 a page at 700,000 a month. It was a low rate and Munsey held his clients with tenacious grasp, was a persuasive influence in creating larger advertisements with wider white borders, at a profit alike to advertiser and himself.

John Adams Thayer, who spent a month and a day of trouble with Munsey, in his book, ASTIR, said of him, "It has been said by a rival that 'Munsey is not a magazine publisher, but a magazine manufacturer.' As it is a known fact that the Frank A. Munsey Company's annual profits exceed $1,000,000, it is clear that, as far as earnings go, he is the most successful 'manufacturer' in the magazine world. Some men issue magazines at a loss; Munsey makes his to sell."

Thayer also passed this judgment, "Frank A. Munsey is a brilliant man—in more ways than one. A real genius seldom makes a success of a business undertaking, but a man who is a genius in spots can be successful in business. Munsey is a genius in spots."

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Munsey, after his dogged triumph over poverty and despair, with his magazines at last going ahead by leaps in spite of the general paralysis, went to Europe for a vacation in 1895, the first he ever had.

This excellent Yankee getting acquainted with Paris for the first time, is of itself a little drama that coaxes the imagination —this tense factual man of business, schooled to subordinate pleasure to ambition, at forty-one already as shrivelled and juiceless as a quince, now bent upon diversion amidst the complete negation of his New England values. He could not have

found Paris easy, but in his way he liked it, and year after year he went back.

The picture of him recalls the comment of Henry James in THE AMBASSADORS, "There were some things that had to come in time if they were to come at all. If they didn't come in time, they were lost forever." And the sympathetic observer will wish that Henry James could have led Munsey into some Paris garden on that first trip and whispered to him, as he did to his young man in the book, "Live all you can; it is a mistake not to. It doesn't so much matter what you do in particular, so long as you have your life. If you haven't had that, what have you had?"

From Europe, Munsey returned to take his place among the citizens of importance. Ahead of him now lay his gilded age, when he was to be accepted as an equal among the glamorous rich. The SOCIAL REGISTER enrolled him in its volume published November, 1895. He proceeded to make friends methodically and laboriously. The type known as the Pittsburgh millionaire was just coming in among New York's big spenders, and the city in a few years would be teeming with the most nouveau of rich men. But Munsey took the conservative path. He chose friends who would help him.

The finished surface which Munsey presented to the world, petrified and frost-bitten, might indicate that he had worked harder and been subject to more disappointment and opposition than any other man. It is possible, indeed, that he actually believed this of himself. For a dozen years he certainly had exercised the wild strength of a Titan, with versatility and courage added in equal measure. Then he came into assured position, never to experience want again, free to give himself to pleasures, interests, friendships and human associations as he might choose. Here ended the Alger story and here began the revealing and measuring years of wealth.

Chapter VII

EXPERIMENTING IN BOSTON

The ultimate luxury which Munsey allowed himself was deferred to the ripe autumn of his success nearly thirty years after he came into money—until November, 1922. Then he bought the lovely estate of his friend and long-time landlord, Louis Sherry, at Manhasset, Long Island, a country home designed in the spirit of Marie Antoinette's Petit Trianon at Versailles, a château with an old mill, a reproduction of the queen's temple of love and formal gardens composing a picture-book landscape. It was a setting worthy of any wealth, any dignity. Its purchase was an odd blossom from Munsey's sparse and rocky soil, but at the age of sixty-eight he delightedly gave it to himself as a present.

The temple of love, built of white marble in classical style, a circle of columns supporting a graceful dome, stood at the corner of the mansion. It was an immediate problem. Munsey's life held no place for such as that.

He decided the temple was badly located and had it removed to the rising ground several hundred feet away, making it a sort of lookout point, commanding a wide view of the estate. Uprooting the stones and rebuilding again, with replacements of greensward and contouring of the earth, was costly, but the owner wished it. However the change did not entirely satisfy him.

The further wanderings of the temple may be seen to advantage through the eyes of one of Munsey's out-of-town friends,

an occasional visitor to the Manhasset estate in those days, who observed progress every three or four months.

At each visit he found the temple of love in a different location. It galloped about the grounds like the knight on a chessboard. Munsey continued to have trouble placing it. From the eminence away from the house, he moved it nearer. He shifted it to one side. He sent it hither and yonder, and still he remained impatient with it.

Once more his friend arrived in New York, and Munsey this time greeted him with a smile.

"What do you like best," he said, "about my property on Long Island?"

"Well, it's a magnificent place," said the friend. "But I must say I always thought the temple of love was very nice indeed."

"Ah, you're getting warm," said Munsey. "I think I'll just have to tell you now that when you come out next time, you won't see it. You'll never see it again."

"Why, what on earth has happened to the temple of love?"

Munsey allowed himself another smile.

"I decided," he said slowly, "that dynamite was cheaper than labor, so I blew it up."

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Now the temple of love was a toy, and Munsey's newspapers, grocery stores and hotel were cold business, but the temperamental fermentation within him behaved essentially the same with any given material. It may be seen at work by turning back years earlier than the temple and following the man step by step in Boston and again in New London.

The old Boston *Journal* was the Bible of New England. It believed unfalteringly in two verities—the Republican Party and the New England home. It penetrated to the most remote hamlet. Munsey grew up on it. It was a day of wonderment

to him, therefore, when he became owner of the great old paper. Already he had bought the New York *Daily News* and the Washington *Times,* both in November, 1901, but that twin event was nothing to be compared with his entry into Boston.

The morning *Journal*—there were morning, evening and Sunday editions—announced the change on October 24, 1902. Stephen O'Meara, the old publisher and principal stockholder, said in his valedictory statement:—"When he begins to build a greater *Journal* he will have no need to dig for a foundation. Seventy years of careful and conscientious work by those who have gone before him will permit of his placing the first of the new stones upon the last laid by his predecessors."

And Munsey was just as proud, just as earnest. A few weeks later, on December 16, being honored at a dinner by the Merchants' Club of Boston, he told his hosts how as a boy looking out from the Maine farm:—"It was the golden dome of Boston that caught my vision, and Boston was the center of the world to me for many years thereafter. But in all the air castles of those old days—and I do not mind telling you that they absorbed me soul and body—in all these fancies I never pictured myself as the owner of a Boston newspaper, much less the owner of the great Boston *Journal.* . . . The ownership of such a newspaper and in such a city was beyond all earthly hope."

The *Journal* was published from an old-fashioned shop and was an antique ungainly oversized sheet, made up in the worst Bostonian style with advertisements littering the front page like an untidy kitchen. However, the old management already was far along on construction of a new building with modern equipment, and the *Journal* was prolific of extraordinary newspaper men. Munsey got there some of his ablest lieutenants, including Edgar D. Shaw, H. J. Taft and Fred J. Walker.

The Merchants' Club recognized Munsey's triumph by invit-

ing him to its dinner, and the prospect set him off upon a glowing fantasy. Why couldn't this important personal event be utilized to mark and introduce the *Journal* in its new style and dress. The problem was largely mechanical.

"The building was to have been ready January 1," said the contractor. "But it could be speeded up. I think we can get you in for the dinner, but it will cost you a lot of extra money."

"I don't care what it costs," said Munsey. "I want it done. I want to get out my first issue from the new building, on the new presses, in the new form, exactly on time for that dinner. It will be very dramatic."

It happened as he desired. Newsboys brought in and placed before each guest at the banquet table Munsey's new Boston *Journal*—as different as a country girl home after a year in finishing school.

The pages were reduced to an ordinary convenient size—not tabloid; the front page was swept clean of advertisements, the principal headlines were printed in red ink, numerous catchy human interest items and magazine features were added, and the price was cut from two cents to one cent.

It was a stunning and dazzling novelty in Boston journalism. It was a great credit to its owner. However, it wasn't the *Journal*. That standby of the New England fireside which generations of readers had learned to recognize and trust was gone forever.

The spruced up and urbanized Munsey *Journal* proceeded briskly for four months, and then the owner decided it was not making sufficient progress. After a personal analysis of the situation, he started off his once-sedate old newspaper upon a career as irresponsible as that of any temple of love at any place, any time.

His first conclusion was that it was a mistake to issue two

separate newspapers each day, morning and evening, from the same shop. The evening edition, he declared, was a drag.

So on April 18, 1903, he killed the *Evening Journal.*

Three days later, in order to preserve the valuable Associated Press membership for possible sale, he started the Boston *Evening News,* publishing from the same shop, lifting the price to two cents.

Two weeks later he put back the price to one cent.

Nine months later he stopped the *Sunday Journal* and started instead an enlarged fifty-page *Saturday Evening News* with comics and magazine.

After seven weeks he revived the *Sunday Journal* again.

Next, he killed the *Evening News,* a year after it had started, allowing the evening Associated Press membership to lapse.

Then he changed the price of the *Sunday Journal* to two cents.

Then, September 11, 1904, he killed the *Sunday Journal,* discontinued it.

By this process of zealous tinkering, in a little less than two years Munsey dynamited his evening and Sunday editions, reducing the weekly issues from thirteen to six. He completely made over what remained of the *Journal.* He had presented, promoted and slain one new and separate evening newspaper, and had put the Sunday paper through tricks such as never entered its head before. Beyond this, as purely business office detail, he had reduced the wholesale price of the *News* to the unheard-of figure of ten copies for a cent, then put it back to 50 cents a hundred copies. He also had made unsold copies of the *Journal* nonreturnable, to the anger and disgust of the news dealers.

Six years later, on May 8, 1910, Munsey resumed publication of a Sunday morning paper—not of the ordinary sort but a distinctive stripped-to-the-bone *news* paper, the same as on any

other day of the week, without bulky supplements and magazine sections. The price was one cent.

Seventeen months later he killed the Sunday paper entirely and for the last time.

In November, 1911, he stopped all illustrations in the *Journal,* inaugurating a pictureless newspaper.

Two weeks later in a bombshell three-column advertisement on Page 1, he offered the *Journal* for sale.

In March, 1912, he resumed the use of pictures.

Then, in December, he changed the page make-up from seven-column width to eight.

Then in January he made sixteen pages the regular daily size and again eliminated pictures.

Six weeks later he raised the price to three cents.

And at last, eight days later, March 11, 1913, he sold the *Journal* and departed from Boston.

Changes hour by hour in the editing and display of news were naturally a regular occurrence on the *Journal.* They were ordered from New York by telephone. Charles E. L. Wingate, the general manager in Boston, soon adapted himself to the contingency of being summoned to New York on a moment's notice, usually late in the afternoon. "Wingate?" would come a familiar voice over the phone, "Come right over. Catch the five o'clock train." During all those ten years, Wingate kept a traveling bag standing beside his desk, packed and ready to go.

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"Wingate, I don't have to do anything in this world I don't want to do."

So said Munsey, discoursing genially to his lieutenant.

In this spirit he entered Boston to claim his opportunity before the eyes of his own New England, loaded with money

from his wonderfully profitable magazines, in the prime of his energy, arrogant from success, knowing little about a newspaper but absolutely sure that the good old way of trial and error which had won out before would work magic for him again.

"Throw out that Sunday magazine," he commanded, almost immediately upon taking possession.

The magazine was a syndicated supplement, bought for a year in advance by signed contract. It was thrown out and the contract cancelled. The syndicate threatened suit and Munsey settled handsomely.

"This paper needs more snap," he said, installing a new managing editor. "It's too tame. Go in there and raise Hell."

Fearlessly the new man obeyed, and soon Munsey was learning about libel suits from him.

"You said to raise Hell," apologized the managing editor.

So Munsey fired him.

The new owner found clouds of tobacco smoke overhanging his editorial department and composing room.

"I want notices put up, all around, 'No Smoking,' " he said. "Do you know why I am stopping them from smoking? Because it is a loss of time. Whenever these men stop to puff a cigarette or light a pipe, they waste time. And God hates a waster."

On this policy surprising difficulties arose. The reporters and editors met the prohibition by stepping into the washrooms whenever they wished to smoke, thereby neglecting work and wasting time, for the sake of tobacco, twice or three times as much as usual. In the composing room the order became a fighting issue. The printers threatened to strike.

Fortunately, Munsey was so seldom in Boston, the management was able to arrange a compromise. The "No Smoking" signs remained. But it was agreed that no one in authority

ever would see any violation of the rule. And the printers, for their part, would be reasonable, and when Munsey was visiting the plant would not allow themselves to be caught by him.

The details of Munsey's purchase of the *Journal,* although widely circulated in conversation, cannot be reported on first-hand authority; both the principals are dead. The story is given here upon the word of old associates on the *Journal* who had it direct from the seller, Stephen O'Meara.

Shortly before the paper was sold to Munsey, the owners realized that they must have more capital or else they would be submerged. Great though it was in fame and tradition, the *Journal* had declined in earnings to the narrowest of net revenue. O'Meara himself already had put about $100,000 into the paper, and it had been spent. Whatever values remained must be salvaged quickly. Then Munsey appeared and inspected the property. Soon afterward he invited O'Meara to visit him in New York.

"I'll give you $600,000 for the *Journal* and not a cent more," Munsey said in greeting, coming directly to the point.

O'Meara always enjoyed describing the scene. So much money, several times the amount of his brightest dreams! And Munsey assuming all the debts besides!

"I was afraid I'd give away my feelings," O'Meara would recall for his listeners. "I was afraid I'd jump at it too quickly. So I said as calmly as I could, 'This is a very sudden offer, Mr. Munsey. You'll have to let me walk around the square and think it over.' When I got out of his office, I hurried around that square as fast as I could in order to get back and accept before he changed his mind."

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Munsey retained O'Meara as publisher of the *Journal* for months after his purchase, never indicating the slightest jeal-

ousy or fear of rivalry. So superior did he find himself always, that the suggestion of rivalry from anyone would have impressed him as absurd. On the other hand, his men joked contentedly among themselves over the fact that earnings went up when he was in Europe or otherwise diverted, dropped off again when his experimenting was resumed.

The publisher himself, in a signed editorial, declared frankly, "During my ownership of the Boston *Journal,* now six or seven years, there has never been any harmony of opinion between my associates and myself as concerns the matter of headlines and methods of presenting the news."

His men did learn, however, little systems for getting along. The *Journal* once sought to put on a more prosperous appearance by buying rugs and new furniture for the counting room at a cost of several hundred dollars. Arriving soon afterward, Munsey disapproved the extravagance and had the purchases all sent back to the store.

Then a member of his New York staff, attending him on the visit, whispered a private word of wisdom.

"When it comes to small things like these rugs, you never can get them from the Chief," he said. "You may even have to spend the money from your own pocket. But if you ask for machinery costing $10,000, or any other big thing, you'll get it without argument. He hates spending money on little things. He loves to spend on big things."

Erratic though he was, Munsey showed a fine courage in Boston more than once. "The first order I gave on taking possession of the property," he once trumpeted to *Journal* readers, "was to throw out certain so-called medical advertisements and other advertisements of a character that ought never to enter the home." He estimated the loss at $25,000 to $30,000 a year and was unperturbed.

When he enlisted under Theodore Roosevelt in the political

warfare of 1912, he turned his back defiantly upon his whole clientele of deep-dyed New England Republicans and fought hammer and tongs for the rebel. His was the only Roosevelt newspaper in Boston, one of the very few in New England. Support of Roosevelt certainly would cost him readers, probably advertising as well. Munsey was not interested in compromise or recession. He didn't have to do anything in the world he didn't want to do.

The continuous experiments by which he wrecked the *Journal,* although including some wild ventures of inexperience and fancy, were not without merit in themselves. Other papers succeeded by similar devices. But the rapid succession of his changes made it impossible for any single popular idea to take hold. Newspaper choice is a habit. Munsey tore up established habits by the roots, and before new ones could form, he was tearing up again. His impatience kept him from reaping any fruit from his planting.

By 1910 he was impatient of the dreary continuance of nonsuccess. In tones prophetic of his later sweep through New York he blared to his readers, "We have too many newspapers in Boston for the good of the newspapers themselves. . . . A consolidation of the eleven daily newspapers in Boston into four or five would be the best thing that could happen."

By 1911 he firmly made up his mind to say farewell. This thought he tossed out lightly on Thursday, November 23, in one of the most unique advertisements ever printed in a newspaper, a signed notice occupying all of the first three columns on Page 1, declaring himself finished with the Boston *Journal* and the Philadelphia *Evening Times.*

"These two newspapers are worth more to some one else than they are to me," he began. "Each paper could occupy every minute of an owner's time, and should have every minute of an owner's time right on the job.

"My own time has been so fully occupied with my magazines and other interests that I have never done any direct work on either of these newspapers. The work I have put on them has been done at long range and through others."

(Cheers and hurrahs at that from the Boston staff, permitted so candidly to assume responsibility for all mistakes!)

"My time is worth more to me now applied along other lines than any success I might make of these two newspapers. Undeveloped newspaper properties call for earnest attention and intense direct work. The undeveloped property is a drag. The developed property is an easy thing."

Munsey expressed his unreserved opinion of each paper and finished, "I don't want more for these newspaper properties than they are worth, but I want approximately what they are worth, though I am willing that there should be a margin in favor of the purchaser. I say this to save bargain hunters the trouble of investigation."

Warming up to politics a year later, he gave up the thought of selling. The paper was his weapon for Roosevelt. But the damage had been done. The unpopular issue of the Bull Moose cause hastened the finish. Finally, the sudden increase in price from one cent to three cents in March, 1913, clubbed away the remaining faithful who had clung to the gunwales. The hulk was sold quickly. The price was reported as $135,000, a distressing shrinkage from $600,000, which still doesn't take into account the hundreds of thousands spilled out through operating losses.

Munsey was happy to be off. He told Arthur Brisbane in a burst of metaphor, "There isn't enough advertising in Boston to grease a fly's ear."

Chapter VIII

CHANGE IN NEW LONDON

The protean Munsey, enamored of change, tasted in the sleepy old Connecticut seaport of New London one of the profound and satisfying experiences of his life.

For all his rushes and roars Munsey was a timid man. He had deep reserves of indecision. In New London his impulses followed their meandering course without restraint, slipping toward a fog-draped and obscure destination but coming out at last upon a broad achievement. He advanced along his own unique and personal path, by what in expansive mood might be called a restless search for perfection. But he advanced.

The townspeople coined a familiar saying to use when the sunset gun boomed at their naval station in the harbor.

"What's that?" a stranger would ask.

"Oh, that's just Munsey changing his mind again," they answered grimly.

His fickle guidance produced disaster in Boston. Applying the same principles in New London before he went to Boston, and long after he was finished there, he won a great success. The difference in result perhaps is the difference between a newspaper and an ordinary commercial mercantile enterprise. There is a distinction between the two, although Munsey never perceived or acted upon it.

Already a big millionaire, a wonder man of finance, breathing a different atmosphere and treading another earth from the herd, Munsey in New London enjoyed success all over again

and in a separate field. For a second time he became an authentic magnate.

Here, for once, he was himself, undivided. Before the eyes of the simple populace he felt no compulsion to meet alien standards. He could exercise freely his genius for things material, be a dictator as he chose, fuss over detail, rig up a miniature industrial trust organization of his own to play with. And he made a great deal of money. He was working in a metier perfectly suited to his nature.

* * * * * *

It was in December, 1895, in the flush of his young self-confidence, two years after his emancipation from poverty, that the man from the big city first appeared in New London, bringing an architect with him. He intended to locate a printing plant. He had the idea of moving from New York to some town beside the water where living expenses, transportation and production costs would be lower. A few days later the newspapers delightedly reported that Munsey had paid $30,000 for the old Bacon residence in State Street. Munsey was set to show the town how to get action.

Workmen quickly demolished the house and its elm trees, dug down to bed rock, making the largest hole in New England around which the admiring citizens congregated to gaze. Then came the steel workers erecting a skyscraper framework—the very latest method of construction and a novelty anywhere in 1896—soaring eight stories into the heavens, a promise of the largest and tallest building in town, possibly the largest in the State, to house the most complete printing plant in the world.

Machinery of the most up-to-date design was installed. Printers, engravers and binders from New York established their homes in New London, and two hundred local young

persons found jobs in the big establishment. The town experienced a boom. The top floors of the building were rented as offices to select professional men.

But now Munsey was to discover a slip. "Like a fool," he recounted to William Lincoln Palmer, "I hadn't found out in advance about the Post Office regulations."

His difficulty was that the rules then in force permitted only one office of publication, and since the magazine was to be mailed from New London, it had to be entered for second-class mail privileges as from New London. It would be impossible to call *Munsey's* a big New York magazine. And at the moment, New York sounded important to the young publisher.

It happened, too, that a labor quarrel coincided with this irritation over the address. Each month in the rush just before the date of issue, a considerable amount of evening overtime work became necessary. Munsey now learned that his workmen were paid on these nights not only for their overtime but for the hour they took for supper at the end of their ordinary day and before returning for their extra hours. He protested that since the men did not work while eating, they should not be paid. He posted an announcement.

The union called a strike the next morning. The men presented their demands and walked out, leaving the dismayed local manager to telephone New York. By mid-afternoon Munsey had made up his mind.

"Move out," he ordered, and a crew of mechanics rushed into action.

By six o'clock the same evening the first of the big new presses was lifted off its foundation and set onto a boat; before midnight the greater part of the equipment was afloat on Long Island Sound. Before the next monthly publication time, everything was back in New York, set up and ready to go.

So the Munsey publishing plant arrived in New London and departed, all in a few months, leaving behind only a vast pile of brown pressed brick on a prominent corner, forlorn as a temple in the desert, echoing and gathering dust. Waggish report had it that the very steel and masonry was to be loaded onto barges and floated away after the machinery. The tenants upstairs deserted the empty shell. Citizens hurried past as if the place were haunted. The newspapers speculated plaintively on "What Mr. Munsey May Do?"

So far as Munsey was concerned, he could take his loss and forget about it. On the day of the exodus he ordered that the new building be credited on his books at a value of $1.

* * * * * *

But in time faint stirrings of life appeared. Word went around that if anyone wished to open a store, the ground floor could be rented. There were no offers. Then in August, 1897, the Mohican Company, Inc., owned by Frank A. Munsey, was granted a charter. About the same time alterations were begun on the Munsey Building.

From second floor to roof it was transformed into a hotel, the Mohican, a splendid ornate affair, having chefs brought in from New York, bell boys in tight uniforms and brass buttons, doormen of formidable dignity. Topping all was a new casino and roof garden which offered full advantage of the magnificent marine and landscape view. New London's population was 16,000, but the Mohican would have been an ornament to Boston.

As the hotel got under way, Munsey decided now to become a merchant also and to utilize the unrented ground floor of his building. He stocked the Mohican department store, described proudly by the press at the opening as "a piece of Twenty-third Street transplanted to New London," a worthy companion for

the hotel in magnificence. Whatever might be found in any department store—from carpets to imported millinery, from a stove to a bottle of Chablis—was here. And the store lived up to its challenging slogan, "More for a dollar than a dollar will buy elsewhere."

The only difficulty was that the newcomer was such a giant, if it prospered the small, old-fashioned merchants of New London would be driven out of business; and they saw it clearly. The Mohican could supply every need of every inhabitant. So the small fry made war, cutting prices, appealing to civic spirit and, furthermore, agreeing never to buy from any drummer who stopped at the Mohican Hotel.

Munsey fought back valiantly. He engaged an orchestra to play in his store on Saturday nights, offered more bargains, broadened and expanded his stock; then, as his wares increased beyond containing, he took over the entire second floor of his building, turning out the lobby, office, parlors and dining room of the hotel, to make room for doubling the size of the store.

All the second-floor services and spaces of the hotel were moved up to the eighth floor, and the occasion was seized to turn out all guests and remodel throughout. Workmen brought from Italy laid a distinctive and superior tiled floor in the new lobby. Each room was provided with a bath, each was papered in gorgeous tints.

Previously the elevator shaft had been changed. After the removal of the publishing plant, Munsey had decided the shaft was in the wrong place and took it from the corner of the building to nearer the center, also cutting an open court through from the roof to the ground to give daylight for all inside rooms. Now with the office and lobby promoted upward to the top of the building, still another change became possible. Greater traffic would require enlarged facilities; another elevator shaft was cut through and capacity was doubled.

The second Mohican was a very paragon of hotels, with its baths in every room, wide expanse of imported tiling and choice of elevators. It appealed to the most desirable residents of New London, and they moved in joyously to make it their permanent home.

Munsey appeared on the scene, however, four days before Christmas, 1899. He had brought his architect from New York. It seems that the progress of business had not kept pace with his hopes. He served notice immediately that all rooms must be vacated in eleven days, by New Year's Day, to make way for alterations. The permanent residents moved out.

While he was ripping out the interior of the building, this time from roof to third floor inclusive, Munsey decided to make a thorough sweep of it and dismantle the department store also. Nothing was left except a ready-to-wear clothing shop on one side of the ground-floor entrance and a small, pure-food grocery equipped with the former oversized refrigeration plant on the other side.

The merchandise of the department store was gotten rid of in a giant clearance sale, and hardened observers shook their heads and remarked that the purpose of the whole enterprise from the first had been to use the upper floors as sales rooms in which to dispose of the hotel furniture second hand.

In place of hotel and big store, now were built tier upon tier of magnificent lofts. It was an ideal location for small manufacturing plants, in case any promoters wished space. To set an example, Munsey moved into two floors of the building his Lyon Umbrella Company, from Broadway, New York City.

This company, whose umbrellas were the most widely advertised in America, had been sold to Munsey during the expansive afterglow of his success with the magazines. He kept it in New London for a year, then moved it back to New York, re-

named it the Manhattan Umbrella Company and after another year disposed of what assets remained at a public auction.

The merchants of New London meanwhile brought forward a plan to remove the threat of competition and utilize the waste spaces of the Munsey Building. They proposed to rent the property entire, themselves, and then assume the risk of getting suitable tenants. It seemed a helpful scheme for all concerned, but the owner wasn't interested in the price they offered, so he kept the building but stripped out the lofts.

Munsey by this time was making his own home in the superior apartments which Louis Sherry had fitted up over his famous restaurant at Forty-seventh Street and Fifth Avenue, New York. The Sherry apartments opened on October 10, 1898, and that same day Munsey moved in and remained uninterruptedly until they closed twenty-one years later. With Sherry's for inspiration, he began a third time to fit up his Mohican Hotel, to make it finer than it ever had been in any previous incarnation, as fine as money could buy, as fine as Sherry's, one of the finest small hotels in the whole country.

Amidst the swirl and hubbub one of the New London business men had a chance to talk with Munsey and made a remark about what a white elephant the old printing plant had become. Not at all, said Munsey. He explained patiently:

"All men of wealth have some particular hobby, some means of pastime or recreation. They spend their money on yachts and on racing stables, which are things I don't care for. And still I must have a hobby. This little affair up here fills the bill. I really enjoy it. This is my yacht."

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After this record in New London, of course, Munsey's Building appears to be a worthy forerunner of his Boston *Journal* and his temple of love at Manhasset. But the story develops.

Munsey was not dabbling in either journalism or love; he was engaged basically in a business enterprise, sure ground for him in spite of his novel, unpredictable methods. Through his changes was developing a hotel which became famous, a chain of grocery stores which were outstanding—the fitting apotheosis of a boy who once had stood behind the counter in the little country store at Lisbon Falls.

In its perfected and tertiary form the Mohican was to proceed on now without major interruption to a career of prosperity. The automobile brought it an influx of tourists from distant cities. Crowds for the annual Yale-Harvard boat races on the Thames took it up, and year after year the Mohican was headquarters.

The hotel, however, always was somewhat subject to change without notice. After Munsey's interests had spread into a chain of newspapers and politics on a national scale, still he allowed himself frequent little recreations in New London for scene shifting and reconstruction.

He especially cherished the news stand in the lobby. Every year or two he liked to move it from one corner to another. He shuttled it through a fancy pattern of locations which should have suggested mounting it on wheels. He added two stories onto the building. During the War, while construction costs were at their peak, he built a twelve-story annex. To the end of his life he kept closely in touch with this property, but on his visits he seldom arrived alone. At his side like a shadow would appear also an architect.

From New London, too, emerged Munsey's great Mohican stores, the company eventually capitalized at $3,000,000, but rated in the trade at a far larger figure, a pioneer market chain, an institution with fifty branches already when investors awoke to consciousness of chain stores and bankers went in for their stock. And this, like the hotel, blossomed out for Munsey,

apparently by the smooth process of whim and the magical transmutation of caprice—plus his own talent as a grocer.

Through all the variations of the original department store, Munsey had arrived finally at nothing more than a small grocery with an overgrown refrigeration plant in the first-floor corner of the Mohican Hotel. Nothing else remained of the giant emporium.

About 1900 a branch grocery was established near by at Norwich. Soon a third was opened at Westerly, Rhode Island.

Munsey was getting the glimmer of a big idea. Always and everywhere he was at heart a big-business man. His thought moved in front with the modernists, pressing for amalgamations and combinations, boldly following the golden vision of volume sales.

The groceries multiplied to twenty or thirty, with a large warehouse in New York. And now the restless Munsey decided to change again. He closed the warehouse, shut up two-thirds of the stores, started again from the bottom and rebuilt the Mohican Store chain complete.

From this new start the Mohican Stores expanded through Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New Hampshire, New York State, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, about seventy-five stores, each a money-maker.

In theory they followed the style of Munsey's pioneering pulp-paper *Argosy* magazine, mass business, low price, no money wasted on fixtures and decorations, everything plain and simple, appealing directly to the vast lower middle class, the great buying and consuming mass of the population. They handled little fancy merchandise for the few best families, did not cultivate the poor. Sometimes on Saturday nights the police had to be called in to keep the crowds in line, so great was the pressure to reach Munsey's bargains.

The Mohican Stores, nevertheless, were aristocrats by the

one test which defines aristocracy in the mercantile field—profits.

The stores started from the big refrigerator. Their basic goods were the perishables which other chains avoided and were afraid to carry until years later. The Mohican Stores made a specialty of meat, produce, dairy products and cheese. Each store, or the primary store in each town, had its own bakery, which consistently undersold the opposition. Once having eliminated the warehouse, the stores never came back to it. Stocks were delivered directly onto the shelves.

The chain also was distinctive for its man power. It attracted able men, trained them to high efficiency and retained them. Rivals might bid for them in vain.

Whereas the average modern chain-store unit does a business of about $50,000 a year and earns about two per cent on the gross, the Mohican, by the calculation of competitors, averaged not less than $200,000 per store, two or three favored and enlarged stores doing $700,000 or $800,000 business each year, the net profit of each figuring about four per cent. Thus did Munsey's rivals appraise him, and the figures bred a towering respect. By all counts in the grocery trade, Munsey's touch was sure.

The Mohican Stores were not absolute pioneers among grocery chains, for the tea and coffee stores began three or four decades earlier. But they were among the first in the expansion into the general cash and carry business and their high efficiency made them pace-setters.

For a time the stores lay very near to Munsey's heart. They were the germ of his dream for a universal trust monopoly of his own. But as he grew older and his position advanced, as he became a figure in society and society became a factor in his life, his conversation touched less upon the groceries. He never had lent his name to the stores, was not listed as an officer of

the corporation. The store earnings flowed into his pockets, several hundred thousand dollars a year, but even that was but a minor part of his fortune, unequal to his losses on newspapers when in his stride as a publisher. The grocery chain was not the expression he chose for his life.

So it was that the attack against which he had no defense was for someone of social eminence to call him "the Grocer." And those who hated him, again and again, in anger, unerringly reached for that missile to hurl at him—"the Grocer."

Chapter IX

IN HIS OWN ELEMENT

"Louis Sherry is going to retire, the damned fool," said Frank Munsey, being then sixty-eight years old himself and having had his own work time extraordinarily crowded with activity. He spoke as publisher of the New York *Herald,* personally giving an assignment to his most trusted reporter, Walter Davenport.

"Mr. Sherry is closing his restaurant, and I want you to get the story of his career. He is going to retire from business, going to live in Paris among a very ordinary bunch—low-class noblemen and people of that type—doing nothing. He is my friend and I have bought his property in the country, but he's a damned fool."

After Davenport had written his story, he was called again into Munsey's presence.

"Mr. Davenport, I have read your story and I don't agree with it. It is rather photographic, I admit, a picture of the man. But Louis Sherry has passed out from amongst us. He is going to retire, the damned fool.

"So I have dictated a substitute for your story, utilizing your facts, and I have put my own caption over it: 'Louis Sherry, the Man.' Will you please read it and say what you think of it?"

The reporter read and ventured an honest opinion: "It sounds to me, Mr. Munsey, more like an obituary than a news article. It sounds as if he had died."

"That is right, Mr. Davenport, exactly. Louis Sherry *has* died."

Voluntary retirement was something that Munsey never would have considered for himself and, of course, he could not understand it in another. He did give up speculation in the stock market—for a gamble against longer odds. But give up his business? When he did he would be dead indeed; there would be nothing left.

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As a business man Frank Munsey attained indisputable greatness. From his magazine business alone, as a result of his hard work and sound management, he took for years an annual net profit of $1,000,000, before income taxes levied upon the rich. His grocery business was an enchanted beanstalk. His basic policy and theory marched with the times, pushing on always toward industrial dictatorship and regimentation under a single management, toward the current ideal of exterminating the small independent for the sake of the large corporation.

Munsey the trader in stocks and lands was an ornament to the tradition of Yankee shrewdness. He knew as well as any David Harum the game of chaffer and bluff by which to consummate a swap: his sere arithmetical mind soaked up essential points of value like blotting paper, with swift thirst; business to him was a passionate excitement under whose stimulus his imagination leaped to romantic pinnacles and his activity patterned itself in imperial designs. He was a business colossus, considerably modernized and enlightened, and he appears at his best while counting his profits.

Those who met him on even terms in business carried away a respectful and friendly impression. Long after his death

these acquaintances, fellow members with him in the great fraternity of men of wealth, brought out their memories of him with aggressive loyalty, repeating one after another the cautious defensive phrase, "I don't know anything about him but what is good."

As business men they could not but be impressed by the superlative money-maker. Beginning in his fortieth year and striding forward during three succeeding decades amidst the flash of millions, Munsey lived success. Money-making as he practiced it appears so easy, his career seems a chart to guide others to a similar haven.

Bankers, brokers and directors of great corporations saw him by the illumination of his wealth, and besides being impressed by his winnings in the race which they also were running, they recognized his quality as an analyst of situations, his cold-blooded daring and megalomaniac ambition. He was not petty; he drove his bargains with broad strokes, in large round numbers, with long foresight. He was not a small man's man; he was a big man's man.

To those on his own level, furthermore, he recommended—endeared—himself by a precise etiquette unusual in the market-place, the reverse of his sharpness toward the small people on his payroll. He was scrupulously punctual in appointments, was a paragon of business ethics, held himself proudly above taking any mean advantage. Munsey the business man boldly slashed through with those actions which others aspired to and went broke attempting.

One of his men on the New York *Sun* one day, just after intervewing Darwin P. Kingsley, chairman of the New York Life Insurance Company, chanced to meet his employer in the office.

"Mr. Kingsley was telling me how much he admired you,"

the reporter said. "He said he would always remember how you had the nerve to hang on and buy U. S. Steel after it went down to twenty-five."

"Huh," grunted Munsey after long silence, "I've bought it around eight."

John A. Hennessy, former managing editor of Munsey's New York *Press,* is the authority for a story which he heard in the summer of 1914 on a drive with George W. Perkins to the home of Colonel Roosevelt at Oyster Bay. Perkins regaled him en route by describing, "The one man ahead of all others I ever knew for sensing a financial situation and knowing what to do about it, with a vision and money judgment the greatest in Wall Street." The man was Munsey.

Perkins told of forming the International Harvester Corporation in 1902 to control the manufacture of farm implements, bringing in only the members of his family and a few extremely intimate associates, deciding to spend every cent of earnings upon upbuilding, not to pay dividends the first few years, and to guard against speculations by placing 60 per cent of the stock in a voting trust. But by the time the corporation was well under way, its stock began a spectacular rise extremely disturbing to the trustees, who sensed something contrary to plan and smacking of treachery. Perkins inquired and searched but could learn nothing. And then upon the street he met Frank Munsey, who was entirely an outsider.

"Congratulations, George," said Munsey, "upon the progress you are making with International Harvester."

"Well, what do you know about Harvester? It's a great headache to me. I'm trying now to learn who is putting its price up."

"I am the man," said Munsey.

"What!"

"Yes, I am doing it. I have been buying it through brokers in

Philadelphia and Chicago and other cities, under various names, and if anyone has produced any effect upon the price, I am the one."

"But how did you know about it?"

"No one told me. I simply was watching it, and I was sure it was a sound idea. I have made about $11,000,000 in it."

William Lincoln Palmer, the genealogist, has a story, quoting Munsey:

"The other morning I felt tired, so instead of walking to my office I decided to ride on top of a Fifth Avenue bus, and my eye happened to rest upon a sign, 'This Corner Property For Sale.' In my mind I measured the property and its possibilities and value. Then I telephoned the real estate agent and, not giving my name, implied that I had a customer who was willing to give a certified check for the property at noon that day."

As Palmer recalls the offer, it was $350,000. The agent rejected it, demanding much more, but even as he refused he got Munsey's private unlisted phone number and within half an hour he called back and accepted. The cash in full was delivered that noon. The following day Munsey sold the same corner lot for $450,000 to a purchaser he had foreseen, pocketing $100,000 for his bus ride.

"I have never made a mistake in buying property when I followed my instinctive vision of its value when first I laid eyes on it," he told Palmer. And again he said to him:

"Mr. Palmer, I'll whisper something in your ear. If you want to make money, don't go to the poor house, go where money is. I was a failure until I was nearly forty. Why? Because I had started out where there was no opportunity and fifty dollars a month was big pay.

"I'll tell you one of my secrets. It is just as hard to sell a pair of gloves for $1.00 to a one-dollar man who wants them as it is to sell a $500,000 plot of ground to a $500,000 man who

wants it. To make money you must have vision for big things.

"I am superstitious on only one point as far as I know. If a man has failed at other things, I don't want him around me in business. I want men who have been successes."

* * * * * *

Amidst his early success Munsey beheld a grandiose vision which he worshipped in his heart and boasted of to his listeners, which he expanded and fondly labored to perfect, and at length relinquished only after years of jolts and detours had persuaded him to leave the elements unconnected. His eyes in those days were dazzled by the rising kings of oil and steel and tobacco, the heroes of the trust period. He was content to allow them their sway unchallenged. But upon the foundation of his own grocery stores he planned a homely kingdom to out-merge and out-rival all the others. He proposed a system of systems, to produce all the food and household commodities of ordinary commerce, advertise them in his magazines and newspapers, sell them in his cut-rate stores, deposit the profits in his bank and at every stage of the process collect rents as his own landlord.

Munsey, a pioneer merchandising visionary, told his plans to the Merchants' Club of Boston in December, 1902:

"A hundred thousand people in New England alone are now buying bread from the Mohican Company at three cents a loaf—bread of the same size and quality as that which cost them five cents before the Mohican Company hammered down the price.

"With an organization broad enough to encompass ten thousand stores, the outlet would be so stupendous that the average price of all provisions would not exceed this same sixty cents on the dollar.

"Such an organization would refine its own sugar, grind its

own flour, import its own coffees and teas and spices. It would slaughter its own meats, produce its own butter and cheese, and would manufacture all the other products that go to complete a perfect provision store.

"There would be no middleman here, no dividends on watered stock, no tribute to any one, no waste anywhere."

He spoke modestly about himself as an editor, but he was the magnifico unrestrained in his business dreams:

"I think I shall be able to make good by the power of organization and by applying the methods that are now employed by our great business combinations, popularly known as the trusts. In my judgment it will not be many years—five or ten, perhaps—before the publishing business of this country will be done by a few concerns, three or four at most. There will be a line of newspapers representing each of the two great political parties, and another chain independent of politics."

When not telling the Alger story of his own rise he was likely in those days to be talking of these expanding hopes: twenty-five newspapers in the twenty-five largest American cities, 100 or 200 in cities of around 100,000, hundreds of others in smaller cities spanning the continent. He expected to see his own companies manufacturing all the ink and paper, and even the machinery itself. He also proposed to publish books.

And "instead of a fool management that now controls too many of our newspapers," small men, earning a few thousand dollars a year, he foresaw that "genius of the highest order will shape and mold both our news and editorial columns," men easily worth $150,000 or $200,000 a year, aggregating a general editorial staff costing $1,000,000 or more each year.

"My chain of dailies is not yet large enough to warrant hundred-thousand-dollar salaries," he said in Boston. "But when it has grown to embrace a thousand newspapers in a thousand towns—and this is well within the compass of the

scheme—then no expense, however great for the general staff, can be felt by the individual paper."

Through such an organization he saw himself as the emancipator of newspapers from domination by advertisers and from the temptation to accept undesirable advertising. To his vision the power of organized capital was invincible and benevolent. "This is an age of organization and of consolidation," he proclaimed, "and the man who opposes that tendency of modern life might as well oppose his puny strength to the torrent of Niagara."

His consolidation would bring into his power an all-embracing chain of factories, farms, shops, stores, publications, hotels, banks, real estate developments, all earning a fair profit, all linked together and throwing business to one another—making him richer, but more than that, making him greater—a catholic merger of prunes and printer's ink. And at the same time the one great corporation would be spreading to the masses the simple advantages of jobs, low-priced commodities, more instructive publications, safer banks—well-tempered philanthropy hand in hand with personal aggrandizement, and both in a sound cash position. This was Munsey's ideal and statesmanship—a favorite word of his—a great trust, a sort of Universal Everything, Inc.

Munsey added one further touch of gilding to the airy masterpiece. He was a bachelor, and he recognized that when he died his work would be done, his name forgotten, his accumulations scattered. His properties would crumble and decay at his death, he wrote once, "unless before that event I succeed in making them a part of a great combination."

This was Munsey's aspiration—big business—and this his hope for immortality.

This fond mirage he pursued for the greater part of two decades, and its collapse was one of those irritants, beyond

question, which made eventual success with his New York newspapers such an indispensable compensation to him. He acknowledged his revision of plan when he sold his Baltimore *News* in 1915, "The newspaper chain idea in the outworking isn't the same thing it looked to be in analysis. It has a fatal defect . . . the defect that is felt . . . under salaried management as contrasted with the newspaper under *individual ownership* management."

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Notwithstanding his top-lofty planning, it was chance that brought Munsey into banking just as into chain groceries, in each case the selfsame chance of real estate left on his hands.

When he erected the Munsey skyscraper for his Baltimore *News,* he placed a spacious banking room on the ground floor. But it remained unoccupied while he fretted.

"It looks like we aren't going to get a bank at all unless we start one ourselves," remarked Stuart Olivier, his general manager in Baltimore.

"All right," said Munsey. "That's fine. Go ahead and start it. You go to work and start a bank."

At last in December, 1912, the Munsey Trust Company of Baltimore opened its doors, Munsey himself having put in $500,000, or half of the capital, with Eugene L. Norton and Jacob France as the principal promoters.

A few months later, enlargement of the Munsey Building in Washington created another handsome banking room, and the course ahead was clear.

"Now, Stuart," said Munsey, "get busy and start another bank for us."

The Munsey Trust Company of Washington, with capital of $2,000,000, opened for business in May, 1913, two months after Woodrow Wilson's inauguration.

Now Munsey was a banker, and the trap was set which caught him in a local swirl of finance and politics, made him appear both cheat and hero, worried him with savage criticism and led to one of the most creditable public services in his history.

Washington at the time was under the spell of a boy wonder of finance, Elbridge E. Jordan, chairman of the United States Trust Company, a recent arrival from Texas, who had squeezed into the trust company and then, by promising high interest, had taken away depositors in swarms from the older banks. Naturally he suffered ostracism from the conservatives, but he was soaring high.

Then, in the late fall, the United States Trust Company ran into difficulties. It had been making real estate loans in a rising market, and values dropped until the security was insufficient; the capital was impaired. The conservatives wouldn't help him. Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo, awakened at two o'clock one morning and told of the crisis, which was a threat to the whole banking community, offered a Treasury loan of $1,000,000 to be made through one of the leading Washington banks—through any solvent acceptable Washington bank—to protect Jordan's depositors. But no agreement could be reached.

Meanwhile, rumors got abroad. Restless depositors, beginning on Thursday and rushing to a stampede on Friday, November 21, 1913, started drawing out their money; stood in lines extending from the bank windows far out along the street, withdrawing their money; at the close of business, Friday, still were withdrawing, still waiting.

Such was the crisis into which, at dusk that glowering Friday, strode rapidly the frigid, upright and solvent figure of Frank A. Munsey.

His arrival had had a brief prelude outside Washington,

two days before. At that time, Stuart Olivier in Baltimore had been approached by R. Lancaster Williams, his fellow director in the Munsey Trust Company, a brother of John Skelton Williams, then Assistant Secretary of the Treasury.

"That bank of Jordan's is about to crash," he said, "and my brother John and the President, too, are viewing it with alarm. Here is a new administration hardly started, business is bad, and if a bank blows up right under Wilson's nose, it may set off a whole train of troubles and damn him before he gets a chance. Do you think Munsey could be persuaded to take it over?"

The bank was hopeless, but still outstanding was Secretary McAdoo's offer of $1,000,000 to protect the depositors. Olivier went to New York with the question, with the fascinating offer of a merger to enlarge Munsey's bank.

"We can't do that, Stuart," said Munsey. "How do we know what the bank's condition is? What do you advise?"

"I advise against it. It isn't our funeral. It might be possible to take over the bank and meet the runs and save people's money. If conservatively handled, it might possibly be worked out without a loss, but that is about the best we could hope."

Munsey was making up his mind as they talked. To the political peril of the Democrats, he was indifferent. But here was a chance for a bold stroke. Possibly he visioned a distant return for his money.

"Stuart, go right back," he interrupted at last, "get Jake France, go over to Washington and look into the bank's condition yourselves, and if it checks up as it seems to now, we'll take the gamble."

"But, Chief, we haven't time. The run on the bank has started already, and it's getting worse."

"All right, let's act. Tell them I'll guarantee the depositors. Now go down to Washington."

This decision was made Thursday, as the clouds overhung the United States Trust Company. On Friday afternoon Munsey came himself, too excited to stay away.

He made two alternative proposals for buying the business and protecting depositors: one, to pay the bank a price of five per cent of all deposits, the directors in return to guarantee him against loss; second, to pay no price and receive no guarantee. In either case, if any assets remained after liquidation, they were to go to the stockholders. Promptly, the directors chose the second proposal.

Soothed by the pleasant assurance that his mere presence settled everything—the $1,000,000 loan from the Treasury already promised, the panicky directors in grateful accord—Munsey sent out a proclamation to the morning newspapers, instructed his men to iron out details with the Washington Clearing House and went to bed.

The banks of the Clearing House were a necessary link, for the law then prohibited any government loan to a trust company; it must go through a national bank. It had been assumed that three or four would borrow the $1,000,000 from the Treasury and pass it on to Munsey, but now all wanted a cut in the business. It was agreed—$90,000 apiece to eleven banks—and still they haggled.

How much money, the banks demanded, would Munsey put up? How much additional cash would he bring to Washington?

It was four o'clock in the morning, almost dawn of a fatal day, and still the banks continued their hold-up. At last, in the crisis, Munsey's lawyer promised that early the next day Munsey would bring in half a million dollars from New York further to strengthen his credit. He was to be made to put up money as well as use his name in this deal—his little six-month-old trust company with fewer than 4,000 depositors

swallowing an established institution with five branches, 55,000 depositors and more than $6,000,000 on deposit.

The Washington bankers being satisfied by this promise and the way made clear, Munsey's newspaper truck in charge of Olivier backed up to the Treasury of the United States at six o'clock that Saturday morning and was given $1,000,000 of fresh new money. At nine o'clock the Munsey Trust Company was ready to support Munsey's published reassurance, "I hereby give you my personal individual guarantee."

The uneasy depositors read his words and continued their withdrawals. Later on, Munsey himself dropped in, refreshed by his night's sleep, to see what was happening. The tellers, counting deliberately and going over each count four times before payment as a way to retard the rush, did their feeble best.

"You close at noon on Saturday's," remarked Munsey. "I think it would be well to announce that to-day the bank will keep open and pay off any depositor as late this afternoon as he comes in. We don't want to take advantage of rules to prevent a man's getting his money if he wants it."

That word was sent out. And then the depositors faded out of line, leaving their money, and the run ended.

For a brief ten days Munsey could preen himself over a bold, outstanding popular stroke by which he had unquestionably served the public welfare, although not without legitimate advantage to his own bank. He had saved thousands of government clerks and other small depositors. One enthusiast urged Congress to designate November 21 as a national holiday, "Munsey Day."

But there was a swift morning after, induced by that red-hot anti-administration partisan, the New York *Tribune,* questioning Munsey's personal honesty and charging favoritism through Lancaster Williams. And since the *Tribune* was at

war against the pending Federal Reserve banking bill, it shouted a warning that the measure would encourage further outrages of the same kind. Munsey was the frightful example.

The attack centered upon two vulnerable points. It held up the agreement that Munsey was to bring in $500,000, which he had repudiated the next day. And it dwelt upon an untrue and irritating document which Munsey's Washington *Times* had published after the settlement, "an official statement by the Treasury," saying "the Munsey was the best qualified bank in Washington to handle the situation. This company has the largest reserve fund—more cash on hand—than perhaps any other Washington institution."

The first point was covered by the business ethics of Munsey's time and caste, and he stood his ground. The Washington bankers were trying to get hold of his money; he wouldn't let them. He had made his deal with the Treasury and with the directors of the collapsing bank. He hadn't specifically authorized his agents to promise money. He wouldn't back them up. Let the Washington banks complain of New York Wall Street trickery as loudly as they chose. It was too late to recall the deal.

On the second point, there was mystery. The Treasury denied it had issued the statement. It was not accurate in its invidious reference to the other banks. How had it got into the *Times?* The explanation finally was given and accepted that the statement was written as an editorial for the *Times,* and in the rush of making an edition, it had been mis-labelled as a Treasury bulletin.

The experience was a costly one. Immediately after the bank run Munsey had announced that depositors who put back their money at once would not lose their interest—amounting in the aggregate to around $35,000; and after the *Tribune's* attack, as further reassurance, he directed that Christmas Savings funds

be paid off two weeks ahead of time. But confidence was so weakened that withdrawals continued, and in place of the $500,000 promised and undelivered, Munsey was forced within a few weeks to pay out $1,250,000.

In the end, however, all accounts and loans were paid off, and thanks to wartime real estate stimulation, the Munsey Trust Company came out ahead. A Senate committee investigated the merger when John Skelton Williams was appointed Comptroller of the Currency, and he was confirmed with but one dissenting vote—distinctly an exoneration.

* * * * * *

Munsey, in streaks, was a Don Quixote.

When he sold the Munsey Trust Company in Baltimore in February, 1915, he conditioned the deal upon the minority stockholders, if they cared to sell, being paid the same favorable price which he received.

E. P. Mitchell, veteran editor of the *Sun,* who continued for eight years under Munsey ownership, described a parallel procedure in his MEMOIRS OF AN EDITOR. When Munsey bought the *Sun,* said Mr. Mitchell, he

> paid liberally not only for the controlling interest but also, characteristically, for the outlying shares of the minority stockholders. . . . Ninety-nine acquirers out of a hundred would have found it convenient in his place to forget the existence of the more or less negligible interests beyond the line of masterdom. In the rather intimate view of Mr. Munsey's thoughts and business methods which eight years of close association gave me—I discover no instance where the best impulses of the New England conscience and a just pride in financial considerateness, as well as integrity, did not prevail in his multifarious dealings.

Munsey stumbled into a rambling series of problems when he was putting up his new building in Baltimore. The original

plot of ground, he decided, was not large enough; he must have the property next door.

It was a smallish plot held by an estate, and on it a two-story building sheltered a lunch room. The heirs, knowing something of Munsey, had set their price at $20,000, far in excess of prevailing values. Munsey's advisers told him to refuse.

"We must have that property," he answered them. "Pay the $20,000 and sign up."

The heirs, hearing their demand was accepted, proceeded to reconsider, and their new price became $40,000.

"We must pay for our mistakes," said Munsey. "Go ahead and buy it."

But a second time, now, the heirs gambled on Munsey and doubled the price; he must pay $80,000. The trustee of the estate renounced the trust in shame. Another angry report of defeat was telephoned to New York.

"Buy it," was Munsey's answer. And so at $80,000 the property became his, but still not free from complications. The lunch room in the old building was operated by a widow who had placed in it the whole of her husband's insurance, about $3,000, most of it for labor installing the fixtures. Renting on a month-to-month basis for a low rate, she had taken her chance and lost. Now her little capital would be wiped out. She begged that, from grace and generosity, the new owner preparing to demolish would contribute as much as $1,500 to help her to a new start.

"I'm sorry," Munsey blustered. "It's hard. But I can't assume responsibility for what was done by the old owners. We paid the $80,000. One thing we can never do is to mix sentiment with business. The widow will just have to move out and bear her losses."

However, the crisis was distressing and the widow persistent.

So Stuart Olivier decided to let her state the case for herself when Munsey came to town. Without warning he ushered her into the office, with her sister. Both were pretty, and the widow was in tears. In five or ten minutes they left, still weeping. Munsey said nothing.

But the following week instructions arrived by mail. The widow was to be paid not $1,500 but $3,000, with interest, and for six months she was to be carried on the payroll at a modest salary to allow time for her reëstablishment. In such manner, when a woman shed tears, did Munsey exclude sentiment from business.

* * * * * *

Early in his career, when the magazine's success placed surplus cash in his hands, Munsey returned to the stock market, in which he had dabbled in Augusta fifteen years before. Soon afterward, Bryan's Free Silver issue was defeated in 1896, with which began a period of industrial speculation and rapid increase in stock values surpassing anything seen before in the country. Munsey's old friend Ridgway recalls:

"Back in '97 when his fortune was just beginning to pile up, I was down on the floor of his office with him, looking at the plans for a new yacht. The telephone rang. After listening for a few moments he turned to me, still on my knees, with a grin on his face. 'It is the broker,' he said. 'He tells me I have lost a million. That is a new sensation.' Then he got down on the floor and finished looking over the plans for the yacht. That yacht never materialized, nor did any other, though he was on the point of buying several times. He never was quite sure he would enjoy it, and the expense of keeping a palace afloat just for a bachelor could not be made to square with his idea of fitness."

Win or lose, he accepted stolidly. Another of his men re-

turned to Munsey's office after lunching with him and learned the market had taken a sudden upturn.

"I made $800,000 while we were eating," said Munsey.

"Cash in your pocket?"

"No, not in my pocket. Still it's a pleasant sensation."

Munsey was never a speculator to his own Puritan eyes. He would not permit a stock ticker in his office. No matter how rapidly he might turn over a stock, he insisted, "I bought always with a view to a long term and not a short one." He considered himself an investor, a constructive follower of his ideal, J. Pierpont Morgan. Throughout more than a decade in which he was publishing idolatrous articles about Morgan and the United States Steel Corporation, he also was absorbing a business philosophy.

Munsey may not have read his magazine, as his editors asserted, but it is certain he followed the business articles: articles in praise of bigness, glorifying great wealth, approving the Morgan "community of interest" theory to the disparagement of Carnegie competition, describing how consolidations would promote economics, recording the Morgan principles of sparing no expense to obtain first-class equipment and of never being a bear on the United States. All this, written down and reiterated in *Munsey's Magazine,* contributed to the publisher's own education.

He bought and sold in the market from the advantageous inside position of personal friendship at the main corner in Wall Street, the House of Morgan. He was well acquainted with Morgan himself. He came gradually to the closest intimacy with Perkins.

Almost immediately upon arriving at wealth, Munsey met Perkins, like himself a one-time grocery clerk and self-made success, then a young vice-president of the New York Life Insurance Company, on his way to being the most highly paid

insurance official in America. Perkins was a man of brilliant fluency, at his best when dealing in human values, temperamentally the opposite of Munsey. The two disagreed violently in opinions, while possessing a deep affinity in spirit. Perkins planted many a new idea in Munsey's head, notably that of profit-sharing with employees. As they grew older he and Perkins saw each other more often, journeyed to Europe together and found the close association of brothers in the Roosevelt Presidential campaign of 1912.

The magnetic Perkins enjoyed himself with Munsey and sometimes at his expense. During the Roosevelt campaign a group of the faithful were in Munsey's apartment when their host was called away, leaving word to them, "Make yourselves at home." No sooner had the door closed than Perkins shouted gleefully:

"Come on; let's put in some phone calls for Frank to pay."

They proceeded to talk to Bull Moose leaders all over the country, until nearly midnight, charging all calls to Munsey. It was one millionaire's idea of a joke on another.

When Perkins died in June, 1920, Munsey wrote an editorial for his *Sun and New York Herald* praising the alert, practical mind of the departed, his ability as a money-maker, his generosity as a friend. Perkins, he said, as if telling about himself,

> could not breathe the air of inaction. He had no hobbies, he knew nothing of frivolity, he played no games. He was a keen reader of newspapers; he hardly ever read books. In the problems engrossing his mind and in the fierce fray of combat he lived books—books that meant a thousand times more to his intense nature than the printed pages from another's pen. I have known Mr. Perkins intimately for more than a quarter of a century. He had been much in my life; I much in his.

The tribute commands respect. However, Perkins was more fun than it indicates.

Munsey was resentful of the suggestion that this was a friendship of convenience.

"I have never had a business partner in my publishing enterprises and other interests," he said. "I have reasoned out my own problems, done my own thinking, and I followed this method strictly in my stock transactions."

It would be unlikely, however, that the friendship between Munsey and Perkins did not produce valuable knowledge, and there would be nothing in that fairly to contradict Munsey's general statement that never in his life "did I buy or sell securities on tips or short speculative movements. I bought or sold securities on the underlying business conditions of the country and the money conditions of the country as I saw them."

The years of Perkins' high favor as a Morgan partner coincided with Munsey's most active trading. Perkins withdrew from the firm January 1, 1911, and Munsey's speculations began to be curtailed about the same time; just before the election of 1912, answering a campaign attack, he announced that he owned 10,000 shares of United States Steel, Preferred, but did not own "directly or indirectly, as much as a single share of Wall Street stock of any kind, other than the Steel."

And in 1922 he declared, "I have not owned a share of Wall Street securities of any kind whatsoever in, I should say, something like a dozen years."

Now, practically if not verbally, Munsey sold himself to the House of Morgan. He enjoyed a community of interest, sang Morgan's song, was given inside position in Morgan deals. Munsey was a Morgan tool. It was excellent business, rotten journalism.

* * * * * *

For a considerable period, by Wall Street legend, Munsey was the largest holder of United States Steel stock. He owned

at least 300,000 Steel shares at once, and according to various brokers and bankers of reputaton he owned on several occasions at a single time from 500,000 to 1,100,000 shares of assorted stocks. The face value of his holdings amounted at times to more than $50,000,000. With his fortune pledged to support around 1,000,000 shares, he light-heartedly sailed away to Europe one summer, leaving discretionary power to an employee to buy or sell as judgment dictated.

When nearest the limit of his credit, hanging onto stocks by a hair's margin, Munsey would go to his rooms as usual at six o'clock in the evening and take his nap before dinner, sleeping peacefully.

"I suppose I have a remarkable personality to be able to sleep that way," he confided to a broker.

His desk and the tables in his office in those years were piled with charts and graphs, tracing the behavior of stocks in which he was interested—United States Steel, Union Pacific, International Harvester and others. And every afternoon by three-fifteen o'clock, a quarter of an hour after the Exchange closed, a clerk had ready for him a detailed report of his holdings, showing exactly where he stood on profits, losses and commitments.

Munsey had bought steel stock before Morgan's formation of the United States Steel Corporation on February, 1901, and from his friend, Judge Elbert H. Gary, chairman of the big corporation, he acquired a faith in it which was enduring. There was a further practical, bookkeeping sales argument which appealed to him when Steel, Preferred, dipped to low prices. The stock at par yielded seven per cent. Borrowing from the brokers at four per cent to carry the stock, he collected a conservative profit, just by shaving the difference in interest, regardless of market quotations.

He bought Steel, Common, nearly at its all-time low of eight

and three-quarters in 1904, riding upward with it into the fifties. Then in 1907 when the panic brought it to 21⅞, he bought in huge quantities again, starting to buy at thirty and increasing his orders as it dropped, buying, according to informed insiders, at the lowest eighth it reached, while astute traders begged him to sell and his acquaintances shook their heads, during such a toboggan slide that practically the whole financial community was wailing that Steel had no bottom at all.

"At one time when Steel broke, he had an order for us to buy a thousand shares on each one-eighth point downward," one of his brokers recalled. "It was falling so fast that in three or four minutes we bought him eight thousand shares. Then he had to stop."

Munsey's courage in 1907 won him solid respect from Wall Street. Clarence W. Barron's memoirs, MORE THEY TOLD BARRON, gives an insider's cynical view of the situation which is illuminating although it doesn't mention Munsey's name. Barron records the gossip that:

> Morgan took the Steel Corporation money and pegged U. S. Steel at twenty-two. Of course Perkins and the other fellows around, who knew this also, bought the stock after Morgan pegged it with Steel Corporation money. Frick was expecting to see the stock at five dollars and had figured to buy the whole thing for himself, but he didn't dare buy it in the panic.

Barron also mentions specifically a pool in which Munsey held 125,000 shares of Steel.

A few more fractions of drop in market prices in 1907 would have been the ruin of Munsey.

"He was within the narrowest shade of being wiped out when the upturn came," said a broker who handled a large part of his account. "He was carrying himself on his own col-

lateral, which amounted to about everything he had in the world. It couldn't have gone much lower without breaking him."

When the market rebounded, Munsey reaped his reward. At peak values, his brokers have estimated, his profits on paper were no less than $20,000,000. Still Munsey held on, and he didn't take his $20,000,000 home. However, he got out with no less than $5,000,000, by the estimate of conservative men.

In the midst of the panic, while the timorous were quaking, Munsey wrote for his magazine, the issue of January, 1908, an uncommonly cool admonition to buy, quoting prices of leading stocks on the day when he was writing, November 23, 1907, as follows:

> I doubt if we shall have again in many years an opportunity to buy sound securities—bonds and stocks of great railroads and strong industrial concerns—at prices so low as those of today. . . . I would advise you to shun speculation as you would shun a pestilence. Purchasing good securities outright is not speculation; it is an investment—quite as much an investment as is the purchase of real estate.

Exactly a year later, January, 1909, he checked up the price advances, recounting:

> All who followed my reasoning have made money and a good deal of it. And the same advice that I gave to you, I followed myself. If I had not been willing to follow it myself, I should not have given it to you. In fact I was then, as I am now, willing to take chances myself that I would not have recommended to you.

His comparative table, November, 1907, to November, 1908, showed a gain in United States Steel, Common, from 24 to 57⅞; Steel, Preferred, 82¼ to 113¾; Union Pacific, 112⅞ to 183¼; New York Central, 94½ to 116⅝.

"The same advice that I gave to you," he said, "I followed myself."

Wall Street added millions to Munsey's fortune, there can be no doubt of it, although in 1922 he declared forthrightly his money "did not come to any considerable extent through the buying and selling of stocks. . . . My actual net profit from my security holdings was relatively inconsequential compared with the aggregate profit of years from my publishing, real estate and other interests."

He specified also, "the fortune I have, such as it is, has come primarily from two sources; the forty dollars capital I brought with me from Maine to New York forty years ago, and the capacity God gave me for work. There has been no mystery, no legerdemain, no short-cuts to fortune building with me. It has been done by fairly sound reasoning, the courage to put my conclusions to the test and by paying the price in work."

And then as he dryly expressed it, "with sufficient experience in the security market to satisfy me and with some profit —not enough to get excited about—I withdrew my capital from the street and turned to something more dramatic, more worth while, the daily newspaper."

Turning away, after all, was a titanic act in any man's career. Others have said they would get out and have found themselves chained to the market. But not Munsey. With millions in his hand, he said he was going to quit; then he quit and stayed quit.

Looking over the shoulder of one of his employees in the *Sun* office years afterward and finding him studying the day's Stock Exchange table, he pointed to New York Central at 72.

"The best buy on the board to-day is that one," he said like a war charger hearing the bugle, and then—"But I'm out of the market. I haven't bought a share in years."

Chapter X

"YOUR YOUNG MAN'S FIGURE"

MUNSEY HELD fat men in low esteem. He shrank from them in physical loathing. He ordered many a man discharged for the crime of being fat. All his offices had their tradition of the woes of fatness. After Munsey's death some of his loyal favorites added girth in the process of age, unabashed by the irony of it, but during his lifetime only the daring permitted themselves even a mild plumpness.

The perfect man to get along with Munsey would be slim and tall, tasteful in dress, with close-set blue eyes, long nose, and disdainful independent manner, a native of Maine. This was the ideal, a mirror of Munsey himself.

Making frequent snap-judgment on appearances, and setting a timid man's value upon externals, Munsey doomed scores of fat men and also the old because they showed their age, the white-haired and bald, some men because they were untidy, others for personal oddities of dress and habit. Munsey didn't think it proper for his men to work in shirt sleeves, he wanted them always with coats on. Under the weight of his displeasure, one valued employee changed his name because Munsey thought the one to which he was born hadn't a very aristocratic sound. The original name was Popp.

Even the lean and hungry look in his opinion could be carried too far. On his Washington *Times* there was an extraordinarily energetic slender employee who remained year after year in the same job as if chained. The owner wouldn't advance

him, deeming him too thin and delicate to carry responsibilities, and at length the young man quit. Marvin H. McIntyre was his name, and later he became a secretary to President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

But obesity was the sin hardest for Munsey to forgive. Svetozar Ivan Tonjoroff of the New York *Press* weighed about three hundred pounds. He had huge jowls, beefy shoulders, an equatorial belly; he sweated profusely, and frequently between tasks he ate as a pastime.

This militated in no way against his being one of the best news editors in New York. A native of Bulgaria speaking most of the European languages, he had driven a Boston street-car to earn his way through Harvard. His intellectual energy, memory and curiosity were extraordinary, and his keen eye discovered many a latent error in its deepest hiding place. No other member of the staff could approach Tonjoroff in breadth of reading and ready information. Wedged into the slot of the big copy desk, he was a prize asset for any paper. Years afterward he died as the Balkan correspondent of the Associated Press.

Soon after Munsey bought the *Press* in September, 1912, he visited the editorial room at midnight. In evening dress, leaning upon his walking stick, he stood gazing around, silent, expressionless, in the midst of the rush. Then he walked over swiftly to his managing editor, John A. Hennessy.

"Who is that man there?" He pointed with his stick.

"That's Tonjoroff, Mr. Munsey; our news editor."

"Fire him. He's too fat."

"But Mr. Munsey, we'd be very much crippled without him. He's——"

"I want that man fired. Understand! I won't have anybody as fat as that on a paper of mine. Fire him."

Hennessy proceeded to handle the situation. He told Ton-

joroff to keep out of sight whenever the Old Man was around, and for months the office lived under a spy system of elevator operators, doorkeepers and copy boys, all on the qui vive to save Tonjoroff. Whenever the alarm sounded, regardless of what work he was doing, the fat man leaped into a closet and remained for the duration of Munsey's visit. In time he wearied of the hide and seek and departed.

But Tonjoroff had made an impression on Munsey, and the publisher guiltily kept bringing up his name in conversation, wondering what had happened to him. Was he getting along?

Finally, regardless of his tonnage, Tonjoroff turned up on the payroll again and was allowed to stay. Bob Davis, fiction editor of *Munsey's Magazine,* was publishing a complete novel each month and he made the former news editor his assistant, also finding his ready knowledge of Europe invaluable when the war began.

To Tonjoroff's taste largely was due one of the notable literary feats of the magazine's career. He was an early enthusiast over Joseph Conrad, the Bulgarian enchanted by the Slavic brooding of the great Pole, the newspaper man venerating the novelist. Tonjoroff talked much of Conrad, and as Davis was departing for London one summer, he urged him to see Conrad and get a novel for the magazine. Davis brought one back—too long, but with Conrad's free permission to cut it down for magazine use—and Tonjoroff was assigned to that task. He bled for the sacred words he slew, but likewise he worked with such understanding as to leave few scars. So it came about, by the participation of Tonjoroff, the fat man, that *Munsey's Magazine* in February, 1915, published Conrad's "Victory."

The New York *Press* once needed a junior executive, and it was learned that James Keely in Chicago had a most outstanding, brilliant and splashy assistant. By all accounts he was just

the man for the *Press.* Munsey telegraphed a request that he come to New York at his expense to discuss a position. The man was to arrive Sunday morning.

It happened that Stuart Olivier of Munsey's Baltimore *News* was in New York that day, and he was asked to sit in and help size up the new man. Promptly on the hour there was a knock on Munsey's door at Sherry's, and the publisher walked toward his bedroom, leaving Olivier to receive the guest.

And there stood a fat man—not merely a man in good flesh but a mountain of man, smiling hopefully and introducing himself as the one summoned from Chicago, supposedly to receive an important offer.

Heartily, Olivier bade him enter and they began to talk, only to be interrupted by Munsey's valet, asking Olivier into the inner room. "I'm sick at my stomach," groaned Munsey. "That man in my rooms! Did you ever see anything like him? Get him out."

"Why, Chief, what's the matter with you?"

"That fat man! He nauseates me. He's the most disgusting sight I ever saw."

"Now, Chief, you come out and talk to him yourself. He is a superior person. It won't take you two minutes to see it. I think he is what you want. Come on out and see him."

"Get rid of him. I won't look at him again."

"Hush, Chief, he'll hear you."

"I want him to hear me. I don't want him in my apartment a minute longer. Send him away."

And so the courtly Olivier made Munsey's apologies and hurried the visitor to the general manager, to be interviewed, jollied, let down as gently as possible and sent home with all amenities observed.

The Baltimore *News,* under Olivier, was free from the daily interference which Munsey visited upon his New York papers,

under his very eye. He seldom went to Baltimore, but even the *News* had its fat-man incidents. Here is one of them, beginning in the conventional pattern:

"Who's that man?"

"He is one of the most valuable men we have, Chief."

"Fire him. He's too fat."

"But we need him on the staff. He is a man we can't possibly replace."

"Too fat. Fat men are lazy. I won't have them around. If he's so valuable, let the Lord have him. We don't want him. Get rid of him."

Olivier did not obey. He explained Munsey's prejudice to the man, told him there was no urgency, that he would stand by him as long as necessary, would never fire him, but that if he could find another job by taking as much time as he needed for the search, it would relieve a situation. But the Baltimore fat man was old and his overweight was accompanied by internal disorders. He worried at the bad news, and soon he took to his bed with inflammatory rheumatism. Within a few months when Olivier next saw Munsey, he reported to him, "Well, Chief, the case of that fat man you spoke of is disposed of. You don't have to worry about him any more. He died last week."

"Hm, what did he die of?"

"He died of worry because you ordered him fired. I didn't fire him, but I told him what you said and it killed him."

"Stuart," answered Munsey in injured tones, "if you ever say another thing to me as cruel as that, I'll never speak to you again."

Then on the New York *Sun* there was a fat man story, also taking off from the same prelude, "Who is that man?" . . . The managing editor bluntly said he'd quit before he'd fire any man for such flimsy cause.

"Well, something's got to be done about it," insisted Munsey. "Send him up to Bill Brown's health farm and have him reduce. Have him take off a hundred pounds."

"But Mr. Munsey, that is expensive. I doubt very much if he can afford a trip of that kind."

"Who said anything about his affording it? Send him up there and send the bill to me. I won't have him around as he is. Take off at least a hundred pounds."

And so the man was sent to the diet, exercise and fresh air of the health farm. In three weeks he wrote back abject apologies. He had put on twenty pounds more.

"Come on back to work," said the managing editor, and another fat man was added to the bootleg list, never to be caught in the office by the owner.

One exception to the ban was Don Marquis—already established when Munsey acquired him with the *Sun,* a brilliant star and celebrity nearing his peak, undeniably one of the paper's most popular attractions. He was a fat man. Yet he never knew that his new employer disliked flesh. Literally, he never heard of the phobia until years later, for Munsey respectfully concealed his feelings. Instead of firing him, Munsey merely talked to him about dieting whenever they met.

"You ought to watch your eating and get back your young man's figure," he would say.

"I can tell you exactly how to do it. It is quite simple. Every day eat less than you did the day before by the amount of just so much food as you could put on a postage stamp. Then you'll get back your young man's figure."

Munsey, the lean son of rock-ribbed Maine, hated fat men more than he hated Democrats. He permitted frequent variation and compromise on politics, seldom on the flesh.

His purchase of the Baltimore *American* in 1920 brought into his hands one of the most unswerving hidebound partisan

political organs in America. For years it had echoed orthodox Republicanism in Maryland, that and nothing more. It was a shock to some of the regular Republican nominees in 1922, therefore, to come under attack from the *American*. Munsey's Baltimore *News* previously had been critical of Senator Joseph I. France, a Republican; the *American* now proceeded actively to support his Democratic opponent, William Cabell Bruce.

Senator France went straight to the editor, C. M. Harwood, making it clear that if the heresy were not abated he would report it to the owner himself. The paper's clientele was Republican and would be displeased. Advertisers would fall away. The Senator made the dire prediction that opposing him would cost the *American* $1,000,000 in normal revenue.

The editor passed his responsibility on to Munsey, telling him why he was supporting Bruce and opposing France.

"Senator France!" pondered Munsey. "He's that fat fellow, isn't he? Tell him I don't mind spending a million dollars to beat him."

With feelings on the subject so ardent and highly developed, Munsey required nothing less than a miracle of self-control in 1908 to give even passive support to a leader such as William Howard Taft."

When Taft received the Republican nomination for President he was on one of his diets and had trained down to 297½ pounds. He left the White House in 1913 weighing 341.

Confronted by this issue in 1912, regardless of the tariff, antitrust prosecutions, foreign policy and the fate of the Grand Old Party, Munsey came up to the most important political choice of his lifetime with the decision as predestinated as Martin Luther's. He could do no otherwise, God help him.

Chapter XI

1912

On a muggy Indian Summer Friday in 1913, a month before election day, Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, a perspiring vociferous oracle, testified four and a half hours before the renowned Clapp Committee of the United States Senate in Washington.

The committee, called after the name of its chairman, Senator Moses E. Clapp, was scrutinizing the collection and expenditure of money in political campaigns, particularly the money used the previous spring before the Republican National Convention at Chicago in June, by which it was sought to win the Presidential nomination for Colonel Roosevelt and away from President Taft.

Late in the afternoon Senator Pomerene put a question: "Do I understand from your answer that a sum was underwritten?"

"I think there was a sum underwritten for one of my special trains," Colonel Roosevelt said, groping. "I think I could not get off on a trip until Mr. Munsey and Mr. Perkins underwrote it; but I am only giving you my rather vague memory."

It is a trifling fragment, this question and answer. Nevertheless it was the history of the whole 1912 Roosevelt Progressive campaign, the Bull Moose movement, in parable—"I could not get off . . . until Mr. Munsey and Mr. Perkins underwrote it."

This petty crisis arose, another campaigner has remembered

more precisely, at the Grand Central Station in New York when a railroad agent at the last moment declared that the credit of no political committee was any good, he must have cash money. The Presidential candidate already was on board his special train surrounded by his worshippers. Distant audiences awaited. But no wheel turned. A messenger rushed off to seek Frank Munsey, found him, got the money—some $1,800—paid it over. Then and not until then, the station master gave the signal and the train chugged off toward the Colonel's perennial Armageddon.

Munsey and Perkins by personal gifts of almost half a million dollars made possible the Roosevelt revolt in the Republican Party. Perhaps they were exemplifying a higher strategy, these two big business conservatives taking over the menacing left wing of the party, buying and paying for it and putting it in their pockets to the more or less breathless dismay of many an original progressive. The spectacle delighted the country, and scoffers liked to speak of Munsey and Perkins as the "dough moose" of the Bull Moose Party. But their effectiveness cannot be laughed off. There have been larger contributors to campaigns but few ever surpassed these two in timely and essential usefulness. They earned their places that turbulent year among the great political angels of history, among the archangels.

Two weeks after Colonel Roosevelt's appearance before the Clapp Committee, Munsey himself was called to testify. The New York *World* saw him in the witness chair as "tall, loose-jointed, rather ungainly, somewhat stooped and inclined to nervousness." He was a model of openness:

> I was asked one day to meet William L. Ward, the member of the National Committee from New York, a man of long experience in politics. It was at that meeting that the organization began. Mr. Ward suggested the groundwork

> . . . he had already spent some money and more would be necessary. I said that pending the election of a treasurer I would advance money as he advised it.

This preliminary conversation was in December, 1911. "Mr. Ward," he said, "was the beginning of everything."

Munsey told the committee that his contributions to the Roosevelt pre-convention fund were $67,166.56. Of that, $50,000 went to Chairman Dixon and Treasurer Hooker. The rest, he said, was spent before any organization was effected.

"I contributed $15,000 to the fund for the State of New York," he said, "to the State of Massachusetts $9,000; in special editions of newspapers furnished to the Massachusetts committee, $10,969.44; cash to the Maryland State Committee, $5,237.70; printing pamphlets, express charges on same, for National Committee, $10,632.02; total $118,005.72."

Munsey contributed, according to further sworn statements, an additional $111,250 to the Progressive Party after the split at the Chicago Convention, a total of $229,255.72. Perkins gave $123,000 before the convention, $140,000 afterward, total $263,000. In the pre-convention period they were overshadowed by the gifts of two other men, William Flinn of Pittsburgh, a contractor and one-time political boss, $144,000, and Dan Hanna of Cleveland, son of the great Mark Hanna, $177,000. From first to last, however, Munsey and Perkins exceeded all others in giving, and their words, pointing the Colonel's expectant feet toward the path, were by far the most immediate and persuasive.

Nor were campaign funds the total of Munsey's expenditures for the Bull Moose movement. A year before the election, it will be remembered, he tried to sell his losing newspapers in Boston and Philadelphia, but in order to give support to Roosevelt he kept the papers alive and paid their deficits. At high tide in the campaign, September, he bought the New York

Press for $1,000,000 to provide a Progressive morning newspaper in New York, lacking before. And in private conversation that summer he predicted that his magazines would lose half a million dollars of advertising revenue the next year because of his partisanship. He was glad anyway to support Roosevelt, he said stoically, for he had no family and did not care for money except for what he could accomplish with it.

His estimate of the loss was no exaggeration. Ayer's NEWSPAPER ANNUAL AND DIRECTORY, listing approximate circulation figures, dropped the total for *Munsey's Magazine* from 500,000 copies a month in 1911 to 400,000 in 1912. More to the point, the trade publication, *Printers' Ink*, dealing in exact measurements, reported the volume of the magazine's net paid advertising in 1911 as 272,395 lines; 1912, 203,590 lines; 1913, 155,247. The ground thus lost, *Munsey's* was never able to recover, slumping without let-up to 62,482 in 1917, then coming back to 97,616 in 1920, finally tapering off from there to the death.

In concluding his testimony before the Clapp Committee, Munsey lightly remarked:

"You see I have been so widely represented as giving vast sums to this campaign that when I present this figure and contrast it with the tremendous generosity that has been attributed to me, it makes me feel like a piker."

But Munsey by no logic or prejudice could have been rated a piker in 1912.

* * * * * *

"Poor dear Frank," as the Colonel called him, paid the bills. He had the status of any Broadway angel around his show—a solemn non-participation, rewarded by the friendship of the star, respectful attention from the cast and plenty of joshing by the professionals when his back was turned. His place was in the shadows, although opposition orators and newspapers

sought daily to drag him forward as a liability by hammering at his Steel Trust associations.

Munsey arrived at headquarters one day before the convention with a bulky document, a program of suggestions for the conduct of the campaign, which he delivered to George Henry Payne, energetic young publicity man and confidential assistant. The candidate was going to make a speech at Louisville, Kentucky, and Munsey had learned that Payne was to accompany him as far as Philadelphia for an uninterrupted talk.

"Give this to Colonel Roosevelt," said Munsey, handing over the paper, "and be sure that he reads it. Watch his face as he reads it. I want to know what he thinks about it."

A few hours later on the train after their own discussion had been finished, Payne brought out the Munsey document. Its author was very insistent, he explained, that Colonel Roosevelt read it without fail. The Colonel rapidly ran through the sheets.

"Mr. Payne, you may tell Mr. Munsey that you saw me read his letter," he chuckled in his high-pitched emphatic enunciation, biting off his words, and then—disposing of the paper—"but you need not tell him that you saw me drop it at once into the waste-paper basket."

Munsey seldom burst out into the hubbub and heat of the campaign, preferring to do his fighting at arm's length through written manifestos, but his time came the week before the New Jersey primary. Telephoning Roosevelt headquarters in the Metropolitan Tower, he found that only Payne was left in charge. Where were the others?

Mr. Perkins was ill, Mr. Stoddard attending a wedding, Senator Dixon in Washington.

"This is terrible, Payne. We must do something at once. Come to my office and let us talk it over."

Payne stepped across Madison Square to the Flatiron Building.

"Payne, you must go over and take charge in New Jersey immediately."

"Mr. Munsey, there is no one to leave in the office."

"This is more important than anything else, Payne. Here we are in one of the most important primaries of the campaign, and these men have gone off about their private affairs and done nothing. We must save this situation. Drop everything and hurry over to Jersey. Have you any money for the trip?"

The treasury was empty but Payne was loaded for the question. One of the others had cautioned him the week before, "When asking Munsey for money, always double the amount you need, because he always cuts it in half." Payne judged that about $2,000 would be required for a week's tour by automobile for speakers and organizers. In addition he needed money for the payroll and expenses at headquarters. He made his mental discount.

"It will take about $6,000, Mr. Munsey."

"That is a large sum of money. But in a great cause like this we mustn't stint." And Munsey wrote his check for the full $6,000.

On primary day, after Payne's last minute scattering of Munsey's money, no doubt largely as a result of it, New Jersey climbed on the band wagon, instructing its entire convention delegation to vote for Colonel Roosevelt.

To Munsey these New Jersey votes were personal trophies. After this, when he heard the office spellbinders expansively describing their triumphs in the campaign, he liked to move quietly over to Payne's desk and murmur, "Well, we carried New Jersey, didn't we?"

At last it arrived, the Republican National Convention at Chicago, June 18 to 22, 1912. It was not the metier for a cold

and standoffish person. . . . Taft and Roosevelt in a grudge fight to the death . . . a convention punch-drunk and emotion-drunk . . . a star-spangled shindy for in-fighters . . . policemen massed shoulder to shoulder around the platform to discourage fisticuffs. . . ."We want Teddy," "We want Teddy," chanted twenty-four hours a day. . . . Negro delegates locked in hotel rooms lest the opposition entice them away . . . statesmen bawling "Fraud and theft," "Cold-blooded premeditated larceny," "Liar, liar, liar," at fullest lung power . . . galleries derisively shrieking "Toot, toot," and "Choo, choo," as the Taft steam roller flattened the opposition . . . bleary-eyed politicians getting religion as at a revival, singing, shouting and weeping aloud. The party of half a century's tradition was ripping apart.

Munsey, the backer, had a choice seat but no part in the performance. Behind the scenes, yes, his rôle was important. Not only his money but the advice he gave was attentively received. Outside he was an onlooker.

There was a choice section of close-range seats to one side of the platform reserved for the élite—Mrs. Taft, the President's wife, Alice Roosevelt and Nicholas Longworth, the special rich by dozens. Newspapers lightly estimated that among the hundred persons sitting here was represented $800,000,000. They called it the Royal Box. Here was Munsey's own place. In detachment and formality he viewed the convention from the Royal Box.

"Most of the rest of us were blithe spirits, willing to take our lives in our hands and go to political hell grinning," recalled William Allen White in a letter,

> Munsey seemed to exude the stinking odor of moldy greenbacks. But when we made ribaldry, his smile chilled us. He talked in soft sepulchral whispers—"the manners of an undertaker"—and was always against the exhibition of

> any audacity. The Bull Moose platform must have crucified him. I was on the sub-committee that wrote it (and by the way, it stands up pretty well to-day). He gave Roosevelt what seemed to his other more irresponsible friends bad advice. He was always pulling Roosevelt's coat tails, holding him back. Pinchot, Hiram Johnson, Jim Garfield, Victor Murdock, O. K. Davis, Mose Clapp, Joe Dixon were all for putting on a big celebration all the time—platform dance in the grove and fireworks at night. Munsey was a mole—silent, subterranean, gray, blind, a funny creature in our menagerie. But in the end he and his kind wrecked it. When I got a chance to drop a silent tear at his bier, I crashed a torpedo instead. I hope it knocked his smiling teeth out, wishing him no worse luck.

Munsey's heart was in the campaign but articulate emotion was out of his reach. And politics to him was the most ponderous of sciences.

The evening of election day he chanced to meet Will Irwin, a fellow worker, and invited him to dinner at Sherry's. The restaurant was distributing election bulletins to the tables on mimeographed sheets. One of the first said, "Governor of Florida claims State for Democrats."

The State was incorrigibly Democratic, so Irwin tried a joke, "Well, well. Florida Democratic. That's important if true."

Munsey gave him a solemn, patient answer, "But, Mr. Irwin, we never have counted on Florida, anyway."

* * * * * *

Munsey liked to call himself a liberal; nevertheless, and of course, he should have been for Taft in 1912 and not for Roosevelt.

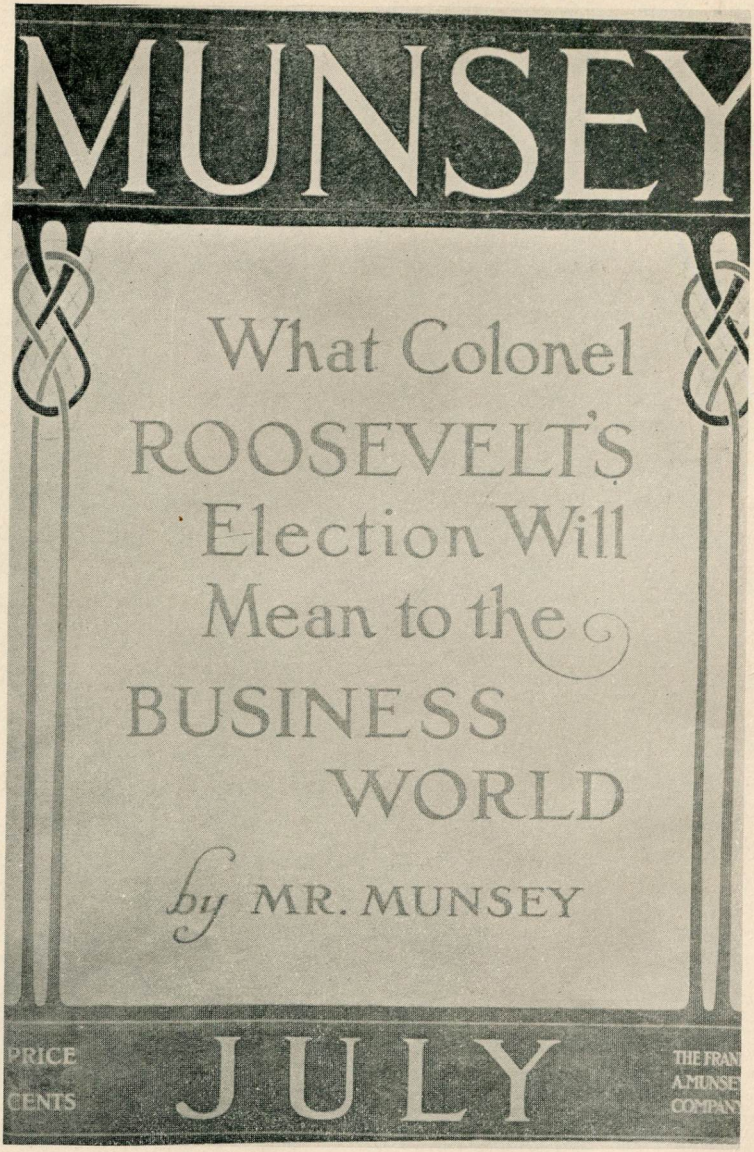
By temperament and type, origin and schooling, interest and sentiment, Munsey was of the same breed as the Uncle Joe Cannons and Senator Aldriches who brought Taft into dis-

credit—all of them practical old-time G. O. P. big-business standpatters. He was an heir to the Blaine tradition as were they. He was of the business oligarchy which they served.

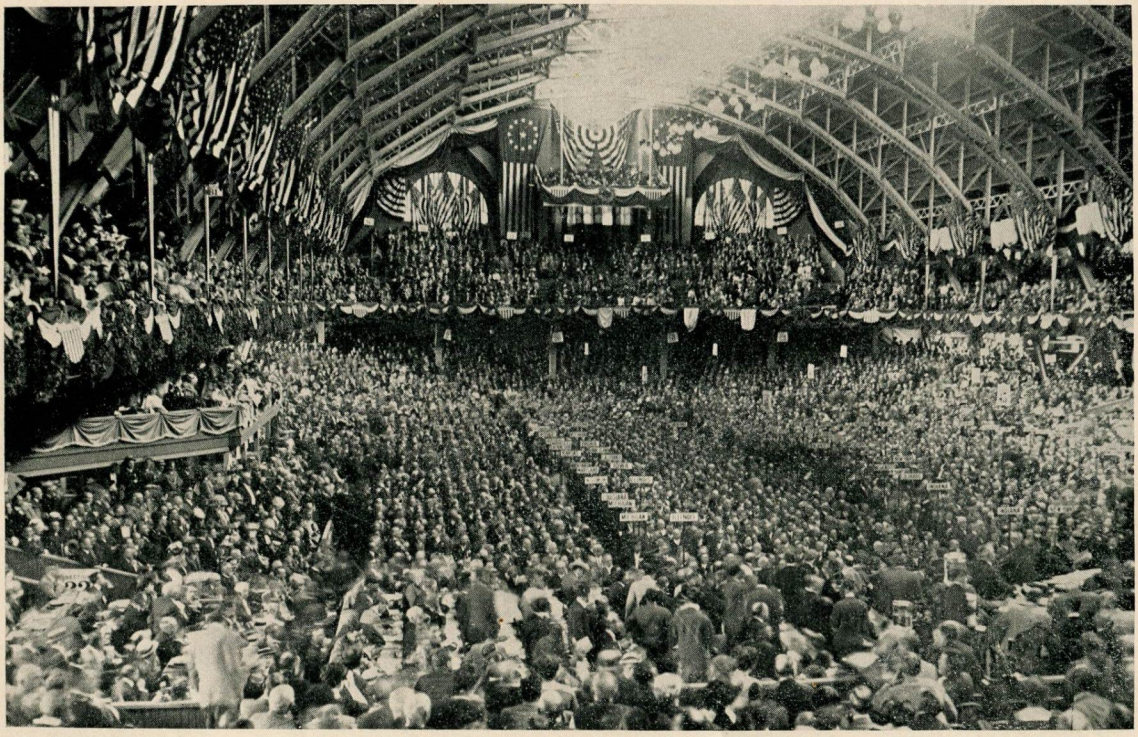
To be surprised, however, at his desertion to Roosevelt is to overlook the whole mélange of discordant personalities loyally welded to the leader. After election they flew apart like shrapnel; but under the impulse of hot personal devotion they were blood brothers—Munsey and Perkins from Wall Street with Jane Addams and Judge Ben Lindsey of the social uplift; Clapp and Beveridge of the Senatorial insurgency; William Allen White and the Pinchot brothers, hero worshippers; Hiram Johnson, Francis J. Heney and William Flinn, hard-boiled politicians a continent's breadth apart, so fervid that observers linked all three together as "the wild men." Roosevelt in his time, indeed, had commanded stranger elements than these. J. Pierpont Morgan, his favorite enemy, had been moved to pay $150,000 into his campaign fund in 1904.

Munsey's impulse for following Roosevelt was scrambled together of many factors, sentimental and practical. But it is due him to point out that not one follower understood more clearly than he the exact character of the effort they all were making. Many crusaders felt their feet planted on a golden staircase, reaching gloriously upward to a transfigured republic of righteousness and square-dealing. To Munsey the Progressive campaign of 1912 was a factional quarrel in the Republican Party, a piece of the same old thing broken off from the mass, and this realistic appraisal he expounded busily to the idealists. Future events justified him completely. His cold eye for business was never fooled about it.

Munsey's practical reasons for supporting Roosevelt he summarized when he bought the New York *Press,* September 16, 1912, announcing in his first issue:



MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE IN BATTLE ARRAY



THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION OF 1912

> My advocacy of Mr. Roosevelt in the campaign for nomination was not in the interest of Mr. Roosevelt himself but chiefly because I wanted to see the economic policies of the Republican party continued in force, and that this might be done meant that we must have a candidate who could be elected. . . . If Taft had any chance whatever to win, the case would be entirely different. . . . The logical and honest thing . . . is to support Roosevelt, who can be elected and whose election will mean the continuation of a tariff that makes it possible for our industries to compete with foreign industries and that protects our markets from the onslaught of foreign invasion. The *Press* therefore under my ownership will stand for American prosperity and American industries, which after all are the bread and butter issues of the campaign. These will be as safe in the hands of Roosevelt as they would be in the hands of Taft—as safe in the Progressive Party as in the Republican.

It had been a reluctant and gradual process, this conversion of Munsey to the banner of the political romantic who had built a reputation for trust busting.

* * * * * *

Roosevelt, the aristocrat, the charmer, the dramatic actor, the articulate good mixer, had all those qualities which Munsey wistfully missed in himself.

The publisher's awareness of his hero began early, back in October, 1895, when his magazine carried a brief favorable notice of the young head of the New York police. In June, 1897, the magazine published an article by Roosevelt on "The Ethnology of the Police." Through the progression of Spanish War, Governorship, Vice-Presidency, White House, reëlection, the magazine kept its gaze on him.

Such articles were significant, because fond as it was of per-

sonality sketches, the magazine seldom noticed subjects not approved by the owner. It made conspicuously little mention of E. H. Harriman, who dared oppose Morgan, or of President Taft.

But Munsey's interests before 1908 were political only by the thimbleful. Wall Street got his attention in buckets. His closest association was with those who feared and hated the President—always excepting Perkins.

Munsey did attain an invitation to a Presidential dinner, and Archie Butt wrote him down as "sharp and briary looking, and every inch a man of affairs." But Munsey stood far at a distance. Perkins was so much nearer the President that he could say—when the Clapp Committee wanted to know whether he had used his friendship to protect his International Harvester Company from prosecution as a monopoly—"I went directly to President Roosevelt and told him it was unfair to bring suit against the Harvester Company before the investigation by the Bureau of Corporations. I don't know what happened, but the suit was not brought."

From approval and admiration, Munsey was brought to blind worship; he surrendered to the Colonel and was his man. "Poor dear Frank," he might be, recognized as a difficult personality, but the master politician knew how to flatter and command him.

The election campaign had been fought and lost already when the Colonel honored Munsey one evening by a visit to his apartment. Dr. Alexander Lambert was there, and Perkins and Judson C. Welliver, the political correspondent. The Colonel told about the assassin's recent attempt against his life in Milwaukee and Doctor Lambert's skillful treatment. The bullet, he said—proud as a boy to have admirers of his hurt—remained in his body, outside the ribs over his heart. The doctor had decided it was better not to remove it.

"See here, you can feel it," he said, tearing at his shirt buttons.

Munsey was squeamish. He was no doubting Thomas, needing physical demonstration. He walked away across the room.

"Come and feel the bullet, Frank," commanded the Colonel, not above a sadistic enjoyment. He seized Munsey's hand and thrust it inside his shirt and placed his fingers upon the little pellet of metal beneath the skin.

And obediently as for no other person, meekly, almost happily, the self-willed Munsey did as Roosevelt forced him to do.

The three-hundred-pound Taft, on the other hand, never troubled to direct his geniality toward Frank Munsey. He was aware of him as a rich Republican, a contributor to campaign funds and the owner of newspapers, but his imagination did not seize upon him as a man especially profitable to cultivate.

A political correspondent of Munsey's Washington *Times,* James Hay, Jr., experienced an intimate brief view of the two men together during the campaign of 1908, which possibly has bearing on 1912. The incident is repeated here from Hay's memory.

After his nomination in 1908, and before his speaking tour, Taft spent most of July and August on a holiday at the small mountain resort of Hot Springs, Virginia. Hay was assigned there, and one day he received a telegram: if he could have Mr. Munsey invited to consult with the candidate, making it appear as a spontaneous thought of the candidate's, it would be much appreciated by the paper.

At the next press conference the reporter made his request.

"Why, what in the world would I want his advice on?" said Taft.

"I don't know myself, Judge, but it would be a great favor to me if you would ask him."

"All right," Taft obliged. "You send the invitation, and I'll stand him for a few minutes."

Hay reported: the nominee was extremely desirous of a conference with Mr. Munsey on the state of the nation, and the next day a telegram gave notice of Munsey's early arrival.

Hay met the train, introduced himself, was elaborately patronized.

"He will see you at three o'clock this afternoon."

"Very well. Have a conveyance for me."

The reporter explained that the nominee occupied a detached suite in the hotel, only three minutes walk up the hill from where Munsey would stay.

"Nevertheless, have a conveyance."

Hay procured a carriage with two horses, the most expensive conveyance in town, and promptly at three o'clock he escorted his employer to the nominee. Taft, a helpful friend to all the reporters, was waiting on the porch and he waved cordial greetings.

"Hello, Jim."

"Hello, Judge."

"Who've you got with you, Jim?"

"This is Mr. Munsey, Judge."

"Oh yes. Come in. Come in."

In forty minutes Munsey returned to the hotel. He was not then hostile toward Taft. But he had become surprisingly affable to Hay. The candidate had given him a glowing account of the reporter's merits.

When the newspaper corps next saw Taft, one of them asked about his talk with Munsey.

"Oh, you mean the gentleman with the—I wonder how I should describe that face?"

"Perhaps, Judge," another volunteered familiarly, "you might call it a cucumber face!"

"That might be a good description," laughed Taft. "To tell you the truth, boys, I don't remember what we did talk about."

When Hay lingered to thank Taft for his kindly report to his employer, Taft laughed again, "Well, Jim, you know I had to talk to him about something."

It would be straining the evidence to say that the slight import of this talk with Taft planted the germ of Munsey's antagonism. But it was true unquestionably that Taft did not take to Munsey. It was of greater weight that Munsey never did warmly and deeply take to Taft. That fact left its print on history.

* * * * * *

After Taft's inauguration in 1909, Munsey quickly turned against him, soured on him as impulsively and completely as if slating one of his own employees for dismissal. He found the fat President inconsequential. He thought he was hurting business—most damning of accusations. Soon, in his eyes, Taft could do no right.

In particular Munsey loathed the government policy on the Anti-Trust Law, Taft insisting that it be kept on the books and in force, with legislative supplements. Roosevelt, on the other hand, wrote for the *Outlook* an article very warm and friendly toward what he considered the good trust, "which has not offended otherwise than by its size."

The United States Steel Corporation, Munsey's best beloved, finally was singled out for attack, and in October, 1911, a suit was brought to compel dissolution, including Perkins by name as a co-defendant. And in April, 1912, a second blow fell, a similar suit against International Harvester, Perkins' special creation. The President, of course, was the pointing intelligence back of these prosecutions.

Strange to observe, Munsey's newspapers, particularly the Washington *Times,* fought the unfortunate Taft even upon his advocacy of the high tariff, that disastrous Payne-Aldrich Bill, the responsibility for which came to be unloaded onto his broad shoulders as a dead weight.

The fight, however, belonged primarily to Judson Welliver, then aggressively editing the *Times,* and his assistant, John Snure, a pair of Iowa insurgents whose anti-trust, anti-Old Guard principles most certainly would have shocked Munsey if he had read his paper. There are other and similar cases in his career in which he knew nothing of what his editors were printing. Even Munsey's friendship for Albert J. Beveridge, the Progressive Senator, seems inadequate to explain a conscious toleration by him of the *Times'* long battle.

Welliver and Snure lined up with the insurgents at the first appearance of the tariff issue, making the paper the very nucleus and rallying point of insurgency, denouncing the bill almost daily in the spring and summer of 1909 as a grab and a repudiation of Republican platform pledges.

Munsey himself gave no public indication of interest in the tariff until the following summer, 1910; Welliver meanwhile suddenly retiring from his employment for a season. And then from Salzburg was cabled a ringing interview with Munsey to the New York *Herald,* a high-tariff interview, sharply reversing *Times* policy, saying that high wages were dependent upon the tariff and deploring further attempts to revise the schedules.

In November, 1910, Munsey published in the magazine an article of his own, still further repudiating the anti-high-tariff Senators, saying, "while I compliment them for being independent men and thinking for themselves . . . I at the same time doubt the wisdom of their stand for legislating downward."

President Taft could have said no more. But it did not mean

Munsey's personal support for him. At that time Taft's Congressional following was swept away completely by the disastrous elections, and Munsey had forsaken him as a loser, never to return. However, Munsey's statement against disturbing the big-business tariff was the voice of his own convictions; the Washington *Times'* slashing, unavailing fight was not that voice.

Munsey's break away from Taft came finally during the 1910 election, when he was induced by Perkins to contribute $25,000 to the war chest of Henry L. Stimson, running for Governor of New York. Stimson was Roosevelt's candidate, chosen over the opposition of Taft's state organization. Munsey's gift was the largest collected from anyone, and it served to bring him in, himself, wetting his feet in politics as they hadn't been wet since the Blaine campaign of 1884.

The following spring Munsey actively began digging his trenches, bringing up artillery and posting battalions in order of battle for the great Presidential issue of 1912. In May and June, 1911, he leaped off with fighting articles by Welliver in the magazine, written according to the ablest muckraker tradition, tearing open again the bribery charges against Senator Lorimer of Illinois, linking his vote and his support with Taft.

That same June, 1911, the magazine brought another gun into position, reviving its department of current editorial comment, trumpeting at once the partisan dogma that "the next President will be a Progressive" and suggesting that Taft's nomination "might cause so wide a break that another candidate would be put in the field by the progressives of the Republican Party."

Privately Munsey was not so sure. He wrote to Beveridge in July that "the political situation is still badly mixed, but Taft has his renomination well in hand." But by December, 1911, although it is possible Colonel Roosevelt still did not know

he was to become a candidate, there was complete assurance in the minds of Munsey and the other President-makers. Vagrant newspaper references appeared about Munsey and the others in conference with the Colonel, soliciting funds in Wall Street, sending scouts to distant states.

Thus Munsey arrived at his great determination to back the Roosevelt campaign—a decision influenced by his coldness toward Taft and inability to see him as a winner, his developing personal admiration for Roosevelt, the persuasion of his friend Perkins, his resentment at the anti-trust prosecutions and —not least—his self-induced conviction that it was a big thing to do for the country.

* * * * * *

The Munsey newspapers, January 11, 1912, carried on their front pages a two-column signed editorial, "Mr. Roosevelt and the Presidency"—virtually a pledge of support to Roosevelt and a plea for the country to demand that he assume leadership again. "If the call does come," Munsey assured the public, "he will buckle on his armor and go to it with all his old-time impetuosity and energy."

This editorial easily was the most substantial public wooing the Colonel had received. Munsey immediately followed up with a private personal letter to him, enclosing the editorial, urging him to say openly that if nominated he would accept. It was in reply to this that the Colonel wrote his famous letter of January 16—"I will not tie my hands"—in which he declined either to seek or to refuse the nomination, an eloquent study in hesitation, remaining to this day the most revealing and intimate record of his mind on the eve of battle.

Within two weeks the Colonel's hat definitely was in the ring, although public announcement was withheld until his speech at Columbus, Ohio, on February 21, and in that febrile

period of preparation, Munsey sat regularly at the council fire. "His judgment was good, too, and quick," Henry L. Stoddard, another insider, then publisher of the New York *Evening Mail,* recalled long afterward in conversation.

There was a meeting at George Perkins' home to decide whether Roosevelt should accept the invitation to speak at Columbus. Munsey did not arrive. But five of the six there present agreed that their candidate should go. "You're wrong; he ought not to go," Munsey objected when he heard of the decision. "No matter what he says in his speech, the lawyers will jump on it and make it appear damaging. He ought to keep quiet and not give them anything to shoot at."

If all his judgments were as accurate as that, Munsey could qualify as a major prophet, for it was the Columbus speech more than anything else which stirred up opposition and built obstacles. Colonel Roosevelt there made his celebrated declaration for the popular recall of judicial decisions. Many reporters appraised that alone as so shocking to conservatives as to lose him the nomination.

As the campaign proceeded, Munsey's pledge of financial support, about which he told the Clapp Committee, was religiously redeemed. Headquarters in Washington were opened in the Munsey Building, and the New York *World* was able to jibe that at first

> the fourth floor of Mr. Munsey's building looked like a deserted dance hall,

but

> the song of the saw and the ring of the hammer were heard, and soon partitions, doors and private rooms were erected for the great army of Roosevelt boosters.

In the three states where Munsey owned papers, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Massachusetts, his staffs were drafted not

merely for journalistic support but for general political errands. Their showing was impressive. Roosevelt swept Pennsylvania in the Presidential primary. He carried Maryland narrowly, and half the delegates instructed for him went over to Taft at Chicago. He lost Massachusetts as a whole by less than 4,000 votes, Munsey's *Journal* being his solitary champion in Boston.

Returning now for another glance at the Chicago Convention, let us observe that as soon as the celebrated Taft steam roller began deciding election contests, it became apparent that Roosevelt hadn't enough delegates. The first test was the election of a convention chairman, and the Taft choice, Elihu Root, won by 558 to 501. Thereafter, literally, it was all over but the shouting, although the rival forces hung on for three days more of intense heat, stubborn anger, band music and exhaustion.

Munsey was oftener in conference than in the Royal Box, actively laboring at the proposed platform, always a background figure. In the convention there was emerging an unexpected matinee idol, the handsome young floor leader, Governor Herbert S. Hadley of Missouri. He received an ovation at his first appearance; there was long cheering for him the second day. Liked by both sides, he began to be mentioned amidst the gloom as a chance for compromise.

After a long day of bitterness the inner advisers were gathered in Colonel Roosevelt's room at two or three o'clock in the morning. The Colonel had ordered ham and eggs, and with napkin tucked under his chin, was eating without stopping or even slackening his vigorous talk. Perkins and Munsey were there, and Munsey's right-hand man from Baltimore, Olivier, The door was thrust open by Governor Hadley.

"Come in Hadley," said the Colonel. "How goes the battle?"

"I must confess, Sir, that I am discouraged."

"Are there any plans, then? Is there anything we can do now?"

"Yes," answered Governor Hadley, "there has been some talk of a further plan, but I don't think that I am the one to tell you. There are others who should bring it to you."

"No, Hadley, you tell me. Out with it! Out with it!"

"Well, Sir, there has been some talk of a willingness by both sides to find a compromise candidate in order to avoid disrupting the party, and to compromise on me. It was thought it might satisfy you and your followers and Taft and his followers, and serve what we all are anxious to do, to avoid a split."

Coloned Roosevelt listened, silent and motionless. His fork was poised in mid-air, holding a bit of ham, unnoticed. Then he answered, "Hadley, can we afford to make any compromise at this time?"

And Governor Hadley answered, "Mr. President, it's up to you."

The foregoing scene is recorded here from the memory of Olivier, who commented further, "I was present and I'll never forget the picture—the solemn onlookers and the Colonel with his fork of ham in the air as if frozen stiff. The scene and significance I am perfectly sure of; I remember them exactly. The actual phrases and words are ninety per cent literal just as I heard them uttered."

To these facts may be added a speculative twist, a question to which there is no certain answer: Would Colonel Roosevelt have rejected compromise so steadfastly if he had not been assured of Munsey's financial backing, and could a united Republican Party have elected Hadley over Woodrow Wilson?

There remained after the failure of compromise yet another expedient, a possibility in practical politics—the bribery of delegates. Charges of bribery, indeed, resounded through the con-

vention. The balance of power was held by Southern Negro delegates, about fifty of them, and at least three affidavits were made charging attempted bribery.

Scouts moved through the vast body of the membership, circumventing the locked doors behind which frail delegates were kept honest by their leaders, and the price of votes was quoted and discussed. At last the offer of a block of votes sufficient to sway the outcome was brought to Munsey, the broker being a Southern Republican lawyer of experience in such deals. The authority for this, too, is Olivier.

"I was present when the proposal was laid before Munsey," he said. "I have no doubt whatever that the votes would have been delivered if paid for. The price was two hundred thousand dollars cash.

"That sum would have purchased enough votes to allow a twenty-per-cent margin of safety; one out of five could have gone back on his bargain and still the result would stand. Some votes were offered as low as $400, some as high as $3,000, and on the latter, $100 was to be paid down at once, the remainder after the votes were cast.

"I haven't the slightest doubt that Colonel Roosevelt could have been nominated by that two hundred thousand dollars. The Colonel certainly was the choice of the mass of Republican Party members. His nomination would have stood unchallenged, there would have been no third party against Wilson. Granted this much, it isn't difficult to imagine Roosevelt elected President in 1912, as a direct result of that two hundred thousand dollars. And then what—the war coming on—would have been the change in history?"

The offer of votes was made to Munsey, who had paid out so much already and was ready to go the limit thenceforth, offering easy assurance of the nomination of his man, with the Presidency bright ahead.

"He refused, of course," said Olivier. "He didn't make a scene or become indignant. He simply told the go-between that he wasn't interested and wouldn't pay a cent for any man's vote."

As last nothing remained but defeat, and Roosevelt and his crusaders faced it. Taft would get the Republican nomination.

Munsey came then to one of the greatest moments of his life. It has been described in AS I KNEW THEM, the book of the loyal eye-witness, Stoddard, a vivid picture of another midnight conference in a hotel room:

> Four tired men sat on the bedside. . . . The Colonel leaned heavily and wearily against the headpiece, Perkins next to him and then Munsey. I sat at the foot. . . . Perkins and Munsey urged the Colonel to go on with the third-party fight. They pledged their fortunes—Munsey declaring with characteristic intensity, "My fortune, my magazines and my newspapers are with you" . . . we saw the streaks of dawn as we separated with the Progressive Party started on its earnest way.

It was testing time then even for the strongest. Loyalties pulled in both directions—to the Republican Party and to Roosevelt. Men wavered, and some of the most devoted said farewell. There was no faltering in Munsey. He had enlisted for the duration, and he stood fast.

Stoddard has painted another scene of Munsey's activities that summer, when he himself and Munsey went down to Oyster Bay, had dinner with the candidate and persuaded him to revise the wording of the formal call for the Progressive Party convention to be held in August. He writes:

> Munsey sat on the Colonel's right and I sat on his left. Every moment I felt there would be an explosion, for Munsey had been studying dieting and he kept telling the Colonel how wrong it was to eat cold roast beef and baked

Idaho potatoes. Roosevelt was taking a plentiful helping of both. Nor did Munsey believe in salt, which the Colonel indulged in heavily. The peril of heavy eating and the benefits of light eating were told us with the deadly earnestness of a revival preacher. Still the Colonel kept on eating. He would look—almost glare—at Munsey and then take another mouthful; look again, listen a moment and go at the roast beef with renewed gusto. All the time our threatened revision of the "call" was also on Roosevelt's mind—and nerves. Several attempts were made by others at the table to divert the conversation to other topics than dieting. But Munsey was always deeply in earnest in anything that interested him, and it was difficult to get him away from a subject until he felt that he had enlightened and convinced his listeners. On that occasion he was doing almost everything but convincing. He did not lessen by an ounce the Colonel's meal. My own appetite went unsatisfied because I kept trying to decide on what I would do when the Colonel would blurt out his impatience. The Colonel, however, stuck to his food and his patience.

Munsey bustled through those days with the fluttery attentiveness of a midwife. Then, having done his utmost, and leaving behind an interview pledging the new party to stand by the protective tariff, he hurried off on July 16 on the *Lusitania* to take the cure at Carlsbad, not to return until the campaign was warming up in September.

* * * * * *

The late Alexander P. Moore, Ambassador to Spain, husband of the glamorous Lillian Russell and an ardent Roosevelt man in 1912, delighted to tell of his experiences as a collector of campaign funds.

Munsey's generosity to the cause needed no stimulant. Nevertheless, Moore prided himself upon his special and individual

technique for extracting contributions. Here is the story as he told it:

"Roll up your pants leg, Frank."

"What is the matter with you, Alex?"

"Roll up your pants. I want to look at your leg."

"Why do you want to see my leg?"

"Because, Frank, if the Colonel is elected, you're going to be Ambassador to the Court of St. James, and I've got to see how you'll look in silk stockings and knee breeches when you're presented to the King."

This dialogue, insisted Moore, never failed to create a favorable mood toward the war chest.

Campaign workers years afterward have recalled freely that talk about jobs and appointments pervaded the atmosphere at headquarters, a definite factor in the crusade, and was the occasion for both joking and serious thought. A report of such slate-making, placing Munsey in London as the American Ambassador, got into the newspapers in May, 1912, while the Roosevelt movement still was rising ambitiously. It said that Munsey, on the train to Philadelphia had told an employee that he had been promised the appointment if Roosevelt were elected. Immediately and emphatically the publisher repudiated it, so harshly repudiating it that the writer of the report brought suit for slander.

What rewards would have been distributed in case of victory, of course, remain purely speculative, although probably Munsey might have received some high position if he wished. And still there is no cause to doubt his disinterestedness and sincere devotion, even if there had been no prospect of reward.

* * * * * *

Munsey set himself to work throughout 1912 to convince American business men, his own kind of men, talking loudly

to himself, that the vaunted "progressivism" of Colonel Roosevelt would not mean anything disturbing to the solid property-owning classes. He gave over his presses to allay "concern about Mr. Roosevelt's attitude toward business, toward railroads, toward corporations and industries generally."

The candidate himself bluntly said in a New York speech in March that "if on this new continent we merely build another country of great but unjustly divided material prosperity, we shall have done nothing." Jane Addams, on the opposite wing from Munsey, announced that she had come in because of the pledges for old-age pensions, minimum wage law, abolition of child labor, equal suffrage and the protection of women in industry.

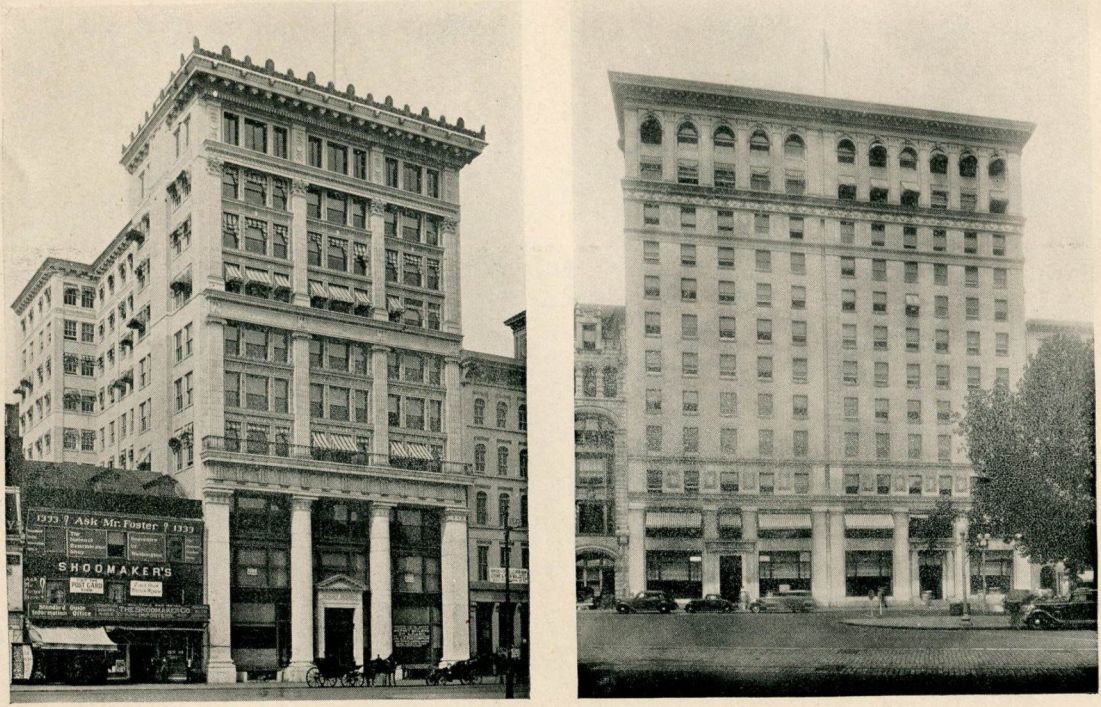
Munsey felt no interest in such things. He promised business men that Roosevelt "would chiefly devote himself to revivifying our industries and our business." *Munsey's Magazine,* in March, carried a study by Welliver of Roosevelt's accomplishments as President, widely reprinted as a campaign document, "Catching Up With Roosevelt." Munsey himself wrote an introduction to it, and the thought he contributed was this:

"The radicalism of Roosevelt . . . has already mellowed into conservatism. . . . Of all the big progressives, Roosevelt is today preëminently the biggest and sanest conservative—a progressive conservative."

The Progressive Party, he promised in the August magazine, "does not believe in the destruction of big corporations, but it believes in controlling them and making sure that they do not destroy the competition of the small man or smaller concerns." As the campaign advanced, the tone of the Munsey newspapers became tuned to the ears of "You, Mr. Business Man." Munsey declared that "Roosevelt more than any other man stands between you and socialism."

There was no equivocation in Munsey's position. He ac-

MUNSEY IN 1896



THE MUNSEY BUILDING IN WASHINGTON, AS STANFORD WHITE DESIGNED IT,
AND AS THE OWNER REBUILT IT

cepted Roosevelt with his whole heart. We may interpret his words as a sincere reflection of what he wanted to see in his hero and what he did see. What he saw was there; but it was not the whole man.

* * * * * *

When the campaign had been fought and lost, the time came for Munsey to write down his signature on the record. He waited a decent period. He went with other Bull Moose to Chicago to a reorganization conference—in truth, a wake—he listened to Colonel Roosevelt's declaration that the party had come to stay, and he pledged himself with a group of two dozen others to pay $250 every quarter for four years to finance its continuance.

Then he returned home and, on January 8, in a large-type editorial spread over the full front page of his New York *Press* above his own name, he propounded his dramatic "Possible Scheme For Amalgamating the Republican and Progressive Parties That Ought to Be Acceptable to Both."

Tacitly admitting that Progressivism was through, the proposal urged that rebels and stand-pat Republicans together should unite, should pass through the business process of a receivership and into the hands of a new "holding party," for which he suggested the name "Liberal Party." Together again, their strength would be enough for successful opposition to their common enemy, the Democrats. "Clearly, the same methods should prevail with regard to politics," he urged, "that prevail in the wisest and most intelligent realms of business."

Munsey was himself again. Here was an opportunity to shape politics—in which he was a novice—according to the pattern of business, in which his movements were sure. Here was an opportunity to bring into full play his passion for mergers, his loathing for a failure, his instinct to kill a losing proposition.

Loud outcries of pain and dissent were the response from the Bull Moose, with Colonel Roosevelt leading the chorus. He issued a statement at once, a resounding disapproval. But Munsey kept hammering away. A few days later the *Press* published "Amalgamation No. 2." *Munsey's Magazine* crusaded manfully. "Amalgamation No. 3" came along in due time. Munsey urged his scheme doggedly, saying, "I am not strong, personally, for a waiting game."

The flag-waving Progressives were prepared to read him out of the party. They would not consider his plea. But in 1916 the complete merger of all elements, proved that Munsey, the impatient amateur who footed the bill, had figured out the practical answer. On any question of a merger, it was hard to beat him.

Chapter XII

THE CHIEF

Upon the enforced cooling of his emotionalism after the Roosevelt campaign of 1912, Munsey turned with a new-born devotion to his newspapers, the one interest which was to survive unrivalled and unchanged for the remainder of his days. The passion of his young manhood had impelled him to be rich. At the peak of his maturity the Bull Moose crusade gripped him as the love of a bride. Now for his definitive period he gradually centered upon his papers until nothing else held any importance for him.

Twenty-one years before this he had ventured a four-month flyer as a daily publisher, an experience almost negligible. His practical initiation had come in 1901 when he began applying the chain grocery theory to journalism, for the most part as an absentee landlord, although the New York *Daily News* did rest like a stone upon his hands for several years. His purchase of the New York *Press* in 1912 marked his entire conversion and change of heart.

It was a late beginning. He was fifty-eight, set in ways and outlook, trained well in other activities, lavishly confident but unaware of those fundamental routines which his contemporaries in the craft had been busily acquiring for forty years past. Munsey's newspapers were the toys of his fatuity, the victims of his hoary sedulous dabbling. He himself was, as the candid *World* remarked, "one of the ablest retail grocers that ever edited a New York newspaper."

He never became a newspaper man. The nearest approach

of his life was as a magazine man, which few have been able to combine successfully with newspapering. He brought to his editorship a hungry ambition, a shrewish tongue, an unstable nervous system and a thumping ignorance of practical newspaper ABC's. Far back in 1891 he quoted in his magazine "the old adage that every man thinks he can run a newspaper or run a hotel," and that unacknowledged principle served as his own best guide and inspiration.

He was a failure as a newspaper publisher, a fact which cannot be obscured by the late and partially compensating prosperity of the *Sun*. Upon his whole journalistic career, no better summary can be pronounced than the one he expressed himself in a moment of discouragement to the late H. J. Wright, brilliant editor of the New York *Globe,* who suffered under him for a year:

"No man ever did for me what he did for his former employer, and no paper ever did for me what it did before."

* * * * * *

Coming to the newspaper from the magazine, Munsey brought an interest in typographical dress and almost invariably improved the appearance of a paper if he let it continue. He had definite ideas of public policy, generally reflecting the prime background of his youth and the class into which he had elevated himself. He had distinct tastes and preferences. He would not stoop to salacious appeal. He wanted as his readers the most moral, most substantial people in town. But he had an extraordinary blind spot toward the primary commodity that a newspaper had to offer—which is news.

His valuation of news at times, especially in the early years, seemed purely quantitative. His editors were instructed to make daily reports of their "exclusives," which were items carried by no other paper. A two-line notice of a nonentity visiting the

city or breaking a leg would be an "exclusive," and a sufficiently large number of them might distract attention from a rival's scoop on an important event.

The editors of his papers who are still active in newspaper work are almost unanimous in saying that he never showed any interest in the news published in the paper, except in response to letters of complaint.

They agree that he would interest himself, from time to time, in editorial policy, and in his talks with them, did show an active and keen interest in general affairs, particularly if they related to business or finance, but he had no interest in the active process of news-gathering nor in the possibilities of great news enterprises, nor of the actual manner of handling news by his papers.

He did give attention to complaints. He might say "I agree that this person has just grounds for complaint. Fire the man responsible." But, also, he was just as certain to stand up for the paper when he thought it was right, and fight back under criticism.

Paul Patterson, who edited his Washington *Times,* describes his characteristically uniform method of supervising his paper as follows:

> It was quite a common thing, when I was called to the New York office, to find Mr. Munsey standing before his desk on which were spread the day's issue of his four newspapers. He would carefully turn over the pages and note with a particularly keen eye the printing, typographical arrangement, and general make-up. He had very decided ideas about the appearance of his papers and how he thought they should be put together, but practically never, in my recollection, did he give any indication of knowing what was in the news columns. I never heard any comment from him that indicated that he really ever read any of his own newspapers.

This attitude may have been modified, to a certain extent, after he acquired the *Press,* in view of the fact that it was published in his own city, but this personal observation of him was certainly true of the Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington papers.

And in a highly volatile enterprise Munsey remained prosaic, as Arthur Brisbane describes him:

Munsey was a very even, rather cold, extremely intelligent BUSINESS man and—so far as his friends could see—ONLY a business man. He displayed no more imagination than any inanimate object. In fact, he didn't believe in imagination.

That explains the fact that his newspapers died, or were consolidated out of existence, or handed on to some one else, with great rapidity. His business ability enabled him to BUY the newspapers; his lack of imagination made them worthless after he got them.

I liked Munsey. He was a friendly person, although without warmth. With millions in the bank, he lived high up in a fashionable hotel, with hotel pictures and hotel ornaments—the coldest spot outside the Arctic circle.

He enjoyed life, even his newspaper failures, because he was always sure that somebody else was wrong.

Much greater editors have rendered less service than he to the newspaper profession. He bought, strangled and killed off several newspapers that needed strangling, for the good of the others.

* * * * * *

The picture of Frank Munsey in a newspaper shop can be painted only from a violent and grotesque palette, a clash of canary yellows, apple greens, fuzzy gray and magenta, shadowed with hard black, composed of cubes and splashes.

He was not long in sketching such a self-portrait when he acquired the *Press.* The purchase brought into his employ a

smoothly working executive team, whose efforts under the former ownership largely had created that profitable following which the paper enjoyed, Ervin Wardman, editor-in-chief, and John A. Hennessy, managing editor.

Wardman, a powerful writer, fighter, aristocrat, man of independent wealth, who dared to swear back on any provocation and at any person, stayed the remaining ten years of his life with Munsey, well-liked and contented. No Munsey lieutenant ever was more successful at getting along with the Chief.

Hennessy, an Irishman, smouldering and brooding, master of his trade, politically seasoned, equipped with encyclopedic knowledge of New York City and a vast personal acquaintanceship, became the victim of maddening interference and insult. In less than three months he quit in a rage.

"The trouble with you is that you are missing the big news right before your eyes," Munsey told Hennessy one day. "I want us to cultivate the children of the rich. That's the way to get circulation in Fifth Avenue. Send reporters and photographers up to Central Park where they play. I want three columns every day about the children of the rich."

"Don't worry," Wardman reassured Hennessy. "Go on getting out a newspaper. He'll forget about his children of the rich. Leave him to me."

Another day the new owner opened up on Hennessy, "I have a philosophy about newspaper men. The average reporter is worth twenty-five dollars a week and no more.

"There are a few exceptions, of course. We'll have to have experienced men to write the important stories. But the staff in the main should be paid a top of twenty-five dollars a week, and I want you to conform."

Hennessy bristled. His staff, he said, was organized differently. He had specialists, working on space rates, each guar-

anteed sixty dollars a week, many getting much more. Often an active man assigned to a lively story would earn one hundred and twenty-five dollars a week.

"We can't run with twenty-five-dollar men," he said.

Munsey conceded nothing. He would take up the payroll with Wardman and work out a new schedule. He stalked out. Within two weeks he was talking about his ambition to build up the best staff in New York, expense no object.

"What I want," he said this time, "is the first paper in the city. Go out and hire the best men."

Actually he did not cut the average man's pay nor did he raise it, although he begrudged any liberality on salary except to obtain an outstanding, extraordinary person, or one so considered. What he did was greatly to increase the hazards of newspaper employment. But the reputation for being a pay-cutter clung to him.

The Chief stood in the doorway one evening, a disturbing apparition, gazing over the scene—as a reporter remarked—"with eyes like two dead oysters." Then he walked over to Hennessy and pointed with his walking stick.

"Who's that?"

"That's Billy Gilpin, our assistant turf editor."

"Fire him. He's too old."

"If we do, Mr. Munsey, we'll miss him. He's an expert. He's been a gentleman rider, a trainer and an owner. He absolutely knows, and we need him. Besides, he's only about sixty."

"Fire him. A man his age is no more good."

Hennessy took it up with Gilpin. Of course he wouldn't fire him. But it would be a favor, he explained, if Gilpin would keep out of sight while the old man was in the shop.

"To Hell with him," said Gilpin. "I won't work for a man like that. Be a good fellow and fire me."

"All right, Billy, have it your way. I'll give you a month's notice with pay, and you needn't do any more work."

"He's got plenty of money," said the perfectly adequate turfman. "Why don't you give me six weeks' notice?"

"All right. Six weeks it is."

Twenty years passed and Gilpin still was an active turf writer, in proof of the Chief's fallibility as a judge of age.

The brothers Bustanoby about this time boldly, and with a long prophetic vision, opened a women's cocktail bar at their Café des Beaux Arts, a startling innovation. Their enthusiastic publicity man even sent out to the newspapers posed photographs of girls with their feet on the brass rail.

Amidst the welter of heavy political news, such diverse fluff was an answer to prayer. Hennessy rushed his photograph to the engravers. The office boy returned in two minutes. The foreman, he said, declined to make the cut; he didn't consider the picture sufficiently clear.

Hennessy dashed to the engraving room. The foreman was a stranger. Unbeknownst to Hennessy or Wardman, the owner that afternoon had dismissed the old engraving crew and installed a force from *Munsey's Magazine.* They had orders not to accept any dictation from editors.

"The foreman is right," Munsey answered Hennessy over the telephone. "I never saw a newspaper editor who knew anything about pictures or photography. If the foreman says the pictures are no good, he knows. I don't want them printed in my paper."

The *Herald* the next day carried the rejected photograph with fine effect. The owner conceded that the editor was right. The old engraving force was restored. Hennessy resigned.

"Don't be red-headed about this, now," said Wardman. "Tear up that resignation and leave him to me. It won't happen again. I know how to handle him."

Almost invariably it was Munsey's habit to telephone his office in the evening to ask for the latest news, sometimes taking a quarter of an hour for a detailed summary, again desiring only outstanding events. His introduction came to be as set as the responses in a prayer book:

"Good evening, Hennessy, this is Mr. Munsey."

"Good evening, Mr. Munsey."

"What is your chief story for tomorrow, Hennessy?"

Just before Thanksgiving Day, 1912, Hennessy felt particularly well prepared for the question. From confidential official sources he had learned that the most famous convict in the state, Albert T. Patrick, sent to Sing Sing for life as a murderer, was to be pardoned. It was bound to produce bitter criticism of Governor Dix, just then leaving office.

The managing editor reported to Munsey his great exclusive story.

"Then it hasn't happened yet," said Munsey. "It isn't news."

"Oh yes, the pardon has been signed and is to be delivered, and the man released, on Thanksgiving eve."

"I don't want it," said Munsey. "Every word in my newspaper, I insist, must be strictly accurate. I won't have guess and speculation. I want it as true for history twenty-five years or a hundred years hence as it is for tomorrow."

"But Mr. Munsey——"

"Hennessy, I am the owner of this paper. Don't print that story."

The *Press,* accordingly, did not print it. The news later came out in routine fashion. The explosive Hennessy resigned again; Wardman persuaded him to stay.

Again Hennessy got an exclusive story. His old friend, Governor-elect Sulzer, had been visiting William Jennings Bryan, with his own eyes had seen a letter from Woodrow

Wilson asking Bryan to be Secretary of State, and he had seen the acceptance. Sulzer told it all to Hennessy. It was the greatest story of the day.

"Ridiculous," said the cold voice of Munsey over the telephone. "The President-elect cannot make anybody Secretary of State. It is three months before he is to be inaugurated; both of them may be dead by that time. We can't print that."

So Hennessy resigned for the third and last time. He was through.

More than twenty years later, his anger calmed, he sat telling of his difficulties with Munsey.

"I'll concede him this one point on which he weakened," he smiled. "I went from the *Press* to a political job, appointed by Sulzer, and in the general attack on the Governor I came under fire myself. And then Munsey ordered an editorial written, coming to my defense."

* * * * * *

A private and confidential theory was developed—attributed to Wardman—to explain Munsey's outbursts of savagery. It simply declared him crazy. "Circular insanity," was the name for it, by which the staff laughed off the Chief's impossible inexplicable behavior. Approximately four weeks was plotted as the cyclic period, with a more devastating outbreak recurring every two years. His intimate subordinates saw him blow hot and cold, knew him as both daring and shrinking, silly and wise. When he broke out on a true rampage, they would remark knowingly, from the safe retreat of Hahn's ornate bar, "Well, we might have known it. He's been comparatively reasonable now for a while."

His manners when in an irritated or bullying mood were atrocious. He humiliated his men, and they took pains to avoid

him. Editors long in his service, whose high capacities he knew well, from whom the glamour of novelty was worn off, he used as verbal punching bags.

Every week or two a department head would emerge from a telephone booth at the *Sun* breathing hard and mopping his face.

"My God, he's having company again," he would mutter.

It would have happened in this fashion: Proofs of editorial page articles were sent to him for approval before being used. Normally he would make his changes calmly. But upon occasion he would telephone into the office a critical sermon that was irrelevant, sulphurous and lacerating. The recipient, putting his own resentful interpretation upon motives at the other end of the line, would picture the Chief as talking to impress some audience of onlookers in his apartment.

With the mechanical departments of his papers, behind the barricades of union agreement, Munsey interfered less and enjoyed more pleasant relations, but his clumsiness sometimes bred trouble there also.

A committee from the pressmen once brought a grievance to his office. One of their number who had suffered the loss of an arm now was receiving only half the regular pay. They asked for a wage readjustment.

"Your facts are correct, but you don't understand," Munsey said kindly.

"My attitude in this case has been extremely humane. This man was disabled, but still I gave him a job and a chance to earn his living. I don't intend even now to discharge him.

"But since he has only one arm, obviously he can do only half as much work as a man with two arms. So he gets only half pay."

The delegation waited. A precise clear voice back in the room said:

"The old son of a bitch."

Then they quietly arose and walked out.

Munsey was a great firer. When he bought the *Herald,* the trustees of the Bennett estate recognized the rights of a dozen or so of the oldest employees who had given their lives to the paper, and specified by contract that these should receive salaries as long as they lived.

A few weeks later Munsey sent for one of the trustees. "Take these men off my hands," he wailed. "I can't do anything with them. They know I can't fire them, and they walk around looking insults at me." And so the contract was readjusted on an actuarial basis providing annuities for these employees, and Munsey was relieved of the sight of men he couldn't fire.

Edgar D. Shaw, general manager of the Washington *Times,* once was directed without explanation to dismiss the chief editorial writer with a payment of two weeks' salary. With money in his pocket, the man bought a railroad ticket to New York, hurried to Munsey's office and was admitted to the presence.

"Yesterday, for no reason at all, I was fired by your orders," he told Munsey, "so I came up to see you, not to ask you for my job back, but for the satisfaction of telling you just what opinion real newspaper men have of you."

"Go ahead," said Munsey.

And the writer proceeded with profanity and imagination, not omitting specific instances, to elaborate upon Munsey's shortcomings.

"How much salary were you getting," Munsey interrupted.

"Seventy-five dollars a week."

"Well, you go back to Washington and tell Mr. Shaw that you aren't fired and that your salary is to be one hundred dollars a week from now on."

Newspaper writers ranked in Munsey's mind as grocery clerks. During one of his mergers, after the sorting out and

amalgamating of staffs had eliminated a large number of men, he was talking with one of his stars.

"I made a success of my Mohican Stores by putting them on an efficiency system in this same way," he said.

"I said to each store manager, 'You must deliver to me personally so much net profit every week.' I had estimates made, so I knew just how much each store ought to earn. If the man couldn't deliver that in cash every week, I dismissed him. It was not unjust, because that man didn't belong in the grocery business. So it is with these less efficient newspaper men. They should be directed to some other occupation."

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When Munsey went over the proofs of editorials for his paper, he performed a thorough amputation of quotations, allusions, the livelier phrases and assorted opinions, not to mention chunks here and there sabotaged for reasons hard to define.

Allan Nevins, one of his editorial writers, after Munsey's death wrote a balanced description of his methods for *McNaught's Monthly*. He gave handsome acknowledgment to his sincerity—"it was impossible not to carry a deep respect for the moral earnestness with which he was expressing a heartfelt conviction"—and then threw light upon his editorial personality, in these examples:

> For twenty years he had read little but the headlines of his newspapers. Of the vast field of knowledge contained in books he knew almost nothing. In an editorial brought him by the late Ervin Wardman he lighted upon the name of Robert Clive. "Who is this Clive?" he demanded. "What does he do?" It was explained that Clive was the long-dead hero who had added India to the British Empire. "Never heard of him," ejaculated Mr. Munsey. "I don't believe our readers would understand that reference. Take it out." . . . He would pounce unerringly upon a reference to King Charles' head or to the Capulets and Montagues with, "Yes,

you know what this means, but I don't, and neither do most of our readers. Kill it.". . .

With his courage there were combined flashes of an appallingly childlike timidity. He would not say what he wanted to write about McAdoo in 1924 because he occasionally met, or feared he would meet, Mrs. McAdoo or one of her sisters at New York dinner parties. This motive he frankly confessed. He would not say all that he thought about the French invasion of the Ruhr, an act he detested, because he owned the Paris edition of the New York *Herald* and feared French reprisals. This, also, he frankly confessed. He was nervous about the slightest criticism of Mr. Coolidge. . . . He spoke and acted as if he believed the *Sun* were read daily and sensitively in the White House, and that any unkind gesture would cut the President to the quick. One of his editors sometimes commented humorously on this failing. "You can say what you like about dirigible balloons," he would remark, balloons being one of Mr. Munsey's pet aversions. "We never meet dirigibles at dinner."

Except when aroused to a major campaign, he was extraordinarily timorous of advertisers. "I will not quarrel with the sources of my revenue," he admonished his writers.

One editorial writer, Harold Kelloch, who spent a summer on the *Herald,* a temporary position which he filled easily by writing light human-interest comment, not exerting himself with thoughts about policy, had the good fortune never to experience anything but kind consideration from the Chief.

Almost every day there would be a hesitant movement at the door of this favorite's small cubicle office, and diffidently, almost flutteringly, the owner would enter.

"I hope you are happy and satisfied here," he said, day after day. "Is everything all right? Are you getting along satisfactorily? If there should be anything you want to complain about, please feel free always to come direct to me."

Such solicitude usually exhausted the conversation. But one

day Munsey tarried to express further his pleasure in his employee's work.

"I like the fact that you do not write any opinions," he said. "So often our editorial writers get off on the wrong track. They have opinions, that is the trouble. We had a chief editorial writer here recently, a very nice man indeed, but he felt it necessary—if I may use a vulgar phrase—to shoot off his bazoo. Now my idea is, no opinions at all. That is why I like your work so much. I conceive that our editorials should be—should be—ah——"

As the Chief groped for a word, the writer came to his relief, ironically seeking the most resounding meaningless phrase he could find, "You mean, Mr. Munsey, that our editorials should be constructively informative."

"That's it, constructively informative! If you don't object, I'll write that down and pass it along. Constructively informative."

And thereafter, at the conclusion of the daily visit, the writer was regaled by the spectacle of his employer bidding good day, stepping outside, then reopening the door, reaching inside an upraised finger, saying again:

"Remember now, no opinions!"

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To the old throne room in the Flatiron Building one autumn afternoon was summoned Managing Editor J. Edwin Murphy of the *Press*. The Chief sat glowering, thrumming the edge of his desk with his long powerful fingers. Tables around the room, and the old-fashioned high-legged accountant's desk at which Munsey liked to write, all were spread with large sheets of graphs and tabulations.

Several months before, upon the eve of departing for Europe, Munsey had engaged an efficiency expert. Now the report was before him. He led Murphy to one of the sheets as if to his

doom. Accusingly he pointed to a heavy line pursuing a rhythmic course across the page, periodically slanting upward to a decided peak, then dropping to dead level and continuing almost horizontally until the next upswing. It was a picture of *Press* circulation year after year. The increase began regularly about April and grew to a maximum in September or October.

"Look at that bulge," snapped Munsey. "Our big news campaign comes in the fall, winter and early spring, but circulation does nothing then. Look at this thing, bulging upward in the summer. How do you account for it?"

"Well, Mr. Munsey, we have a very good sports department, with a large following. During the summer, people buy the *Press* to keep up with baseball, and late in the season, as the league games narrow down in the pennant races, there is more excitement and they buy extras. Besides that, we have the 'Rod and Gun' column, which is followed by sportsmen. The Sheepshead Bay fishing boats advertise there almost exclusively, and many people buy the paper just for that. And so summer gives us bigger sales."

"So that causes the bulge," said Munsey. "Well, I want it stopped. I want you to go right down town and fire the entire sport department, and I want you to leave word with the advertising manager not to accept any more ads from fishing boats.

"Throw them out, every one of them. I don't want any bulges in my circulation. I want it to run along at a healthy honest pace, straight through the year. Understand! No bulges! Throw out all the baseball and all the fishing."

Wardman, receiving the edict, spent the next two weeks laboriously obtaining a reprieve for the offending bulge.

Munsey telephoned the offices of the *Sun* on the evening of the heavyweight prize fight between Jack Dempsey and Fred Fulton. Well, what was happening?

"Dempsey knocked out Fulton in the first round."

What was that? An explanation followed.

"You mean then that this Dempsey knocked Fulton down?"

"Yes, Mr. Munsey. Knocked him down and knocked him out. He won the fight."

"Well, why didn't Fulton get up and knock Dempsey down? Was Fulton a coward?"

"No, no. Fulton was knocked unconscious. He couldn't get up."

"What, knocked unconscious with a blow from the fist! Nonsense! It can't be done!"

When Munsey said "nonsense" or "impossible," it might mean a serious blocking of progress. "Impossible," he said one election night when Kenneth Lord, city editor of the *Sun,* told him that Harding was carrying New York State by 1,000,000 votes. He scolded and hesitated and got in the way until a *World* extra was brought in announcing the same figure.

George Brakeley, well-liked Sunday editor of the *Sun,* was called into Munsey's office one Tuesday to receive the announcement: "Beginning next Sunday we shall issue the magazine section in sixteen-page tabloid form, one-half the size of the regular pages."

"Yes, Sir, I'll have it ready. But we'll need some new type too. The faces we have won't be suitable for a magazine in that shape."

"I am taking care of that," said the Chief. He called in his mechanical superintendent.

"It can't be done," he was told. "Our deadline on the magazine is Thursday night. That means new type must be here the day after tomorrow, and we can't get delivery that soon without big extra expense."

The Chief heightened his Munsey manner by several notches: "I said we are issuing the Sunday magazine in new form this week. I said nothing about expense. Get the type."

Thus, with continuous stir and strain for forty-eight hours, the new magazine section was prepared. When Munsey came into the shop on Thursday night, the sixteen pages were in the forms, with the young editor proudly ready with proofs of each page. The owner gazed at them coldly.

"Throw that out," he said, pointing to a leading article. "And throw that out, and throw that out."

In two minutes he reduced the forms to a wreckage of gaping holes, with press time due in half an hour and nothing on hand for filler. The Sunday editor miserably looked at the holes. The managing editor sauntered over, "Kind of leaves you in a fix," he remarked. Brakeley nodded.

"Well," said the tired voice, "I think you might get by if you just change the heads and let the stories run as you intended. He reads only the heads anyway. And on that story by Fritz Cunliffe-Owen you'd better kill the signature. The Old Man has a hate on at present against Cunliffe-Owen and won't buy anything of his if he knows it. Write new heads, and you'll be all right."

The magazine came out successfully. But next week, the last minute interference was repeated, and it became a regular occurrence. Finally the young Sunday editor went to Bob Davis, reporting that the Old Man was getting on his nerves.

"He does the same thing to me on my magazine, but I use a system on him," Davis said. "Every month I fix up a certain number of extra pages so rotten that he's got to kill them. Even Munsey couldn't miss them. So he pokes into them and leaves the rest alone."

On the day that Munsey bought the New York *Evening Mail,* Walter Davenport, star reporter on the *Herald,* returned to the office late in the afternoon to find the managing editor in a state of nerves.

"He's bought the *Mail* and wants you to write the story," Davenport was told. "Get right at it. He's in a hurry; been calling for you every five minutes."

Davenport was barely at his typewriter, looking over notes and data already assembled for him, when Munsey himself strode rapidly across the room to him.

"Have you got the story written? Let me see it."

"No, Sir, I just got in and I'm only starting it."

"What kind of organization is this anyway," fumed the owner. "Here it is 6:30 o'clock and the story not written yet. I want to see it before I go out for the evening. And I have a dinner engagement. I want that story written at once and in my apartment in one hour."

By a good reporter's burst of speed, regardless of small details of polish and arrangement, Davenport whipped a story through his typewriter, and on the hour he was in Munsey's apartment at the Ritz-Carlton. He waited ten minutes. Munsey came in, dressed for the evening. He shook hands, took the manuscript, took a long cigarette from a silver box on the table and lighted it.

"Do you smoke, Mr. Davenport?"

"Yes, Mr. Munsey, I smoke."

"Well, you can't smoke here. I can smoke here. It is one of the rights of a man in his own home to smoke if he chooses. But no outsider may violate the rights of a home without permission."

Gravely and judicially, Munsey expounded the theory that a man's home is his castle. He discussed the evils of smoking for young men. He was altogether justified, he declared, in not permitting his men to smoke in the office. He continued for half an hour. He did not glance at the account of his purchase of the *Mail*. Then he returned the unread manuscript.

"All right, Mr. Davenport," he said as a benediction. "Go back and tell Mr. Lincoln to put this story in the paper. That's all."

Munsey stopped Davenport one day at the entrance of his newly purchased Stewart Building, 280 Broadway, just after the paper had been moved in. He shook hands formally, inquired what Davenport was doing and was told of the assignment just received from the city editor.

"Don't do it," said the Chief. "Don't bother with it. I want you to go and find out for me what is the matter with America."

"Well, Mr. Munsey, that is rather a large order and may require some time and study."

"Nonsense, Davenport. Look around you. Do you see anything wrong. No? There's the trouble with you young fellows. Six weeks ago I ordered glass doorknobs placed on the inside doors of this building. They have not been delivered yet. Why can't I get a doorknob? You find out the reason, and that will be the straw in the wind telling what's the matter with America."

Davenport returned smilingly to the city editor.

"Nonsense yourself," said that long-suffering journalist. "Telephone the contractor and tell him those knobs have got to be put on immediately, and then go on with that assignment."

The next day Munsey cordially visited Davenport's desk.

"See there, the glass doorknobs are on already. Now, what is the matter with America?"

"I'm sorry, Mr. Munsey, I haven't got all the data yet, but the contractor is sending it over to me."

"Don't put it in the paper when you get it but bring it to me. I wanted to test you."

Munsey suddenly sent for Davenport the week before the

Republican National Convention of 1920, which met in Chicago. No one had been sent from the *Sun,* the executives having delayed because of a restricted budget. Munsey wanted Davenport to start at once, without even waiting to go home to the suburbs for his luggage. From the Chief's office he telephoned his wife asking her to pack a bag and bring it to him at the Grand Central Station.

"Nonsense," said Munsey, seizing the telephone. "This is Mr. Munsey, Mrs. Davenport. Go right out and catch a taxicab without waiting for a train and drive into the city."

The chief personally made reservations for him, by his influence and at extra cost obtaining a compartment on a crowded train. Instructions would follow by wire, he said, rushing Davenport off. And when the reporter reached Chicago there was a telegram awaiting him at the Blackstone Hotel, commanding, "Do nothing until you hear from me further."

The following day reinforcements arrived, Edwin C. Hill, and Thoreau Cronyn, with verbal instructions, "Do nothing until you hear from Mr. Munsey."

Three days later came the long-awaited instructions, a telegram: "In this time you must have stored up vast quantities of important news. Release at once. Frank A. Munsey."

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Munsey had a conventional speech that he made in hiring young executives which had the effect actually of holding some in his service beyond their intended time. They remembered it at his death, and the more urbane of them smiled at it as an unintentional little racket of his. He would say:

"I am not offering you a large sum of money.

"But you are young. You are ambitious and have your eye upon the future.

"I am an old man. I have a great deal of money. I am a bachelor without heirs. I think it may prove a great advantage to you young men who are on my papers when I come to die. I have no one to leave my money to, you see, and so——"

And he terminated the speech with the expressive gesture of expanding his hands.

Chapter XIII

ANOTHER GOLDEN CHAIN

Frank Munsey cherished for more than ten years his vision of a combination to control the business and influence of the press in many cities, a newspaper chain, a trust which should be dominant in its own way as was his industrial ideal, the Steel Corporation, but all of it owned by himself alone.

Actually he did seize for himself a surpassing opportunity, the most strategic grouping of papers ever linked together on the Atlantic Coast, the five largest cities.

It started with his purchase of the Washington *Times,* November 15, 1901, the New York *Daily News* eleven days later, the Boston *Journal* the next year.

His chain of groceries was then just extending itself from New London into the neighboring towns. After uncertainties and losses, the stores were money makers, fit to stand beside the magazines. And next was to come a similar chain of newspapers, profitably dispensing another commodity. Munsey sketched his journalistic vision to a *Herald* reporter when he bought the New York *Daily News:* "I consider that to-day news is a commercial necessity, just as is steel or flour, and I am anxious to be in the business of furnishing this necessity." Beyond the newspapers, still higher towers lifted as distant and shadowy bids to his ambition.

These early newspaper purchases followed in the autumn after Morgan's brilliant synthesis of United States Steel, when that spectacle still was dazzling Munsey's eyes. They utilized

the new quick money of Wall Street now added in his pockets to the magical yield from his magazines and pure-food emporiums.

His next splurge came in the spring of 1908 when he bought the Baltimore *News* and started the Philadelphia *Times*. This followed the Wall Street panic of 1907, which his coolness and business judgment converted into such a gold mine. His growing capital, pressing hard for investment, found its outlet into newspapers, and they proved, as Munsey operated them, a superb outlet for capital, a perfect Niagara of an outlet.

Why did he ever want to own newspapers? Only a very personal logic, premised in the far-away, deep roots of his career, can give full answer to that. He once tossed off to an editor a superficial confession, "When I was making so much money on my magazines, I just couldn't wait a whole month to be in fresh touch with printers' ink. I had to get me a daily paper." Want a paper he did. And having it, he could not rest until he had a success, whatever the cost in money, labor and suffering.

Few possessions, after all, could afford such living and consistent renewals of self-confidence as a chain of newspapers, such soothing to the ambition, such reassurance of high position. With a chain of successful newspapers daily building up his name and fortune, the gawky outsider from the Maine back country need doubt himself never again.

Headquarters for this chain of power and glory appropriately should be Washington, the capital of the nation. Within a few years Munsey bought ground in the most approved location, on Newspaper Row facing Pennsylvania Avenue, between the well-established *Star* and the famous *Post,* and from designs by the country's leading architect, Stanford White, he erected the Munsey Building.

The changes followed. Originally a row of massive granite

columns fronted on the street, but after the architect's death this façade was altered to conform more nearly to the owner's taste, all plain white marble. In either aspect it was one of Washington's finest private buildings, needing to offer no apologies even to the palaces of the government.

Across the top floor, the entire front, extended a throne room for Munsey, in size somewhat more appropriate to a ball room, walls panelled in costly old wood, with ornate fireplace, parquet floor, imposing fixtures. It was kept locked, but when Munsey arrived the doors would be thrown open for inspection and further adornments and alterations would be ordered. It awaited the time when the owner should take up residence in Washington. Whatever his official position, however glittering his destiny in society, it could not be said that his setting was unworthy.

For years the throne room waited. Then Theodore Roosevelt was defeated for the Presidency in 1912, and the room was dismantled, partitioned and rented as office space.

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The hoop jumping, backward somersaulting and trapeze performing through which Munsey put the Boston *Journal* was required from the other papers of the chain only in part.

The New York *Daily News* he transmogrified to an early death—as will be told in its own place. The Washington *Times* suffered the prompt cutting off of its morning and Sunday editions, making it exclusively afternoon. The Philadelphia *Evening Times,* nearest to his own New York office, he belabored every quarter of an hour by telephone until at last his editors confessed to making up their paper for his eye alone, in utter disregard for what might interest the readers. In Baltimore his general manager, Stuart Olivier, was unafraid and independent; in Washington, Edgar D. Shaw was prepared at

any indignity to throw the job in Munsey's face and go hunting another, and these two were allowed unbelievable latitude. In the Maryland Free State he even permitted an editorial fight on the Eighteenth Amendment at exactly the same time that the New York *Sun,* directly under his hand, was doing its best for ratification and to place prohibition in the Constitution.

The Baltimore *News,* Munsey wrote in 1915, was "the best-paying paper I ever owned." He followed with what must seem to the onlooker as a clear explanation, although nothing indicates any consciousness in his mind of cause and effect. He said, "I adopted the home rule policy. After I had selected Mr. Olivier as general manager and found he made good, I left the *News* entirely in his hands and in the hands of his associates. While I was still the owner, I did not interfere with its policy or its management except in a general way."

But even with home rule, Munsey ownership meant constant telephone calls, changes arbitrary if not revolutionary, fitful pastoral visitations and periodic bids for editors and business managers to assemble in New York.

All the distant papers had their lookouts at headquarters, and the New York magazine and business office lieutenants—no matter how they might be accused of politics—played fair in protecting their colleagues against surprise.

"Frank A.'s coming" was an alarm cry producing immediate results . . . staff frozen into expressionless tension . . . coats on . . . cigarettes and pipes out . . . the fat and the old, out of sight . . . paper off the floor . . . broken chairs to the cellar.

And then the general manager might be seen stepping into the editorial room with Munsey, the latter nervously glancing around, then walking over to city editor or managing editor to exchange greetings. And—not an untypical scene—as owner talked crisply to his editor, his eye roving about the room:

"How was ink spilled on that desk?"

"I'm sorry I can't tell you, Mr. Munsey. I hadn't noticed it before."

"Well, we mustn't let things like that happen. Keep everything in proper shape. Get it cleaned off right away."

Such was his interest and conversation, with possibly the command to discharge some one, and then—dinner for his topmost two or three men and a long evening of talk, talk from Munsey about his struggles to get started and his dream of a glittering chain of many newspapers.

On the other hand, the presentations at court in New York created a merry fellowship—Shaw and Paul Patterson from Washington, Olivier from Baltimore, H. J. Taft from Philadelphia, Wingate from Boston and a few others of rank—who dubbed themselves privately the "Royal Order of Munsey Scouts."

Anticipating dull hours ahead, they habitually made the night festive until dawn. Then, at 9 o'clock in the morning, like sleepy schoolboys, they would arrive in the Chief's outer office to wait for him. They waited. They waited. The conference when it came was, most often, the familiar reverie of reminiscence and aspiration, followed always by a handsome dinner at Sherry's. Then the party broke up to catch midnight trains, the editors puzzling why the ritual had been repeated again.

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Munsey was thrilled and eager with a real idea, however, when he summoned to the throne in late November, 1908, the young managing editor of his Washington *Times,* Paul Patterson.

He wanted an afternoon paper on Sunday.

"Yes, Mr. Munsey," said Patterson.

There must be no delay, Munsey charged him. He wanted it at once, with no excuses, no sparing of expense.

Within two weeks a Sunday afternoon edition was to begin on the Washington *Times*. It required, of course, a whirlwind campaign of advertising solicitation, and—more important and difficult—the improvising of complete telegraph and cable news service. Ordinary wire service was not obtainable Sundays until time to begin work on the Monday morning papers.

"Go to it," said Munsey.

Out of thin air Patterson created a news service. An arrangement was made with the wire agencies for skeleton coverage of foreign emergencies. The United States was blanketed with letters of request and instructions, hundreds of correspondents were enrolled. Whatever happened on Sunday, the Washington *Times* was to be queried.

As Patterson slaved at the huge task, Munsey enjoyed the excitement. He gave out interviews and issued statements: the Sunday morning edition of an afternoon paper was "a jackass attachment" . . . in modern times "all must advance but the dead" . . . "pioneering the procession" . . . "cost . . . and labor . . . are of little consideration as compared with the working out of a sound idea . . ."

Just before the great Sunday, December 6, Munsey went to Washington to give the venture his personal attention. "Send a night letter to remind all correspondents again," he directed, and Patterson sent hundreds of telegrams urging them not merely to query but, on an important story, to file without query.

The result was an avalanche, burying the *Times,* flattering beyond all expectation. From remote flag stations in the prairies, from the forks of the creek, from every state and all the cities came a wealth of items. It was impossible to read them all, much less to get them into type. And at that, the

small composing room set twice as much copy as could be used, so that galley after galley of overset was dumped into the hell box. The advertising department likewise had delivered. The result was a twenty-page paper of lively interest, selling of that first novelty issue nearly 60,000 copies, a substantial increase above the average.

Critics protested feebly about Sabbath desecration, and Cardinal Gibbons in Baltimore took the lead in opposing the idea. In answer, newsboys were told they must not shout their wares loudly. But the idea was working.

"We'll start Sunday afternoon editions on all the papers," cried Munsey to the weary Patterson. "Keep right at it, beginning next Sunday. Get a leased wire into Baltimore and Philadelphia. This is magnificent."

The grind resumed. Another week of it and the Philadelphia *Times* blossomed out with its new Sunday afternoon edition. Another week, the Baltimore *Sunday Evening News.*

In general a criticism made later of the New York *Sunday Evening Telegram* was applicable to the Munsey trio: one enjoyed reading the paper "because he always found in it so much news he never saw anywhere else—or again." But news breaks favored the Sunday afternoon papers. They received as a gift from heaven the first break on the sinking of the *Republic,* first great sea tragedy to have wireless as a conspicuous factor, with Operator Jack Binns making himself a hero. In time came the first first-hand interviews—mushed across miles of snow—with Admiral Peary after his return from the North. And then the first interview with the celebrated British murderer, Dr. H. H. Crippen, reached on a boat at Quebec on Sunday as he was attempting escape to Canada.

The Philadelphia *Times* reached its pinnacle on Sunday, October 23, 1910, the day on which the Philadelphia Athletics beat the Chicago Cubs in the final game of their baseball

world's series. Five minutes after the last out in Chicago, the *Times* presses started rolling, and 201,671 copies were sold.

A year after the start, Munsey congratulated himself in the Baltimore *Sunday Evening News* as follows: "I know of only one paper in the history of journalism that has done so well, and that is the Sunday issue of the Washington *Times*. The *Sunday Evening Times* has not only firmly established itself in a single year but has earned a net income of nearly $10,000. This profit was earned by the Sunday issue alone, entirely apart from the profits of the other issues of the week." The *Sunday News* in Baltimore, the editorial declared, now was "on a good profit-making basis." The venture was, indeed, one of the most satisfactory of all Munsey's innovations, and although no winner still it was in no sense a count against him.

The New York *Telegram,* then owned by James Gordon Bennett, followed in July, 1911, with a Sunday evening edition and continued as a large money-maker until Munsey himself choked it off the same week he sold the New York *Herald.* His own original Sunday editions continued without great change as long as he owned the papers.

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Of all the tests which a newspaper in its lifetime cannot escape, scarcely one is so acid as a large-scale strike of the local trade unions. In self-respect the paper cannot keep silent, and its protestation of being a friend of the people counts for nothing at all. Will it support the working man's side if that is the just side or—regardless of bravado or entenuation—will it take orders from the banker and large advertisers? No test is more searching, few go half so deep.

The Philadelphia *Evening Times* came up to its test and its opportunity in the historic street-car strike of May, 1909. Whatever the actual merits of the issue, the strikers had the popular

side. The old Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company had been a toy for political and financial magnates; "The banana line," it was called. . . . "Its cars came in bunches." Its past labor record was notorious.

Now the *Times,* during its initial ten months, had gained not even a foothold. It remained a foreigner, struggling against the ingrown inertia and indifference of Philadelphia, twisted about by the back seat driving of its absentee master. Its editorial chief, H. J. Taft, was from Boston, and likewise many of the staff, opening a way for natives to jeer that if a *Times* man wanted to find the City Hall or Broad Street Station, he had to take a taxicab.

But Taft and his alert city editor, Hood Macfarland, knew a story when they saw it, and they made capital of the strike. They played it. And on all questions of policy they consistently favored the strikers, editorially warning the police, "You should not be partisans of the company any more than of the men," lecturing the company, "Include your employes in the general policy of fairness."

Whereupon, suddenly the *Times* acquired readers. Grateful strikers began selling the paper on the streets. In sections where the carbarns were located, in Kensington, Frankford and West Philadelphia, new circulation was piled on by thousands. Eventually the strike was won—a victory for labor, a victory for the *Times.*

But the following February the men struck again. There was rioting, several deaths, the threat of a general sympathetic strike. The *Times* loyally presented the men's grievances, upheld their right to strike, published photographs of the strike leaders with friendly captions, refused to be horrified by the riots and pointed out that much of the damage was the work of non-union hoodlums.

Having no advertising to lose, the *Times* was perfectly free

to choose its side, and its policy, a confirmation of the position clearly established the summer before, added new readers. The paper sold 185,180 copies on Sunday, February 20, 1910, and 194,085 the next Sunday, with weekday gains to match.

But advertisers and especially the big stores thought the strike was ruining business. A brawling parade down Market Street confirmed the opinion. They began to call on the newspapers for a more aggressive attitude. The little *Times,* at last getting on the map, was happy to reject the suggestion. It had found itself as labor's friend.

And then came the great about-face. Taft broke the news to his city editor.

"I just had a call from the Old Man," he said. "We're against the strike from now on. You have the lead story rewritten. I am putting in a new editorial in the next edition."

First, the indignant Macfarland tried to telephone New York. Mr. Munsey would not talk; no chance to protest; the reversal stood.

And so, between editions, the *Times* vocabulary changed "strike leader" to "typical gang leader." A sympathetic strike became "un-American." Stiff editorials began to say "Violence and rioting in Philadelphia must be stamped out." Headlines disclosed "P.R.T. Willing to Join Men In Peace Plan" and "Unions Defiant."

The *Times* had flopped over, and as it deserted labor, so did labor desert the *Times.* To all the strikers and their friends thereafter, any paper was better than the renegade. The rest of Philadelphia still wasn't interested. A temporary gain in advertising promptly followed. The next month one of the largest department stores began using a full page in the *Times* every day, continuing for a year.

The *Times* had come through its strike test, and thereafter

anyone might know exactly where it stood, might see the glaring blotch on its record. To Munsey personally, however, the strike was neither test nor problem, and the change of policy almost certainly was not a sell-out for an advertising contract.

It is far more consistent with his character to place the Philadelphia *Times* strike flop alongside the almost simultaneous Washington *Times* tariff flop and give both the same explanation, two woeful examples of his foggy editorship, his failure to know what his papers were doing. Munsey in Philadelphia was not attempting to carry water on both shoulders; he simply was incredibly slow in realizing which was the shoulder. His sympathies did not include the common people, the masses or the unions, and he cared nothing about having them read his newspaper.

Rather was he loyal always to the owners of companies and the individuals of position and dignity. When the strike issue was presented to him from their viewpoint, he knew where his sympathies lay and immediately corrected his policy. Munsey had money. He wanted a paper of eminence and vogue, and to the plebeians he bade an easy farewell.

Afterward on the *Times,* when advertising had fallen away to nothing, a new editor pointed out to him that the paper was carrying the advertisements of a baseball gambling pool. He hadn't noticed it, and he stopped it at once, although it cut off almost his last revenue.

Munsey sickened of his losses, hesitated, finally closed out on June 16, 1914. He had hoped to sell, but his price was $1,200,000. He sent Stuart Olivier from Baltimore to find a buyer.

Actually there was a prospect willing to take a chance at his own price, and Olivier reported, "I can get $900,000 for you—$300,000 the first year, $300,000 the second year, $300,000 the third year."

"That's fine, Stuart," said Munsey. "But how about the fourth year?"

"There isn't any more, Chief. It is just $900,000."

"No, there's no sale, Stuart. My price is $1,200,000."

He conferred with Clement H. Congdon, a Philadelphia expert, publisher of the *Sunday Transcript,* proposing that he take over the *Times.* The trouble was, Congdon answered him, that there was no newspaper to take over. The *Times* was only a shell. However, Congdon specified, if he should attempt it, he would accept no interference, would not allow anyone, even Munsey himself, to make a suggestion, and the owner must be ready to lose $1,000 a day for a year. So Munsey determined to kill the *Times.*

Half a dozen of the best men he brought to his New York *Press,* the others—a hundred or more—were thrown out of work with a few weeks advance pay, their livelihood cut off, left to pick up whatever jobs they could find. They heard of the suspension first when they arrived for work on the last day. One of the sports writers happened to be traveling then with the Philadelphia Athletics baseball team in Chicago, and he was left stranded, without money then or thereafter, to be brought home at the club's expense. It was one of the little careless incidentals of a newspaper's going out of business.

Munsey bore his losses cheerfully, in his final announcement saying: "Not every experiment is born to succeed. The *Evening Times* is merely one of them that falls by the wayside and the world goes on merrily all the same."

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Munsey parted with the Boston *Journal* in 1913, strangled the Philadelphia *Times* in 1914, sold the Baltimore *News* to Stuart Olivier in 1915 and the Washington *Times* to Arthur Brisbane in 1917. Of the four, Boston and Philadelphia were

unmitigated losses, Washington touched solvency, earning $35,000 the year of 1909, and Baltimore was a money-maker. The chain dream was past. The Baltimore *News* reverted when wartime operating costs forced Olivier to give it back, and Munsey then bought and consolidated the rival papers of General Felix Agnus, selling out in Baltimore to William Randolph Hearst in 1923.

Long before that, however, chain journalism ceased to dazzle Munsey and he was approaching his great renunciation, "God Almighty never made any man big enough to handle more than one newspaper." He overlooked a few exceptions, but his meaning was clear. He himself couldn't handle so many. And it was becoming important to him that he handle one. He was going to concentrate on New York.

Chapter XIV

AGE OF INNOCENCE

As young Frank Munsey, back in the early 1880's, sat of evenings in the hotel at Augusta listening to his inspiration, the magnate of the cheap magazines, E. C. Allen, his mind received the blueprint and specifications of a career in New York moving on from magazines to daily newspapers. Publishing a newspaper was part of his plan when he first arrived. And in little more than eight years, astonishingly, he was realizing his dream in practical black and white with his own name at the masthead, at it like a shot as soon as he could lay hands on the money, without waiting to consolidate his ground as a magazine proprietor.

The experience, as has been indicated already, was a swift inconsequential little failure which sent him back to his regular business. But this ambition unrealized was not to be disposed of so casually. The embers glowed, a passion beneath his frigid surface, and again and again they kindled into flame, into a billowing tide of fire, the unquenchable recurring desire which dominated his conduct for a lifetime. Had Munsey succeeded early at newspaper publishing as with his magazines, it is a valid surmise that he would have trampled no such path of destruction through the newspapers of New York as in fact he did. But success was an essential next step for him and he pursued it undiscouraged and persistent.

Munsey was thirty-six, rich in hopes for his *Golden Argosy* weekly and with some little money from its earnings—his

monumental stroke with the ten-cent monthly still dim and unvisioned in the future—when he got his first newspaper.

It was called the *Star,* a Democratic partisan organ, once owned by Tammany Boss "Honest John" Kelly, later by William Dorsheimer, but now deepy in debt to Collis P. Huntington, mogul of the western railways.

Munsey changed its name to the *Continent* and made it New York's first modern tabloid, beginning on Sunday, February 1, 1891. It continued until June 7 when it passed to Colonel John A. Cockerill to become a full-sized newspaper once more, the morning edition of the *Advertiser,* its actual owner being Huntington.

Don C. Seitz in his JOSEPH PULITZER notes that Munsey had been given a six-month option but, unable to meet competition, turned it back after four months. His loss by current estimate was a trifling $40,000.

Tabloid in size, the *Continent* was calmer than its tabloid successors thirty years later, but typical in its lavish illustrations and in a heavy emphasis on human interest—features of ephemeral quality which shocked its august contemporaries. The outstanding story of its first issue discussed "The Noses of Many Fair Women," with profile drawings of Mrs. Vanderbilt, Mrs. Leslie Carter, the Duchess of Manchester, Mrs. Chauncey M. Depew and Lillian Russell. The personal Munsey touch showed in a narrative about old-time telegraph operators, "Men Who Pounded the Key When the Art Was Young." For its editorial writer it had the advantage of an outstanding personality, the humorist John Kendrick Bangs.

Already accustomed in his magazine to personal talks about his motives and intentions, Munsey at the start pontificated to his readers that "to establish any important undertaking in this big city of ours requires force of personality, untiring energy, push, capital and good common sense, with a solid back-

ground of experience. The *Continent* has been launched with a perfect understanding of the situation, and its appeal for public approval will be an intelligent as well as an energetic one."

Four months later, after this optimism was deflated, the *Continent* carried a valedictory editorial of haunting significance. It had battled successfully for two reforms, it said, and was "clearly and beyond question entitled to the credit of assuming the initiative," for the abolition of toll gates on Brooklyn Bridge and the opening of the Metropolitan Museum of Art on Sundays.

Here was Munsey as far back as June, 1891, feeling a practical awareness of the Metropolitan, with which his name, beginning a third of a century afterward, was to be linked so substantially.

When the *Continent* quit, the lofty *Evening Post* bade it a satirical farewell, moralizing:

> That it should perish so soon must be considered extremely discouraging for ambitious young journalists of a certain type. Reasoning *a priori,* we should have supposed that earnest thoughtful journalistic work on such themes as the noses of "society ladies" would bring its due reward both in money and fame. . . . In New York the outlook for young journalistic biographers and noseologists must be considered, in view of the death of the *Continent,* extremely gloomy.

The little *Continent* snapped back a deathbed reply: "And to the press of this town, with one exception, and to the press everywhere, the *Continent* also extends its thanks for the uniform courtesy and many words of praise that it has received. That one exception, it is hardly necessary to state, is the *Evening Post,* an organ whose ingrained malignity has deservedly made it the Ishmael of journalism."

* * * * * *

Munsey wrote an extraordinary document for his magazine of January, 1892, an article on "Journalists and Journalism of New York," in which he described and appraised the field of his recent experience. Nothing could appear more intimate, looking back upon it, for of the sixteen newspapers reviewed, eight became his own properties—only two of them surviving his hand—and a ninth, the *Morning Advertiser,* was made out of his old *Continent.* It was as if a bidder, studying his cards, were computing the tricks he would take. It opened a window upon Munsey's comprehension and recorded a forecast of his career.

In 1892, as ever afterward, the *Herald* of James Gordon Bennett was his dream and ideal. As he saw it, "it devoted a smaller percentage of its columns to editorials than any other leading New York paper, and yet the *Herald* is probably the most valuable newspaper property on this continent . . . a newspaper whose expenditures for news from all over the world, for illustrations of the highest grade known to the daily press, for best paper and best print—for all these combined, the *Herald* ranks first."

He theorized a bit, declaring "in the days of Greeley and Raymond the strength of a newspaper lay in the force and brilliance of its editorials, but now the newspaper is a business enterprise pure and simple, conducted with business instincts and business energy."

He didn't notice the *World's* congenital bent for crusading. As he saw it, however, when Joseph Pulitzer came to New York, "the journalism of today began. . . . Then it was that the counting room emerged from subordination and became the ruling power." In the face of this progress, "visions of the once-popular *Sun* as the model for the greater journalism of today are but back number views."

He proceeds: *Herald, Sun, Press, Daily News, Commercial*

Advertiser, Mail and Express, Tribune, Times and the others. Colonel Elliott F. Shepard, proprietor of the *Mail and Express,* he finds "an eccentric journalist, but one who has the merit of being in at the finish. The public likes a marked personality."

* * * * * *

The New York newspapers of the early 1890's, seen down the vista of retrospection, take on an almost pastoral aura, charming even if unreal, emphasizing the revolution wrought during one man's life.

It was a field crowded with proud, opinionated, historic, intensely individual newspapers, small old papers dominated by large personalities, engaging in fierce verbal duels and each flaunting its prejudices and eccentricities to the delight of the constant readers. Young Pulitzer of the *World* was chief firebrand. Whitelaw Reid, successor to Greeley, just recently had forsaken the *Tribune* for diplomacy. Edwin L. Godkin thought for the liberal intelligentsia on the *Post,* which had less than 25,000 circulation. Charles A. Dana, Aristophanes in gold-rimmed spectacles, upheld on the *Sun* his unexcelled standards of wit, satire and sound writing. Adolph S. Ochs and William Randolph Hearst hadn't come above the horizon.

The *Herald* in its arrogant prime still was capable of thrilling the world by its adventures; it was only a few short years since it sent Stanley to scorch in African jungles with the curt assignment, "Find Livingstone," sent its own ship to the frozen Arctic, a newspaper still first in earnings, boasting "High Water Mark Circulation 190,000," the largest in the United States.

Newspaper shops then were smaller, cheaper, more intimate, more disorderly than later efficiency could tolerate. In thought, at least, it was still possible to become editor with no equipment beyond a marked personality and a hatful of type. Then

and for long afterward the *Sun* occupied the former home of Tammany Hall, a rickety barn of littered floors and unsteady desks, prolific of those fabulous cockroaches big enough to write on a typewriter, which inspired Don Marquis's "archy."

When Munsey made his first venture, his *Daily Continent* was written by hand, not by typewriter; set by hand, not by linotype; its illustrations all were pen and ink drawings, for no daily paper was able to print a half-tone engraving for another three years. The Sunday colored comic hadn't been invented.

The *Herald,* blazing a trail of modernism with a new steam-driven press in 1891, "the fastest press in the universe," boasted that its "consumption of white paper is so astounding that even the imagination grows tired and sits down to catch its breath." It was a press capable alone of producing 72,000 eight-page *Heralds* in one hour. Twenty-nine years later when the *Herald* was sold to Munsey, its best single press had a capacity of 240,000 eight-page papers an hour, and it was obsolete.

Advertising was undeveloped, kept strictly secondary. The classification known as "dry goods store advertising" was down the list in importance. The *Herald* haughtily refused all advertising cuts. Eight to twelve pages constituted the daily editions, thirty-two pages on Sundays. The papers were far more like themselves of fifty years before than of ten years afterward.

The editor was master of the paper, and each editor employed a publisher to direct his business policy. In a few years more, the publishers would dominate, each having an editor in his employ.

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The newspapers at the time of Munsey's *Daily Continent* were enjoying the last days of their age of innocence. Every

sent a sort of accomplishment, and they are Munsey's very own.

* * * * * *

As a lethal agent Munsey was merry, vigorous and efficient, a perfect implement for the task. Proceeding through New York he put his heart into his strokes, looking up hopefully from a freshly taken victim to scent out the next, hurrying forward with gusto and joy in the chase. Already he had cultivated his taste and whetted his weapons by mergers in the magazine field and by knocking papers in the head in other cities.

He felt exhilaration from buying a newspaper; it was as if its strength began immediately to flow in his own veins. He bought with abandon. He was nonchalant about casualties.

He purchased the Baltimore *American* and the Baltimore *Star* from General Felix Agnus in 1920. Negotiations had been finished off for him by Charles M. Harwood, editor of his Baltimore *Evening News*. Everything was settled. The price was $1,250,000.

General Agnus and Harwood together came to New York for the formality of signing the contract, meeting Munsey in his apartment on Sunday morning. The purchaser was dapper and gay, wearing one of his emphatic checked suits, moving about the room with long bounding strides, excited as a youth.

The seller, a wily and alert octogenarian, sensed the mood and made it his opportunity. He began talking about the insignificance of the sum agreed upon. It was too small. He must have $250,000 more. Munsey interrupted, hurriedly.

"General, are your papers worth that much money?"

"Why, yes indeed, Mr. Munsey. They're a bargain at that."

"Very well, Sir. We'll pay it."

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"General, are your papers worth that much money?"

"Why, yes indeed, Mr. Munsey. They're a bargain at that."

"Very well, Sir. We'll pay it."

Then he flashed grandly to his employee, "See, Harwood! That's the way we buy newspapers."

The *American* he kept as a morning edition of his Baltimore *News,* but the *Star* he dropped in its tracks with dispatch. That was the way he bought newspapers.

* * * * * *

After Munsey's juvenile experiment with the *Continent,* and before he settled into his rhythmic fateful swinging of the scythe, he suffered a second disappointment and embarrassment of the utmost importance, both to himself and to the newspapers of New York.

He had another failure, the New York *Daily News,* a blot which he was to spend the remainder of his life attempting to launder. For ten years after the *Continent* he had enough of newspapers. Then he plunged, and on November 26, 1901, the *News* became his.

It was strange fish for Munsey's net. "The longshoremen's delight," New York called it. Operated by a skeleton staff and on a financial shoestring, utterly stripped of social or intellectual pretensions, it prospered because of its shrewd appeal to a definite audience. The longshoremen, indeed, and also the hod carriers, policemen, serving maids and charwomen were its loyal readers.

The *Daily News* filled its columns with items from the "Ladies' Roscommon Association" and the "County Leitrim Association of Hell's Kitchen." It specialized in events at churches on the far East and West Sides, and waiting newsboys on Sunday mornings sold tons of papers to the crowds coming from mass. It reported all departmental trials before the police and fire commissioners, went in heavily for personals about the ward politicians and was favored by Tammany with a rich slice

of legal advertising. Another specialty of the *Daily News* was its short story—rewritten and condensed from old copies of the *Fireside Companion* of Augusta, Maine—every day repeating the romance of the poor girl who married the prince.

From Civil War times it had been the property of Benjamin Wood, a man given to card playing who left the paper in charge of Colonel William L. Brown, ex-soldier, politician and minority stockholder, a publisher who had in his own way the Midas touch. It was Colonel Brown's boast that the *News* consistently earned $100,000 a year, and even $72,000 the final year of disaster before Munsey.

When Benjamin Wood died in 1900, his widow suddenly become a business woman and took personal charge. She was an imperious little eccentric of sixty, already inclined to be miserly, in her youth a Southern belle who had danced with the Prince of Wales.

Mrs. Wood it was who instructed the newsboys in a raucous chant:

> "*Daily News,* one cent.
> Help Mother pay the rent."

When she succeeded to her late husband's authority, she ousted the business manager and cashier, crowded Colonel Brown from the editorial department and for eighteen months gave the paper her attention. As assistants, she installed her sister and daughter. By the fall of 1901, she was a loser and weary of it. Such was the *Daily News*—with the additional item that Charles F. Murphy of Tammany Hall then was reputed to be dickering for its purchase—when Munsey became interested.

Munsey was a different man since 1891, now at fullest strength, financially beyond attack, at the threshold of his mature expansion. He wanted the *Daily News*. Mrs. Wood

wanted to sell. Nothing stood in the way, and the price was $340,000, cash, no checks.

Munsey's general manager thus early was young William T. Dewart, and Dewart he sent to get the money from the bank in fresh unfolded $1,000 bills, three hundred and forty of them, and make delivery. Mrs. Wood received him in her apartment in the Fifth Avenue Hotel. She also called in her daughter and sister, and the manager of the hotel.

The money, said Mrs. Wood, was to be paid into her hand, one bill at a time. Dewart complied, giving her the first $1,000. Mrs. Wood studied it, turned it over, noted it with a pencil tally on paper and passed it on to her companions. When all three had nodded, she reached for the next bill, and so on for the next and the next, the process being performed three hundred and forty times until by the end of the afternoon the price of the *Daily News* was paid.

Mrs. Wood at length checked her count of pencil marks, then signed the necessary contract of sale, then delivered to Dewart the key to the *News* office. Thenceforth, she was heard of no more for thirty years, until, a few months before her death, she was discovered by her heirs, a recluse in a hotel room, hoarding some $900,000 in bank notes and jewelry.

But now the old Tammany, Irish, longshoremen's, servant girl's *Daily News* was Munsey's, and it was a bargain. It had been a phenomenal money-maker, was a power in politics, stood in an admirable cash position with no debts and $90,000 of undivided profits in the bank. Nothing could represent more precisely Munsey's ideal of a profitable investment. There was no valid reason why Munsey, of all men, should not be satisfied with it, except it had no position in society.

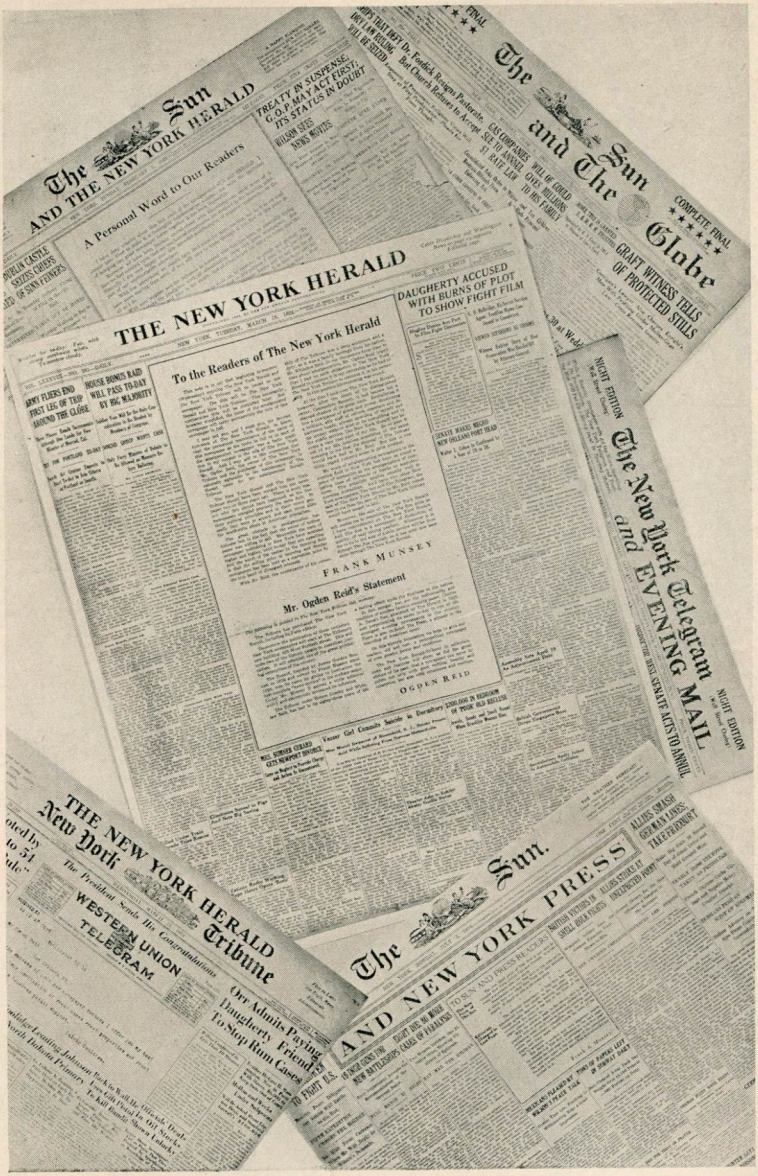
No sooner had he acquired it than he turned up his nose and began putting its plebeian past completely out of mind, bustling about like a New England wife at housecleaning time.

Soon he was sniffing to the readers that "if I were to buy a thousand newspapers, and this is perhaps within the range of possibilities, I shall never find one of them in so helpless a condition as the *News.*"

To which he added a boast superlatively naïve: "The *Daily News* with its eight pages, and no more advertising than it has at present, gives more reading matter than any other one-cent evening paper in New York."

Five weeks after his purchase the old-time subscribers who still remained were scandalized to discover at the top of Page One a crusading headline, "To Charge Sisters With Being Cruel," introducing an exposé of mismanagement at a Catholic orphanage in Queens. The pious Irish took off their spectacles and let the paper fall from their hands. "Is this the ould *Daily News,*" they asked, "or is it a circular from the A.P.A.?"

When President Theodore Roosevelt's first message to Congress was published in December, 1901, events in the reorganized *Daily News* office were so startling as to inspire a bantering story in the Brooklyn *Eagle.* The message was a bulky document of more than 20,000 words, vitally interesting to the country as the new President's opening declaration of policy, and it had been distributed to the press well in advance of delivery. While the other papers were getting it into type, however, in the *Daily News* office it remained in the pocket of the publisher. Unfamiliar with shop routine but impressed with the warning, "Hold for Release," Munsey was taking personal care against violation of the rules. At length came the release flash by telegraph, at two o'clock in the afternoon. And then while rival papers were moving their type smoothly off the bank and into the forms, the editors of the *News,* caught and helpless, were hunting for Munsey, taking the message from him, descending with shouted rush orders and prayers to the linotype operators to get such scrappy composition as



THE STORY THAT SPEAKS FOR ITSELF. THE DOUBLE-BARRELED TITLES WITH WHICH MUNSEY ANNOUNCED HIS MERGERS

A WHITE HOUSE VISITOR. MUNSEY, SENATOR SPENCER AND SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE GILLETT PHOTOGRAPHED WITH PRESIDENT COOLIDGE

they could, literally throwing in the type by handfuls. The jumble, as the *Eagle* reported, made "a curious hodge podge or a sort of plum pudding, with the message for the plums and the other news of the day as the pudding. And every trained newspaper man in the office was swearing at the mix-up."

Munsey wanted Arthur Brisbane for his editor. Years before when starting his ten-cent magazine, he had tried to bring Brisbane into his service with the offer of $50 a week and an interest in the business. Brisbane had declined and explained to him that the magazine couldn't possibly be made to pay. Now Munsey sought out his old friend again, and the latter has kindly recalled the incident in these words:

"I was working for Mr. Hearst for a rather small salary, $25,000, I think. Munsey offered me $50,000 a year to work on the *News,* and like a true business man, offered to deposit the amount of my salary for five years with J. P. Morgan & Co.

"I declined the offer and again gave him friendly advice, which, this time, turned out to be correct. I told him he would save a great deal of money if he would NOT buy the New York *Evening News,* or, if he had already bought it, I advised him to get rid of it as soon as possible. I seemed to know more about newspapers than magazines."

Munsey added a society column to the *Daily News.* He poured money into new equipment, added color presses, more than doubled the Sunday magazine section. Later the Sunday features were issued on Saturday. It was changed to a morning paper and back to afternoon again. The changes, indeed, were contemporary with many of those in Boston and Washington, and at each change another block of old *Daily News* readers fled out the window while new ones remained unattracted.

The climax of sabotage was reached in thirteen months, the change from evening to morning, first announced December

30, 1902, effective two days later on January 1. The *Daily News* was an afternoon member of the City News Association, the agency representing all papers of the city, providing for the coöperative gathering of routine news, each membership having a book value of about $100,000 but more valuable in fact because of the convenience and economy. When the *Daily News* blossomed into a morning newspaper, service was refused. No arrangement for the transfer had been made. In a glow of fraternal and holiday spirit the other papers quickly adopted a resolution declaring the *News* no longer a member. The afternoon papers were happily rid of a competitor; the morning papers didn't want one. The membership was never recaptured and its loss was irreparable.

While Munsey was experimenting, with results increasingly disillusioning, the ousted ex-editor, Colonel Brown, who had conducted the paper along its career of lowly opulence for more than twenty years, who still held some 140 of the 300 shares, was biding his time impatiently at his farm in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. And one hot day late in July, 1903, while reading his Boston newspaper the Colonel suddenly burst into an uproar of swearing. Forthwith, he set out for New York.

Before his very eyes, in the paper he saw that Munsey proposed to sell the *News* at auction on August 21. It was mad first to kill a paper, then to sell it at the dullest season of the year. Breathing out oaths and denunciations, Colonel Brown routed out his lawyer, obtained an injunction, then a settlement, then peaceably returned home, all his shares sold to Munsey at a favorable price. So Munsey held onto the *News,* tried further expedients, finally in April, 1904, gave up.

"Some men do not know when they have had enough, but I do," he said, announcing his intention to drop it. "In discontinuing the *News,* I simply quit a business for which I

recognize I am temperamentally and by training unfitted. I have resorted to every expedient I know to make the paper successful, but I have been met with the remarkable proposition that at each fresh expenditure of considerable money, the circulation instead of increasing, has decreased.

"The fact is that the constituency of the *News* has always been and still remains on the East Side and West Side of the city. It catered to a class of people with whom I am not in sympathy. I tried to make a place for it among those with whom I am in sympathy and with whom I am daily thrown in contact. I failed to do so for various causes into which there is no need of my going."

He made himself a little alibi, such as he employed also in Boston: "As a matter of fact I have been merely the capitalist back of the property and have devoted little or none of my personal attention to its conduct. . . . I do not know a single instance where a capitalist as such has been able to build up a weak newspaper property or to establish a newspaper."

In June a formal notice said the paper had been transferred to its managing editor, Thomas C. Quinn, for a "nominal consideration." Publication became finally impossible two years later. Munsey's losses, by the estimate of *Editor and Publisher,* were $750,000.

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The death of the *News* is the prelude's last note. Beating his big drum, revealing his style and setting his theme, Munsey has made his entry. The curtain rises next upon a rapid and uninterrupted sequence of scenes, making their point by the very bludgeoning of repetition, which carry the actor to his climax.

To a man so proud and self-willed as Munsey, the two early disasters were rankling wounds. The *Continent* might be dis-

missed as youthful extravagance; but the business of the *Daily News* was committed deliberately, publicly and without financial compulsion, and publicly it had been confessed and abandoned. When Munsey returned, he was determined to salve his ego and redeem his reputation with a success which should answer every objector. He would not quit again, he would not divide his interest and he would not admit even the whisper of failure. Nothing should stand in his way.

Chapter XV

TORNADO THROUGH NEW YORK

THE CAREER of Frank Munsey was a prolonged rise on the stepping-stones of his dead newspapers—on dead newspapers, one by one!

A sad and shocking sight is the bodily home of a newspaper which has just died—no pulse in its presses, no reach and grasp in its linotype machines, no copy shooting through its tubes, no voice of typewriter keys in its city room. And through the twilight, moving across the litter of unswept floors, may be seen the employees—corpuscles which had quickened its life—now briefly tarrying for some last trifle, anxious to be away but not certain where to go. The extinction of a newspaper is like the death of a person, and its departure creates a profound vacancy in many a heart.

Munsey, of course, obsessed with his ambition, was heedless of the deaths. He conceived of himself as an engineer planning a great dam, indifferent to the old homesteads flooded. He was as a captain embarking on conquest, disregarding the cannon fodder, and utterly devoid of magnetism to call forth the cheers.

But when the newspaper men, insiders and members of the family, began to see creeping death overtake these institutions which had been their pride and their very living, death coming each time from the hand of Frank Munsey, it was not surprising that they swiftly labelled him a pestilence and a curse. He was an ogre to frighten the children.

Casting about in a wider view, the observers could see the smoke from his destruction in other cities and hear the tales of his heartlessness which the refugees told. They nursed their resentment and remembered against him every point and edge of his unsympathetic personality. They took a futile consolation in recalling harsh acts he had committed, men he had fired, the desperate rejoinders his victims had snarled back at him.

"The boll weevil of journalism," the man in the ranks called him.

"A man with ice water in his veins instead of blood!" And always, "Munsey, the grocer!"

When he bought the *Sun,* they quoted a desperate pun and attributed it to George Ade, "It reminds me of what my father used to say, 'Good night, son.' "

A bitter comment of Frank Ward O'Malley's was passed about as Munsey was amalgamating his staffs after one purchase, "All the slaves go with the plantation."

Veterans and novices, stars and mediocrities alike saw him as a personal enemy, tracking them down, taking away their bread, threatening starvation to their wives, children and aged parents, maliciously devastating the peaceful scene in which they had lived contentedly.

The papers were being killed off.

No man in the newspaper field was more hated than Munsey, and those who hated him had cause. It was a hate bred of suffering and terror. Year by year the number of the displaced increased, from hundreds to thousands. While he was at large, no one felt secure.

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After his venture with the *Daily News,* New York frankly called Munsey a failure. The derisive *Morning Telegraph* took an interview of his in which he had told about giving advice

to his friend, the future Lord Northcliffe, and dared to comment, "if Mr. Harmsworth as a result knows all that Mr. Munsey knows about how not to make a newspaper pay, he ought to be able to avoid disaster during the rest of his natural life."

Munsey at first was cautious. His magazines and grocery stores and Wall Street speculations continued to pour in profits. He expanded his chain. But he kept hands off the New York field for eight years, and then he bought the *Press* from Henry L. Einstein for $1,000,000 cash.

There were rival purchasers in prospect, but according to *Editor and Publisher,* "It is understood that Mr. Munsey went to Mr. Einstein with a certified check for the full amount he was willing to pay, which was accepted by Mr. Einstein after a brief conversation."

Munsey's desire was sincere to use the *Press* as a weapon for Roosevelt in the 1912 campaign, but in his initial statement he also said bluntly, "I have bought the *Press* because I want it. It completes my chain of newspapers covering the five big cities of the East—Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington."

The price of $1,000,000 was not excessive in view of the earnings, $60,000 a year, regularly pocketed by the former owner. The *Press* had a circulation of around 90,000, which was much larger than either the *Sun* or the *Tribune,* and it was firmly established as an authority on sports, also on the theater, with a loyal political following of conservative Republicans. It was less famous than *Sun* or *Herald,* but after a quarter of a century's profitable operation, it was a thoroughly going concern. Furthermore it was a living and vigorous organism which ambitious capital might expand, and there is no reason to doubt Munsey's intentions when he said to John Hennessy he wanted to make it the first paper in New York.

The *Press,* however, did not remain a money-maker for

Munsey. It slumped steadily as one innovation after another altered its appearance and swerved its course.

The Chief's ingrown fussiness, his habit of interfering with the men at work, his restlessness and impatience began to appear at the *Press* almost as flagrantly as in Boston or on the old *Daily News.* Notwithstanding his large expenditures, the result was bad.

Even in circulation, at first, the *Press* slumped, dropping to 81,330 in April, 1913, but mounting gradually through baseball season bulges and winter recessions to 103,657 in April, 1916, and 135,000 the following July.

Blighted by the war, all New York papers lost advertising volume in 1914, but as the others gradually recovered the *Press* shrivelled to a wraith. From 1913 to 1915 it lost a third of its total advertising lineage, the *Tribune* moving ahead of it. In the general improvement of the spring of 1916, of the seven morning newspapers, only the *Press* and the *Herald* counted losses. The *Press,* by an unfavorable gap, came last.

The ghost of the *Daily News* was leering. Something needed to be done. And so Munsey bought the New York *Sun.*

* * * * * *

Nearly a quarter of a century before, Munsey had told Charles A. Dana that some day he would do it, and now, on the last day of June, 1916, he did. He bought the *Sun.* It was a very proud Munsey, indeed, who made the announcement of his triumph. Even the prosaic details of the business office that he brought into his statement were glowing.

The *Press* would cease to exist the following Monday morning, July 3, being merged into the nobler *Sun.* Reassuringly, he said to his old readers, and to his own pride, that

> while still losing money; the loss has been cut to less than one-third of what it was eighteen months ago, and it looks

> as if the clearing was not very far away. That we could win out with the *Press* had we continued on without recourse to amalgamation, I have no doubt. But putting a paper on a paying basis is one thing; giving it the power and position of a great daily like the *Sun* is quite another. With another year of progress like the last, the *Press* would have reached the paying point, but fifty years might not have given it the prestige it will get in a single day through amalgamation with the *Sun*.

To the *Sun* readers he took to himself the merit that

> many of the old *Sun* men, who are steeped through with the *Sun* traditions, will remain with us, I hope, and continue to give you that inimitable *Sun* flavor and finish that you find in the *Sun* alone.

Speaking more casually for himself, he told an interviewer that "New York has had a surplus of newspapers. Even with the elimination of one, it has too many morning papers. The field is still too crowded."

Since Munsey had the money, it was, indeed, no great achievement to buy the *Sun,* and rumors of the deal had been flying about Newspaper Row for several weeks. The old paper was but a shadow of glory. Its semi-annual sworn circulation report in April, 1916, counted a daily average of only 68,309, at the bottom of all morning papers. In advertising, although nearly double the *Press,* its total volume still reached but little more than half that of the failing *Herald,* and was not within calling distance of the *World* and the *Times.* The *Sun* was ripe for extinction, and hung on to life only by the fertile promise of the *Evening Sun,* a steady climber in both circulation and advertising. Its circulation—104,396 in April, 1913, a few months after Munsey bought the *Press*—had marched steadily ahead to 170,464 in April, 1916.

The New York *Sun* was a name and a glamorous tradition,

and the *Evening Sun* was showing a lively capacity to earn money. But they were hobbled by a news service of leaden extravagance because of a long ago feud which excluded them from the Associated Press. They carried on their own independent world-wide system of reporting and paid the whole bill themselves.

On the other hand, Munsey's statement of current prospects at the *Press* had been wildly optimistic, for advertising was at a crisis. But the paper did have Associated Press membership and its summer circulation was nearly double the *Sun's.*

So the rising Munsey, needing advertisers, prestige and tradition, and needing more readers too if he were to make a bid for top rank, took to himself the strength of the *Sun.* He paid William C. Rieck $2,468,000 for the two papers, morning and evening, took them firmly in his grasp and killed the *Press.*

The city editor of the *Press,* Wayne Randall, carrying out orders, fired thirty-five or forty from his editorial department on the last day, and likewise Kenneth Lord on the *Sun,* more than forty. A long generation of men had grown up on each paper, but there was no place for the older, slower, more limited.

"Sorry, this is the wind up," said Randall, passing out the last pay vouchers. There was two weeks' advance for each man, and if he hadn't had his vacation that summer, two weeks additional. The men cursed at the thought that the *Press* could have gone on, that it had prospered for all until Munsey took hold, and then they walked out into the street.

Within a year Randall, too, was dismissed abruptly. The nearest explanation he ever formulated was that he had worn a cap at work, and Munsey may not have liked it.

"My principal regret," said Munsey during the consolidation, "is that so many men will be thrown out of employment. That is something that cannot be helped. Every effort will be

made to place these men in good positions." Ten years later a critic in the *Nation* pointed out that this was the last expression of interest in the human factor of a merger that Munsey ever uttered.

There was one notable case of an employee who came through happily. His name was Jack Minar, a reporter on the *Press,* and he was told he had been placed on the exit list by express orders of the owner. Minar walked around the corner to a job on the *Tribune,* and as his first assignment was sent back to interview Munsey as to his plans for the *Sun.*

Well groomed and intelligent, he made a favorable impression and soon Munsey was asking questions. Minar said smilingly that he had been dismissed only the day before by Munsey's own orders and was just beginning at the *Tribune.* "Impossible," said Munsey. "You are just the type we need. Of course I never ordered that you be dismissed."

He summoned his editors. What did they mean? How could they allow such material to slip through their fingers? The young man must be brought back, regardless of expense. Minar bore no grudge and was agreeable, but he knew his advantage. When at last he did return to exactly his old job again, he had won a pay increase of $25 a week.

Now the purchase of the *Sun,* crucial and timely though it was, and altogether fundamental in establishing Munsey as a publisher of the first class, was followed by pains and difficulties.

Munsey could have repeated word for word the report which Charles A. Dana gave to a friend just after he bought the *Sun* half a century before, "I have revolutionized the character of the paper, and as a matter of course increased expenses and lost readers in the process." But whereas Dana proceeded to make the *Sun* the wittiest, liveliest, most talked-of paper in America, the *Sun* now every day reflected the new owner's

timid principle that "Page One of the *Sun* is no place for satire."

In his first exhilaration, Munsey predicted that the amalgamated paper would have a circulation of 300,000 within a year. And in the next three months, weekdays, it did reach upward to an average of 192,210. But it slumped, and by the end of 1919 fell back to the same low level at which the *Press* had stood before the merger.

The war was introducing new elements of change and expense. New machinery had to be bought, wages were rising and all raw materials soared in price. White paper alone, in 1916 selling at $42 a ton, delivered in the press room, jumped to $65 at the mill in 1917, $90 in January, 1920, and $130 by the end of 1920.

Advertising was slow, and the *Sun* remained just where the *Press* had stood, at bottom among morning papers. Later on, in the rush of early post-war advertising in 1919, the *Sun* climbed, but still the *World, Times* and even the *Tribune* zoomed up and up and up, farther in advance than before.

The *Sun* was bulkier and the cost of its production was unbelievably larger, but it remained the city's tail-end morning newspaper. In these four years the publisher, by his own statement, spent more than $2,000,000 on it, but it lagged. He could buy and he could spend, but he was not a builder. The sturdy support of the *Evening Sun* could not mask this tardiness of its mate to develop into a successful enterprise, for beyond concealment it was trailing the procession.

So Munsey, in January, 1920, bought the New York *Herald.*

* * * * * *

The *Herald* was a special episode in Munsey's career, one of his mountain peaks, most properly to be chronicled in its own

separate place, mentioned here in brief for the sake of continuity.

To his faltering *Sun* and insufficient *Evening Sun,* Munsey joined under one ownership the *Herald* and its afternoon running mate, the *Telegram,* and, for dessert, their trans-Atlantic cousin, that acme of journalism's *jeunesse dorée,* the Paris Edition of the *Herald.* The *Herald* was but a ghost of its old self, ill and ready to die, but still incomparable by sentimental association, and for the trio Munsey paid $4,000,000.

Such superabundance of great metropolitan newspapers no other man ever possessed. Four years before, Munsey had become the successor to Dana; now he was in the place of James Gordon Bennett. From the newspaper of highest literary tradition in the United States, he went on to the paper of outstanding news and commercial prestige.

He was king at last. He alone commanded two guns of the highest calibre, the *Herald* and the *Sun,* and although he reigned uneasily, he never stood on such an eminence at any other time in his life, before or afterward. There was no man in the city to overshadow him. He entered into his kingdom with a reassuring vow to the public that the grand old *Herald* so far as he was concerned should be immortal.

Two weeks afterward he killed one morning newspaper.

What remained of the *Herald* he moved into the *Sun* office, and the two papers were issued as one, beginning Sunday, February 1. The title for eight months was kept as *The Sun and New York Herald.*

Finally, on October 1, the welding was pronounced complete, the morning paper took the name of the *Herald,* the *Evening Sun* became the *Sun,* the *Telegram* continued independently, unmolested, a step-child but tolerated for the sake of its grip on the want-ad business.

* * * * * *

The older editors had regarded their papers somewhat as a yew-tree hedge, not an improvisation but something growing up out of their own soil to be cultivated patiently through the years, to be shaped into what they dreamed of by the care of their own hands, to be distinguished by their own taste and skill. Newspaper men were sentimental over their papers as admired and cherished friends. Munsey broke with this notion. He burst in upon journalism by the strength of his money. He saw editorship as a commercial venture, newspapers as factories to be bought, sold, reorganized, speeded up or shut down as conditions warranted.

No one ever demonstrated more clearly than he the power of money in journalism, or its limitations. He poured altogether about $20,000,000 into New York newspapers, counting purchase prices, improvements and losses. He got back $5,000,000 by one sale. It was not until within three years of his death that he could mark up a net profit. At the end, the readers and advertising clientele he had bought wholesale—one paper after another—were largely dissipated into thin air and from all his purchases and all his dreams of a chain he was reduced to two.

Munsey always could buy another newspaper. He insisted then upon being in fact the master, upon putting in his hand and making it over according to his own idea at the moment. He could not buy for himself that quality of mind and temperament and imagination and humanity which would make his thought effective in shaping a successful paper. So now, as he stood at his pinnacle with his *Herald, Sun* and *Telegram,* actively editing them, the old story was about to be repeated again. The strength he had bought and paid for was evaporating.

It should be understood here that the afternoon papers, as the war excitement subsided, had run into new conditions

which made it almost inevitable that some of them must die. The prevailing afternoon price had been increased in January, 1918, from one cent to two cents, and in July, 1920, to three cents, the result being that the average subway passenger now settled to one newspaper instead of buying several. There was not so much circulation to go around.

It seemed for a time that all the loss was to be suffered by the *Sun*. The *Evening Sun* had passed the 200,000 mark soon after the *Herald* purchase, but a year later it was back to 190,000, the next year to 180,000. Meanwhile its particular rivals, the *Globe* and *Evening Mail,* were increasing, and the *Evening World* and *Journal* maintained their swollen pre-eminence. And although the *Sun* slowly gained advertising, the *Herald* at the same time tilted downward and lost.

Meanwhile, the *Telegram* was faring strangely. Munsey consistently vetoed any new ideas its editors proposed, frankly saying the *Sun* was his principal afternoon property and he thought it unwise to build competition. But in the main, the owner gave the *Telegram* almost no attention and did nothing to disturb its routine existence. And the *Telegram* held on to its circulation, around 115,000 average for the months of the outdoor sports season, year after year, and in advertising it made a small gain.

But in his heart Munsey planned to burke the *Telegram* overnight. He had conceived an admiration for Associated Press membership which amounted almost to idolatry, and while the *Sun* lacked this advantage, the *Telegram* impudently enjoyed it. By killing the rival, he could get the prize for his favorite and certain assets of circulation and advertising as well.

Plans were made accordingly. A formal announcement of the merger was written and set in type, dummy forms were

made up and proofs taken to give the owner a chance to criticize the typography in advance. And then Fred J. Walker, general manager of the *Telegram,* returned to the office with a reprieve.

"The Old Man changed his mind last night," he told his subordinates. "The *Telegram* earned $25,000 last year, and that's too much money to throw in the gutter."

Munsey bided his time, and in the spring of 1924 he killed the *Telegram's* Sunday afternoon edition which had run successfully for a dozen years. But the paper itself he permitted to remain alive.

On the whole Munsey was not making a go of his splendid new properties, and his mind began traveling the habitual path. Besides, he must have an Associated Press membership for the *Sun.* And so he decided to solve his problem by buying the *Evening Post.*

That venerable, historic and outmoded newspaper, now for several years the property of Thomas W. Lamont, held last place in circulation among all the New York papers, both morning and evening, and it was losing money. However, its select group of readers was devoted to it, and advertisers classified it as a quality publication. Killing it would remove another competitor and satisfy a specific burning need, so Munsey offered a good price, all in cash.

But the *Evening Post* was not to be enticed into Bluebeard's closet. Lamont felt a sentiment for the old sheet, a loyal desire to preserve it alive, and he hesitated. As other bidders appeared, although with a less advantageous offer, he said "No" to Munsey.

It was a narrow escape. The *Telegram* and the *Post* now might whistle together, hurrying past the graveyard with the one thought in common, "There, but for the grace of God, am I."

JAMES GORDON BENNETT
LORD NORTHCLIFFE

MRS. WHITELAW REID
ERVIN WARDMAN

Courtesy LIFE

Father Knickerbocker: ALAS, POOR YORICK! I KNEW HIM WELL
HAMLET: *Father Knickerbocker*
FIRST GRAVE DIGGER: *Frank A. Munsey*

THE CARTOON PRICE OF J NORMAN LYND'S JOB

It became necessary for Munsey to look further, and in 1923 he bought the *Globe.*

* * * * * *

Oldest daily newspaper in the United States, established in 1793 with Noah Webster of dictionary fame as first editor, the *Globe* had passed through many hands and sailed under a multitude of names. Its last rechristening, in 1904, had changed *Commercial Advertiser* to *Globe.*

It held a brilliant position in 1923 as a paper with no political axes to grind, of fresh and independent style, courageous liberal inclinations and, furthermore, it was a sound business institution. Circulation averaged about 160,000 and advertising was on the increase. It had introduced the radio section to New York and profited hugely from it. Of all the papers that Munsey bought, the *Globe* stands out as the sturdiest and fittest for vigorous life.

For a quarter of a century its editor had been Henry J. Wright, a man of distinguished mind who enjoyed amazing freedom in management. The owner, Edward F. Searles, fortunately an aged recluse who made his home at distant Methuen, Massachusetts, was a reactionary who referred habitually to his newspaper as "that dirty rag," but still did not bother to interfere with its policies. Searles died in 1920, and the executors and wrangling heirs were not long in seeking a buyer for the paper.

There were various bids from persons who wished to continue publishing the *Globe,* but Munsey topped them all with the offer of $2,000,000. On June 4, 1923, a week after the purchase, he merged it with the *Sun.*

Another battalion of newspaper men and women went out to look for jobs, and they were good men and women, for the *Globe's* staff had been notable. Among its stars were Bruce

Bliven, Maxwell Anderson, Katharine Brody, Pitts Sanborn, Wesley Stout, Robert L. Duffus and Alfred W. McCann. In all, the *Globe* had employed 600 persons, of whom 125 were in the editorial department. John T. Flynn, the managing editor, sat down with Munsey and his executives at the time of the merger, and by rigorous pleading succeeded in placing twenty-two of his men on the Munsey payroll. But the others had to go out and look for jobs.

With stern logic Munsey pronounced the consolidation inevitable, because:

> Newspaper making has come to call for so large a daily outlay in news gathering, in salaries, in print paper, in the mechanical departments and in the delivery of papers, to say nothing of the investment in the newspaper property and the investment in the printing plant, that only the big newspapers can keep up the pace and give the public what the public demands and has a right to expect.
>
> The same law of economics applies in the newspaper business that operates in all important business today. Small units in any line are no longer competitive factors in industry, in transportation, in commerce, in merchandising and banking. Newspapers that disregard this economic law are inviting disaster. . . .

The *Sun's* circulation in April, 1923, had been 177,000, or only 18,000 ahead of the *Globe;* a year later it was 260,000. From the merger the *Sun* gained roughly 100,000 in circulation, about a third in total volume of advertising, and Associated Press membership in the bargain, moving up by the simple process of killing off competition to a business leadership which no Munsey paper ever had held before.

This gain was accompanied by such lamentation from the onlookers as had accompanied no other Munsey killing. The vigorous old *Globe* had been inspiration and hope to intelligent liberalism. Its biting opinions now were stifled. Munsey

provided no successor to it, and no counterpart arose in any other quarter. The *Globe's* intangible values had been no defense against the onrushing bankroll, and its more substantial assets were parcelled out joyously between the *Sun* and the *Telegram.*

The *Sun* now stood upon a solid foundation, a success. Its absorption of the *Globe* was one of the superbly profitable mergers in newspaper history. It took off the curse from Munsey's editorship and broke his dreary procession of failure. Soon the new creation in its thinned-out field was earning a net profit of $1,500,000 a year, and Munsey could talk about it with pride. The *Telegram* remained in an uncultivated state of nature, a money-maker but only in a small way. The *Herald,* lagging and dragging, was a recurrent problem every morning.

Munsey's alert eye now sighted a new rival coming over the horizon. Cyrus H. K. Curtis, like himself a man from Maine, another magazine publisher, backed by the gold mine of his *Saturday Evening Post,* was invading New York by the purchase of the *Evening Post.* Munsey felt the need to strengthen his position. He wanted more elbow room. So he stepped in and bought the New York *Evening Mail.*

* * * * * *

All of a calm Saturday morning, at the Hardware Club, Munsey talked to his old Bull Moose friend, Henry L. Stoddard, about buying the *Mail.* Munsey had been wanting the paper, indeed, for three years, and as expenses of publishing remained high and he realized that Stoddard needed more capital, he kept after him. The purchase of the *Evening Post* by Curtis was ammunition for his argument.

"We've got to face the fact that it's going to be a fight." Munsey said to Stoddard, "Curtis is going to cost us $200,000

or $300,000 more a year. We've got to spend the money. And I've got the longest pocket, so you'd better let me make the fight. If you had the money and I didn't, I'd sell my properties to you and you could fight."

Price never had been mentioned during all the three years of Munsey's urging. Of this Stoddard was certain in telling the story afterward.

Finally, the publisher of the *Evening Mail* arose from his chair. He was going to Brooklyn, he said, to attend the funeral of Eddie Riggs, for many years one of the leading political writers in New York, incidentally a writer on the *Sun* during several years of Munsey's ownership.

"I thought we were talking about buying a newspaper," grumbled Munsey.

"We were," said Stoddard. "But Eddie Riggs has been a friend of mine for a long time and I'm going to his funeral."

"Oh, what the Hell," said Munsey. "Come on and see me when you get back."

And the two did meet after the funeral that evening at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel. Munsey then raised the vital question, "How much money for that damned old sheet of yours?"

"Well, I haven't figured out, but I want more than you paid for the *Globe.*"

"What! That's a Hell of a basis for a price. I never heard anything like it. What's the matter with you?"

"Well, all the time we were going along, the *Globe* was the paper that said the meanest things about the *Mail.* And I'm going to have the satisfaction of getting more money for the *Mail* than you paid for the *Globe,* if I sell."

Munsey and Stoddard talked on, and then, "You know how much I paid for the *Globe?*"

"Yes."

"Well, I'll give you $50,000 more than that for the *Mail.*"

"No. You're just talking small change. That doesn't begin to be what I mean."

"I never heard such a basis for pricing a newspaper. What are you talking about? Such a thing never entered my mind."

"Well, it's been in my mind all the time. The *Globe* fought us and maligned us. And I'm going to have the satisfaction of being worth more than the *Globe* in this sale, or we'll go on as we are. It must be large enough so I'll know in my heart that the *Mail* really is worth more."

They settled that evening. Munsey paid $200,000 more than for the *Globe*—$2,200,000 for the *Mail*.

"This is the queerest bargain I ever made in my life," he said.

Munsey put the *Mail* in with the *Telegram* on Monday, January 28, 1924, and broke the news to the public in one of the most swaggering, magniloquent and overweening manifestos he ever composed, declaring:

> There is no greater menace to a community than newspapers that are struggling to keep alive in an overcrowded newspaper field and without strong financial stamina.
>
> The New York evening newspaper field is now in good shape through the elimination of an oversupply of evening newspapers. Three evening newspapers have been eliminated as individual entities from New York journalism by myself alone. Nobody else has had a hand in this clean up. They have been eliminated at an aggregate cost of more than six millions of dollars—not corporation money, just my own money.
>
> The old *Daily News,* the *Globe* and the *Evening Mail* comprise the list. The *Daily News* alone passed on to its reward. The *Globe* lives in combination with the *Sun,* and the *Mail* begins to live today in combination with the New York *Telegram.* In its combination with the *Sun,* the *Globe* is doing fine work in this community and is content and happy.

> The *Evening Mail* in combination with the New York *Telegram* will become equally worthwhile, equally useful, and it too will find contentment and happiness. A newspaper does not stand the cold worth a cent. It must be comfortably housed, warmly clothed and generously nourished. An underfed newspaper out in the cold is a sad spectacle.
>
> Fortunately for New York there is, and will be, no lack of nourishment for the remaining five evening newspapers—the *Evening World,* the *Evening Journal,* New York *Evening Post,* the *Sun* with which the *Globe* is intertwined, and the New York *Telegram* with which the *Evening Mail* is now intertwined. The owners of the three first named papers are all rich men—very rich—and the owner of the last two is still able to take over another newspaper or two if pressed to do so.

The *Mail* had been a slightly smaller newspaper than the *Globe,* but having attracted 25,000 of the scattered circulation when the *Globe* died, it was selling at the last about 170,000 copies a day. It was selling more papers but carrying less advertising than the *Telegram.* The latter, after the consolidation, jumped to more than 200,000 copies a day. The loss of *Mail* readers was heavy, but a competitor was eliminated and the field weeded out still further. There were the usual curses, tears and situations of personal despair.

* * * * * *

And Munsey now surveyed his kingdom and took note of his worries and disappointments. He was owner of two prosperous afternoon papers, of the New York *Herald,* in which mingled the strains of both Bennett and Dana, and of the *Herald* in Paris.

As he said on buying the *Mail,* he had slain three afternoon papers. In addition, the old *Continent* had passed through his hands and died, not without his assistance, and the *Press* and

Sun were killed directly by his stroke—three morning papers. To his eye the field now was in a far healthier and more practical condition.

Munsey had swept across New York like a tornado and his path remained clean, with only a little underbrush of tabloids coming up. It had been a brilliant career, a dazzling carnival of conspicuous waste, unique and unprecedented. But Munsey remained unsatisfied.

His ambition was thwarted, and an unsolved problem gave him no rest, for the *Herald,* his pride, was not successful. It continued to slump, and his most thoughtful plans were useless to reverse the process. He was losing money on the *Herald.* And so his well-oiled wheels again began to turn, he looked over his competitors, and in a blazing inspiration he resolved upon one final dramatic coup. He would buy the New York *Tribune* and merge it with his *Herald.*

Chapter XVI

THE *HERALD*

When Frank Munsey back in 1920 bought the *Herald, Telegram* and Paris *Herald*—to his own enchanted satisfaction and the amaze of the journalistic world—it was both culmination and consecration. His life was entering its greatest period. And he knew it.

Late that afternoon, January 14, he sat up straight in James Gordon Bennett's chair, at Bennett's small old-fashioned French desk, beside the fire burning cosily on the hearth in Bennett's office in the lovely old Herald Building, and he permitted himself to sip temperately of that heady draught, the pride of ambition achieved.

This room had been the setting and symbol of Commodore Bennett's authority. With its foreign elegance, its un-modern atmosphere, its regular vibration to the bell music of the *Herald* clock just outside, it breathed a rich tradition. Not often had the Commodore returned from Paris to sit here, but every day the room had been dusted and polished for him, the ink had been kept fresh in the large brass inkwell and men stepped quietly when they crossed the threshold.

Here sat Munsey now, the hero of the drama, as clearly indicated as if spotlights were drenching him with their hard radiance. Standing back of him were his most favored employees, his field marshals, and also the old Bennett men, Frank B. Flaherty, J. K. Ohl and Commander J. D. J. Kelly,

the triumvirate which had piloted the *Herald* in its latter days, now called in to the surrender. Finally was ushered in E. A. Potter, Jr., vice-president of the Guaranty Trust Company, executor of the Bennett estate. After eighty-five years the great name of the Bennetts, father and son, was being hauled down, and the name of Munsey was going up in its place.

Potter had brought the certificates of stock, visible evidences of ownership. As he entered he sensed the theatricalism of the scene and stiffened his carriage, then, carrying the documents ceremoniously before him, he approached. Munsey held out his hand. There was a stage business of fluttering papers and low-voiced dialogue at the desk.

Then the new proprietor of the *Herald* spoke his lines. In slow unruffled tones, with passing reference to his long road upward from a penniless start, discussing the significance of the change, invoking the great journalism of the future, he adjusted himself in Bennett's seat. The audience filed out. The curtain was down. The next day the *Herald* announced the sale . . . "Mr. Munsey will tell you in due time of his plans for these newspapers."

* * * * * *

The last Bennett had died in May, 1918, leaving his fortune sadly dissipated, the *Herald* in decline; leaving also a will in the grand style which bequeathed regular annuity payments of nearly $150,000 and created, on paper, a memorial home for newspaper men from the residue.

There was no prospect of a residue soon. Merely to find money for the recurring annuities strained all resources, and the lack of operating capital for the *Herald* was a crisis. The *Telegram* and the Paris edition of the *Herald,* the lesser papers, were earning money. But nowhere visible were there funds

with which to scotch the *Herald's* losses and modernize it to resume a competitive position.

In all diligence and haste the trustees began looking for a buyer while yet the paper amounted to an actual property which could be sold and delivered. Their appraisal placed a valuation of $2,250,000 on the Bennett holdings.

The Guaranty Trust men, Potter and Charles H. Sabin and Francis H. Sisson, glorified peddlers, went about knocking on doors. They saw Munsey and William Randolph Hearst. They received an inquiry from a group which included Brigadier General Cornelius Vanderbilt and Herbert Hoover. They were approached by Governor James M. Cox of Ohio, who became Democratic nominee for President the next summer, by Bernard M. Baruch and by Clarence H. Mackay.

Time favored the sellers. A President was to be elected, the League of Nations already was a white-hot issue. The weight of a great old trusted established New York newspaper cast into the balance might dictate the course of history, and control of that influence was a prize for the ambitious.

Potter, a competent trader and the most active agent, matched one prospect against another. He told Munsey that Hearst was interested and Hearst what Munsey was offering, and confided his out-of-town bidders to each of them, and as eagerness mounted the $2,250,000 valuation of the appraisers came to appear very meager indeed. Potter made a last call on Munsey.

"I'll give you $4,000,000 for your papers and that's final," Munsey greeted him.

"Very well," said Potter. "We'll accept, on one condition—that all current assets must be reserved to the estate."

It was trading instinct and pride of craft, nothing more. The property could have been bought complete and entire for the $4,000,000, and a large price at that. But wanting

always one more point, the banker made his try. Munsey's eyes narrowed.

"Sold," he said.

The accounting revealed about $67,000 cash in banks and a total of current assets amounting to $643,566, assets the purchaser might have claimed for his $4,000,000 except for his eagerness. It gave the banker a satisfied chuckle, although in the end the collection of accounts proved rather an expensive nuisance.

But Munsey had the glamorous *Herald,* and he was happy. He wrote out his check for $1,000,000, pledged his fortune to secure the remainder, and the *Herald* was his, all except the acting out before spectators of the little drama in which he indulged himself in Commodore Bennett's office.

"You're a tough bargainer," he told Potter. "I had no idea a trust company would fight so hard for somebody else's money. I think I'll make the Guaranty my executor to handle my own estate."

And so he wrote it into his will.

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When his sensational purchase was but two weeks old, as was noticed in passing, Munsey gave New York another surprise by combining his two historic morning papers into a single new one, the *Sun and New York Herald.*

Nearly thirty years earlier the worshipping Munsey had declared, "the *Herald* is first," and millions of readers through the years stood ready to support his estimate. The *Herald* had its sharp distinctive pungency, the flavor and essence of superiority. No less distinctive had been the *Sun* in its own high-crested fashion. The two were the oldest and most vitally individualistic of the morning newspapers, each a familiar personality and living citizen of New York.

An inexperienced public up to 1920 scarcely could believe that a great proud old metropolitan newspaper tradition was not immortal. The public had seen papers languish, including Munsey papers, and they had seen the unceremonious dropping of the *Press,* a lesser and younger and thinner sheet. But the giants had stood apart. Munsey was no respecter of giants. He took *Herald* and *Sun* and stuck them together as easily as if he were moving the canned vegetables, soda crackers and prunes of one grocery on to the enlarged shelves of another.

Munsey, thrilling to the jolt he was delivering to public consciousness, saw his act as the saving of two great names which would have died and, no less important, as placing the keystone on his own proud romantic career. He regretted having to do it, he explained, but, "Pride has no place in economics. To have continued the *Herald* as an independent entity would have been in opposition to all the laws of economics, all the laws of sound business."

The former publisher and general manager of the *Herald,* Frank Flaherty, safely entrenched behind a contract, and an old acquaintance of Munsey's besides, was called to the new owner's apartment.

"I've heard you quote the Commodore before this to the effect that there could be no friendship in business," Munsey told him. "Now I don't propose to have friendship interfere with the proper conduct of these newspapers. You know there are men here who were kept on because of friendship alone."

"Who, for instance?"

"Well, how about Commander Kelly?"

Flaherty denied it. He went home and talked to his wife.

"He just wants his dirty work done for him," she said. "When you're through, it's likely your turn will be next."

The next day Flaherty resigned.

By dozens and hundreds, men and women from the *Herald* were turned into the street, others in equal number from the *Sun,* and the remainder of the staffs consolidated. Still others, retained for a probationary few weeks, were not long in joining those first to go.

They were bitter but helpless. For their lifetime, for half a century some of them, they had leaned upon the *Herald* for strength and support. Now their friend was dead. It was a blow to pride and affection no less than to their way of life.

The last *Herald* produced by the old staff from the old building was the issue of Saturday, January 31, and Friday night was an occasion of reunion and farewell. Old *Herald* men from all over the city drifted back to the city room to look around, to shake hands with their friends, sing a song, go out for a drink and shed a tear. At midnight a bugler in uniform from the Seventy-first Infantry blew "Taps." When the last form was locked up in the composing room, a bouquet of flowers was placed upon it, and it was rolled slowly to the stereotypers like a friend to its long rest.

Munsey did not come to the *Herald* office that night.

On Sunday appeared the first *Sun and New York Herald,* bearing in the ear at the upper corner of Page One:

A Happy Blending

The amalgamated *Sun and Herald* preserves the best traditions of each. In combination they cover a wide field and make a greater newspaper than either has ever been on its own.

* * * * * *

When Munsey bought the *Herald* one of his first acts of proprietorship was to dismiss J. Norman Lynd, the cartoonist.

Munsey, indeed, eliminated all cartoons and abolished all the departments of the old paper, both cartoons and departments having been famous attractions in their day. But the reasons for Lynd's dismissal were personal.

Lynd had contributed a certain drawing in 1916 to the humorous weekly, *Life,* using the analogy of the gravedigger in "Hamlet."

In the foreground is seen a black pall draping a recumbent figure labelled "Dana's *Sun,*" mourned by the surviving newspapers which include, with prophetic touch, both *Herald* and *Globe.* In the background are gravestones of the Philadelphia *Times,* New York *Press* and *Daily Continent,* and also of the magazines, *Scrap Book, Quaker* and *Puritan.* Father Knickerbocker stands as Hamlet with a skull, the *Daily News,* murmuring, "Alas, poor Yorick." Munsey himself is the gravedigger, his figure rendered with imaginative freedom, the large front teeth especially emphasized. This appeared just after Munsey's purchase of the *Sun,* but the artist foresaw death ahead.

By 1920 the *Sun's* grave had been dug. And Munsey, the new proprietor, began his sway over the *Herald* by sending for the art director and ordering him to fire Lynd.

"He'll know what it's for," he added.

As the story was embroidered later, Bob Brinkerhoff, another cartoonist, joked Lynd, "So Munsey paid $4,000,000 just to get square with you!" And Lynd came back, "Well, you can draw your own conclusions."

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Munsey of the *Herald* was logically comparable to Northcliffe of the *Times* in London. Munsey long had had Lord Northcliffe for his friend and hero. They entertained each

other handsomely in both New York and London. Their careers were not without marked similarities.

Within a year of the time that the younger man, the Briton, began his career as a writer of fiction, the Yankee came to New York for his great plunge. Each achieved prodigious wealth, and through the same vehicle, the cheap magazine. Each had the golden touch. Northcliffe turned out Asquith during the war. Munsey in 1920 was in the process, importantly and by his own right, of turning Woodrow Wilson down and out. And Northcliffe, June, 1908, by his own earned money had acquired the greatest newspaper in the world by buying it when the family that owned it proved inadequate, and by his power and vision he had made that newspaper during the war as great a force as at any time in its mighty tradition.

When Northcliffe died, Munsey wrote in the *Herald* a long signed tribute, calling him the British Empire's "greatest single human force." In his words may be read, without straining, much of the portrait of his own dream, as follows:

> Northcliffe's abilities radiated in many directions. He had the vision of the pioneer and was always the pioneer in the fields of his activities. He considered himself a conservative and had this strain deeply imbedded in his nature, but his methods in all undertakings were original, dramatic, daring. Northcliffe had rare business instinct and rare genius in sensing public taste, in interpreting public opinion. He made mistakes, as all big men do, but on the whole, considering the big part he played, he made very few. . . .
>
> Northcliffe cared nothing for money for money's sake. He cared for it for what he could do with it, the use he could make of it. His passion was for constructive achievement—the creation and development of things. This dominating characteristic called for money, and always more money, to keep up with his expanding vision and fast broadening interests.

However, Frank Munsey, when he took possession of the *Herald,* was visioning a figure which towered in his mind to vaster, more august proportions than Northcliffe as his inspiration and ambition. Before him he saw the shade of James Gordon Bennett, Jr., the overwhelming Commodore, proprietor of the *Herald* for nearly half a century.

Bennett was best known to the public eye through an old photograph, a model of careless aristocratic assurance, the figure and glance turned off toward the right, mustaches sharply pointed, wearing a rough check suit, lolling in his seat, thumb hooked casually into the lower vest pocket.

Munsey also sat for a portrait, some years later. He took his position sidewise to the camera, turned toward the left but with bold eyes looking into the lens, his mustache pointed, leaning back easily, in rough gray tweed suit, thumb hooked casually into his trousers pocket. It was his version of Bennett, and hard to take as coincidence. It remained the official Munsey picture for the last twenty years of his life.

Munsey had resolved at the Philadelphia exposition forty-four years before that he would own the *Herald.* He had kept his eye upon Bennett, had published a magazine article about him and his vagaries, his domineering power, his arbitrary egotism, his genius. The object of this adoration was but slightly acquainted with Munsey, and in conversation with his ranking men on the *Herald,* when Munsey's name came up, he passed him over lightly as "that grocer." Nevertheless, Bennett was Munsey's model.

As final touches were in progress for the transfer of the *Herald,* the purchaser one afternoon burst into the office of Frank Flaherty, inquiring:

"Who owns the bust of Bennett out there in the outer offices, the elder Bennett?"

"That goes with the property, General. The *Herald* com-

IN FULL MATURITY TWO INFORMAL POSES OF MUNSEY

pany owns it. And as you know, that marble bust might be yourself, line for line, the very image."

"That's a strange thing," said Munsey. "I was at dinner the other night at Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt's. Rieck was there and some others. And do you know what Mrs. Vanderbilt said to me! She said, 'See here, Mr. Munsey. It's strange that so many of your characteristics are so like Mr. Bennett's. You are purchasing his papers now, and on top of that, there's more than a strong resemblance in your appearance.' "

Words in this vein were honey to Munsey. He was becoming the successor to Bennett. In solemn sincerity he sought to live up to the tradition.

As he told another New York editor, soon afterward, "I let the *Sun* run along about as it wills, but I give my personal attention to the *Herald* and hold its editorial policy in my hand —[gripping his fist]—just like that."

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The mighty *Herald* and the refulgent *Sun,* and on the side the Paris *Herald* uniquely promoting its owner to be the eyes and voice of Americans in Europe, were the topmost stars on the Christmas tree of Munsey's career.

Socially, politically, financially—in international circles—he enjoyed such sunshine of public attention now as never had warmed him during all his years of being merely a millionaire. Doors fell off their hinges before him.

Just at this time the cold and lonely bachelor, a lifelong dweller in hotels, began to collect country homes, an extravagance hard to explain except as the trappings for his magnificence. Already he possessed a handsome place in the Adirondacks. He bought the Louis Sherry villa at Manhasset, the estate which introduced the temple of love into his life.

And even before that he had joined a little handful of rich

Americans who were bargaining for a castle-strewn estate in the Tyrol, a million acres of land jewelled with rivers, waterfalls, forests and mountains, mines of iron and coal, steel mills, city apartment houses, a palace and an art gallery, the treasure of royalty itself. Nothing could measure more eloquently the heights to which the Lisbon Falls grocery boy was soaring now.

The estate had belonged to Field Marshal the Archduke Frederick, richest of the Hapsburgs and a cousin of the reigning line, commander of the Austro-Hungarian armies during the war. The properties had been confiscated. The Archduke was an exile in Switzerland with little money, with little prospect of being able to recover, even though his claims seemed to have a treaty to support them. Thereupon he offered to trade part of his potential wealth for a lesser amount of American cash.

The fascinating story came to light in September, 1921, a month after Munsey returned from summering abroad. The Americans had put up a sum of money and were negotiating to take over the Hapsburg estates.

But castellated hilltops, forests and rivers remained but a dream. The governments of Austria, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Poland had profited by the confiscation. They saw no reason to make repayment to the Archduke's agents any more than to himself. Court proceedings multiplied the delays. Some time after Munsey's death, the Archduke obtained a compromise settlement.

* * * * * *

Full sail was hoisted on the *Herald* when Munsey took command, and the old ship was steered boldly toward its destiny of becoming, perhaps, the London *Times*—Northcliffe's *Times*

—of American journalism. The *Herald* thundered—bravely, independently and with a ponderous weight of metal. It informed. It covered the United States and the world with its news gathering. It pleased the eye as a model of clear typography. It appealed to the upper classes, those with money to spend, with conservative dread of change, with convictions. Its respectability was unquestionable. It reassured the existing order. It was the least sensational of newspapers. It was clean, polite, well-bred, well-groomed.

After President Harding's inauguration in 1921 it stood close to the government, one of the most favorably placed of all. The *Herald's* field lay in the rich territory between the New York *Times* and the *Tribune.* In appearance the most like the *Times* of any New York paper, it followed the *Times* model of vast blanket news coverage and aspired to its commercial dominance. Politically, it had only the smaller *Tribune* as a morning paper rival in carrying the banner of stalwart Republicanism.

Munsey's *Herald,* by any critical scale, was a dreadnaught among newspapers, eminent, extremely important. But fewer and fewer persons read it. When Munsey bought the *Herald* it had about 109,000 average circulation, daily and Sunday, the *Sun* about 132,000, combined they had 214,891. And then, steadily, woefully, readers fell away to a circulation, daily, of 203,686 in October, 1920; 189,816 October, 1921; 175,403 October, 1922; about 165,000 October, 1923.

Advertising too, ran contrary to hope and right and rule. All other morning newspapers were gaining, the *Herald* was losing. It lost a clean million lines of advertising in annual total from 1921 to 1923, while at the same time the *Tribune* was making a slight gain, the *World, Times* and *American* were gaining millions.

"Alas, poor Yorick."

Slowly the *Herald* was following the old *Press* and Dana's *Sun* and the other newspapers which Munsey had buried. The owner began to take thought, and as in the long ago past, while studying out his magazine, he sat staring at the blank wall.

* * * * * *

The *Herald* had encountered misfortune at the start by running into the memorable shortage of newsprint paper which brought every newspaper in the country face up against emergency. Within a month after consolidating *Herald* and *Sun,* while the novelty interest was at maximum value, the management had to reject advertisements and curtail production because there was not enough paper at any price.

Every employee on the payroll, at the same time, had to be paid more money. In the composing room, printers got a 76.1 per cent increase during the ten years from 1914 to 1924, pressmen got 90 per cent, photo-engravers 101 per cent, paper handlers 123 per cent. Costs of publishing, Munsey gasped, were "appalling."

Still another disadvantage was a self-made handicap of the *Herald* in dealing with large advertisers. When Munsey united *Herald* and *Sun,* he cancelled all advertising contracts and announced new schedules more consistent with the enlarged circulation he had to offer, a rate about the same as the average on the old *Herald* but considerably higher than the *Sun.* Some stores had contracts running several months ahead. They were informed they must pay the higher rate, and many refused ever again to advertise in the new *Herald.*

Learning from experience, Munsey recognized the old contracts when he consolidated the *Sun* and the *Globe,* and the

result was a profitable good will. But the feeling against the *Herald* persisted.

Now as his own disappointment increased, Munsey had before his eyes the swift, sure, strong competition of the *Times* and the *World,* both of them brilliantly successful. His pathway to a winning pursuit of them was blocked by the little *Tribune,* a paper not so large as the *Herald* but boastful of its past under Horace Greeley and Whitelaw Reid, usually underfoot and appealing to the same audience whenever the *Herald* planned any advance step. It was his rival for the attention of the conservatives and respectables, and people of taste and property. If the strength of the two papers could be joined, the *Tribune's* best features and most valuable assets conserved and combined with the *Herald,* he need fear no rival.

Munsey saw the situation with all the cold clarity of his youth. There were too many papers in New York still. He had given his best to the *Herald* and it failed him. The morning field was impossible. The one way out, he realized, was to buy the *Tribune* and, with powers renewed, return to the attack. It was the Munsey method, the only one he knew.

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"The *Tribune* is not for sale," said Ogden Reid, "but I'll buy the *Herald.*"

It was ridiculous and utterly contrary to his ambition, to his stubborn will for the *Herald,* but Munsey was not dismayed. He had set himself against opposition before, and he was determined to have the *Tribune* for his *Herald.*

He began talking about it in 1923 before he bought the *Evening Mail.* At the same time he was exerting himself without stint to put life and power and drive into the *Herald.* He doubled its Sunday rotogravure section, added a tabloid maga-

zine for radio followers, advertised in more than 200 other newspapers throughout the country, ran up a loss during that year 1923—by the estimate of an expert, although a competitor —of $750,000. And he did not begrudge it to the *Herald* although it produced no visible return.

All the time, in grave tones, whenever he met the men from the *Tribune*—Reid, the owner, and Howard Davis, the general manager—he expounded his doctrine of the superabundance of morning newspapers. He persisted in his suit, became more importunate, and still the *Tribune's* answer was "No."

Herald losses all the time were draining his cash, and associates noticed that his temper was shorter than usual. Munsey, in fact, was opposed by an obstacle entirely new to him. He was encountering not merely a property but a family, through whose fibers were woven the scarlet fibers of the newspaper as a personal identification.

Munsey had no continuing family. No newspaper, not even the *Herald,* ever had been as dear as his own self, or ever had meant to him a pulsing element of his life. And here, in addition, his wealth was robbed of its usual advantage, for equal wealth matched it on the other side.

Still another citadel blocked him, standing in his way before the *Tribune,* the person of Mrs. Reid, the widow of Whitelaw Reid, the mother of Ogden Reid, one of the notable women of her generation. Once before, when he bought the *Daily News,* Munsey had found himself bargaining with a woman, but Mrs. Reid was not another Mrs. Wood.

Born to wealth, she had lived an extraordinarily cosmopolitan life as the wife of a famous editor and diplomat. The *Tribune* was a monument to her husband, a career for her son and her grandchildren. She had been a power in shaping it. And with a superior mind she combined a manner so simple

and casual that its charm veiled the strength of her heart. The self-made magnate was disarmed. His will was only the bludgeon of a peasant against patrician steel.

Yet so swift had been the current in America, "the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier," that this unapproachable superiority of hers had been built upon the advantage of but a single generation. Munsey was the uncertain grocery boy grown to full stature. Mrs. Reid, the arrived and seasoned aristocrat, was the daughter of a man who had been a country grocery boy before he established his position in the world. One generation's difference was enough.

Whenever Munsey brought up the necessity for merging the two papers, Reid and Davis agreed with his analysis. There was a senseless excess of morning papers, as he insisted. But they must buy, or else no trade. For the *Herald* they offered the same price Munsey had set for the *Tribune,* no cash, everything in notes.

And all the while, rumors darkened the *Tribune* office with the fear of Munsey, while downtown at the *Herald,* confidential assurances to the field marshals promised that the *Tribune* was about to fall into their Chief's hands.

At length Munsey was invited to dinner by Mrs. Reid at her massive old Florentine palace in Madison Avenue back of St. Patrick's Cathedral. Mr. and Mrs. Ogden Reid were there, and Howard Davis.

Munsey came alone, a bustling dry man within a few months of 70, his step quick but his hair white, a tired man, depressed in spirit, stubbornly delayed in getting a very big thing that he wanted. It was a congenial little dinner party. And then the white-haired Mrs. Reid herself told Munsey that the *Tribune* would not be sold, and when she told him he believed.

He had decreed death to one more newspaper, and now it was his own *Herald* which must die. By the logic and precedent of a lifetime he had no alternative. A failure was not a property for him. As he had said often and over many years, "I never stick with a loser. If it is losing, I kill it quickly."

He would have liked to hold the Paris *Herald,* a gay feather for his cap, but the purchasers insisted on having it too. They made but a single concession. They would retain *Herald* in the title of the new paper, New York *Herald Tribune,* and even on that point Mrs. Reid laughed and said the *Tribune* was the more valuable name.

Munsey received $5,000,000 by the agreement. And so he went back to his hotel, a very rich man, but no longer the great proprietor of the *Herald.* He added a footnote to the transaction in telling Louis Seibold about it.

"That old woman is a good business man," he said. "After the deal was all settled, she said to me, 'Mr. Munsey, you've made a good bargain for yourself. Now I want you to give me $100,000.' "

" 'Why, Mrs. Reid! What on earth for?' "

" 'For the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.' So I gave it to her."

* * * * * *

The staff of the *Herald* first learned of the sale on Monday evening, March 17, 1924, when the first edition came up from the presses. There was no notice for them from their employer. But in the center of Page One was a fateful familiar large-type box in which Munsey announced that this issue of March 18 was the last, explaining his regret at selling, saying farewell to the readers. The *Herald* would appear the following day in combination with the *Tribune.*

"My work of amalgamating newspapers in the evening field in New York has been as sound a piece of economics as the amalgamation of competing lines of railroads or banks or manufactures," said Munsey. "This principle applies equally well to morning journalism. As I have two other New York newspapers, the *Sun* and the *Telegram,* the sale of the New York *Herald* to Mr. Reid meant less to me than the sale of the New York *Tribune* would have meant to him."

Flags were draped festively over the windows uptown at the *Tribune* building, and the staff moved with joyous and excited steps. The menace of being sold to Munsey was dispelled. But for the *Herald* men the light was turned out. They were in the dark as to both present and future. All they knew was that their paper suddenly had died. All night and the next day they went without a word.

On Tuesday afternoon the lists were given out—those to be kept and transferred to the *Sun,* those to be taken over by the *Tribune,* those to get out.

Ogden Reid at the *Herald Tribune* announced that he would find places for as many as possible and would pay two weeks' salary to the others. But the two newspapers left where three had been before were helpless to use everyone.

"The weak ones must go," remarked an executive on the *Sun.*

It was the old story. The defunct paper, heir to *Press, Sun* and *Herald,* still had an extraordinary number of veterans on its staff, and they had to go. The old were at an impossible disadvantage. One young man on the *Herald's* financial page, an employee of Munsey since he first started to work, was just getting ready to marry, placing installment furniture in the selected flat, but the wedding had to be postponed. He lost his job. The eight-man staff of the *Herald's* Washington bureau

was wiped out. Hundreds of *Herald* people found themselves in the street.

Loud was the outcry, not only in New York but throughout the country. To the eyes of the newspaper craft, Munsey's act was but the callous scuttling of the ship. He was a killer, more irresponsible than ever. And the rage against him was not lessened when readers saw in the same papers, almost side by side, the obituary of the *Herald* and also the announcement of the gift of $100,000 to the cathedral, Munsey red-handed from the *Herald,* nobly giving to "St. John the Divine."

For their last pay the *Herald* men received only five-sixths of their weekly salary, for the closing Tuesday had been a day short of the full work week, counted up to Wednesday. The deduction had been computed exactly. The men dismissed also received two weeks' extra pay at the *Tribune,* this last payment with notice of dismissal coming not from Munsey but from the *Tribune.*

To a few of the upper rank employees with whom he had struck up a personal acquaintance, Munsey did order the continuance of salary for three months, regardless of whether they were located in new jobs by that time or not. But for the rank and file, nothing.

After throwing out thousands of newspaper men, now Munsey himself was out. He might comfort himself with the *Sun* and the *Telegram,* two newspapers left of his chain, but the one he wanted was in the hands of Ogden Reid.

After enjoying the *Herald* and struggling over it for four years only, at the end of wanting it all his adult lifetime since the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, he had it no longer. Money, which had been his strength, had failed him. He could have paid any price for the *Tribune.* He could have held on to the *Herald,* going into his pocket for deficits. But his need was

for a great and successful newspaper, commensurate with his name and the name of the *Herald,* and he was unable to build it.

"This hurt me more than anything I ever did in my life," he told Howard Davis, working out the details of the transfer.

His money had failed him, and he was never to buy another newspaper or to sell another. Talking at the Union League Club, he described Mrs. Reid's decisive word that he could not buy her *Tribune,* that she would buy his *Herald.*

"The earth seemed to dissolve under me," he said. "It was not what I wanted."

Chapter XVII

BELIEFS AND PRIZES

From a countryman grimly bent on getting on in the world, with money the goal and measure of his on-getting, from simple bedazzled acquisitiveness in rebound from an under-nourishment of the spirit, Frank Munsey at last filled out to the stature of an earnest public servant, as intent as any editor in the land upon promoting the right as he was able to see it.

"There was a time," he recalled to William Lincoln Palmer, "when I thought if I had money enough so I could reach a thousand dollar bill into the fireplace and use it as mere paper to light a cigar with, then I thought I should be happy. Well, look!"

He drew from his pocket a roll of bills and pulled one off, holding it up in his fingers.

"Here is a five-hundred-dollar bill. Feel it. Isn't it a pleasure to touch it? I could throw it into the fire now and laugh, and it wouldn't make any difference in my life. But after I did it a few times there would be no more kick in it."

He did not throw the five-hundred-dollar bill into the fire. He replaced it carefully in his pocket again, and then spoke his moral, "Well, believe me, money does not bring happiness."

Munsey grew up as he grew old. He enlarged personally as did few of his contemporaries. We have watched him during the Progressive period of the Twentieth Century's first dozen

years, a golden time of challenge for alert consciences, and he remained fascinated by Wall Street speculation. Eventually he did become financial backer of Theodore Roosevelt's Progressivism, but his voice was never lifted with those of the Insurgents, crying in the wilderness, who were that movement's forerunners.

For almost a decade then, allowing time out for bursts of wartime patriotism, he spent his energy in partisan sniping at the Democrats. At last, when past sixty-five, he emerged upon the high plateau of courageous public discussion upon which he stood before death—briefly illuminated by a dignity genuine and incontestible.

In January, 1902, recasting his new New York *Daily News,* Munsey elaborately abolished the editorial page. He preferred a magazine page "in place of the usual editorial page on which the average editorial writer talks on anything and says nothing." These were the only alternatives he saw. From this he advanced until he commanded on the *Sun*—by the accident of purchase, but still they were on his paper—both Ervin Wardman and Edward P. Mitchell, anointed masters of their craft, the one a sledge-hammer, the other a scholar and stylist of exquisite facility. They were a profound influence upon Munsey, and he respected them enough to give them a reasonably free hand in policy.

And from the *Sun* he advanced to the *Herald's* smashing campaigns—never to the dashing, cap-a-pie, D'Artagnan adventures of the *World,* to be sure, but at any rate to careful selection of certain causes for which he would fight, and to fighting for them forthrightly and at a sacrifice. Into these strange hazards Munsey entered with the whole enthusiasm of novelty, developing a sense of divine participation in the affairs of men, talking heavily about statesmanship, habitually now

carrying in his pocket the galley proofs of next day's leaders to show his acquaintances.

His ideals to him were serious considerations. Back in 1917, selling the Washington *Times,* he said manfully, "the *Times* during my ownership has never so far as I have knowledge, advocated any measure or stood for anything that meant personal advantage to me."

In August, 1922, in the *Herald,* answering a personal attack, he stated his faith:

> The newspaper is just what the man back of it makes it. The newspaper mirrors the man back of it, mirrors the man who puts himself into it. If his heart is in the public service, his newspaper will be a bulwark of strength to the community and to the country. Indeed, with the present political subserviency to the vote, the best hope for sound government must rest with the well-purposed independent press.

Munsey's acme and zenith as an editor, his high tide in prestige and in the shaping of events, came during his four-year ownership of the *Herald.* The time coincides with his most cold-blooded killings of other newspapers. This arrangement stands naturally as it should be observed, astral aspirations and mundane ruthlessness, the two together, both entering into the essential Munsey.

Munsey was no robber baron as were the Jay Goulds, Daniel Drews, Collis Huntingtons and others of a slightly earlier day. He was not critical of such rich men, but he took no man's money dishonestly nor did he fatten himself upon the public domain. He had the white integrity of any other iceberg. Any judgment which attempts fairly to make allowances for good intentions and personal handicaps in the balancing of a man's life must give a high rating to Munsey's manhood.

Nevertheless, his acts often were devastating and his percep-

tions obtuse. By his marauding and killing, his sack of the neighboring strongholds, his human insensibility as he pursued his ambitions, he caused in all likelihood quite as much heartache as did the veriest robber baron. No robber, he made up for it by fire and sword.

Wholly an amateur except in business and finance, not an intellectual, not inquisitive about subjects unknown, he had one talent which he proudly mistook for greatness, the talent for making money. With such equipment, coupled with his physical energy and the giant power of his wealth, he climbed to dominance in levels supposedly reserved for the intellect. His career is a commentary upon the civilization which allowed him such a place.

Munsey was a pragmatist. If he clung to an ideal, it had to be something that worked, which meant something that paid, which in the end was something approved by his own kind of men—the owners of the country's great enterprises.

He was too upright and self-consciously patriotic to place personal interest above his country's interest. But in deciding what was good for the country, he was able sometimes to identify himself with the country, the issue resolving itself into what was good for his own kind. He felt no fraternity with small men or with poor men. They did not make up the country in which he dwelt.

No employer in the land was more doleful than he over labor's high wages after the war. "Organize a citizens' body," he urged. "We must meet organization with organization. I believe in organized labor, but it must not go too far unchecked." He was equally strong for the Mellon proposal for tax reduction in 1924, the extreme of all plans for being kind to large incomes. To his mind it was the only plan which was

right, scientific and conscientious. On most national issues it is perfectly true that the masters of high finance could depend upon Munsey to see things in a constructive light.

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Two familiar characters of the newspaper cartoonists—the G. O. P. and Uncle Sam; the Grand Old Party, a corporeal twin to capitalism itself, a large well-fed old party, alternately bland, indignant and panic-stricken, and Uncle Sam, the slim, shrewd, bustling individualist!

Frank Munsey, by instinct, all his life was a fellow member of the same club with the Grand Old Party, built of its fiber, steeped in its philosophy, stirred by its desires. Nevertheless, he was a close approximation physically to Uncle Sam, merely shorn of the goatee, and he also blended in his character a good number of the old gentleman's stalwart independent traits which diluted his pure Republicanism.

He enjoyed parading this independence. He was always getting off the orthodox reservation, breaking through the party fences—in safe and cautious audacity. He dismayed the party, but the only left wing positions he ever occupied were on the left wing of the standpatters.

In October, 1922, he went on a rampage of plain speaking to proclaim the old story that there was little difference between Republicans and Democrats. The regulars of both parties opposed him. But what did he want, in fact? Nothing more than that the conservatives of both parties unite to fight the menace of radicalism.

"Divided," he said, "the conservatives haven't a show in the world. . . . I can see nothing so important to this nation as would be the welding together . . . of all our citizens who

think alike as concerns constitutional government, who think alike as concerns property rights, who think alike as concerns the institutions of our government. . . ."

Such a "Liberal-Conservative Party" as he called it—whatever that might be—was a fair measure of his liberalism.

Munsey's great defiance, of course, was in backing the Bull Moose rebellion of Theodore Roosevelt, but he also went stalking off away from Presidents Harding and Coolidge when they urged America to join the World Court, again he opposed the Republican tariff bill of 1922, and he was genuinely independent in his great fights against the League of Nations and the soldier's bonus.

In the *Herald's* attack on the Fordney-McCumber tariff of 1922, Munsey distinguished between "a justly protective tariff and an outrageously profiteering tariff." The *Herald* especially loathed the schedules on wool, sugar and shoes, but it found the entire bill a "tariff botch," an "economic blunder." It was "loading the old elephant's back with a burden such as that robust spine has seldom if ever sustained." Although "a consistent and steadfast advocate of the American tariff system," it said, "the owner of the New York *Herald* cannot stand for damn fool protectionism and the New York *Herald* will not stand for it."

That was independence unqualified, and Munsey is entitled to the credit.

He admired and supported certain Democrats, notably Mayor William J. Gaynor and Governor Smith. He never urged Smith's election, although if he had lived until 1926, personal friendship and party sentiment would have had a battle for possession of him. But on the Smith proposals for State reorganization and public improvements, *Herald* and *Sun* habitually lined up behind the Governor and against the

Republican legislature. After his last battle for Smith the rival New York *World* conceded,

> Frank Munsey and the able editors of the New York *Sun* . . . in defiance of their own party leaders . . . have not only done well by the State of New York but have given a new prestige of independence to the journalism of New York.

Most outstanding of all was the prompt brave "No" of the Munsey papers to the war veterans' demand for money. The bonus movement got under way in the fall of 1921, a bonus bill was passed in 1922, was vetoed by President Harding, passed again in 1924 and rolled on to golden glory over President Coolidge's veto. Those were years of Republican supremacy in Congress. Munsey fought against his party's Representatives, against the voters, against newspaper readers, and except for his opposition, in the opinion of Ervin Wardman, there would have been no obstacle to the bill's passage at the first try.

Wardman went to the expense after the victory of 1922, and while Munsey was on a holiday in Europe, of publishing a brochure reprinting the anti-bonus editorials under the title, "Militant American Journalism," saying admiringly in his preface:

> The fight of the New York *Herald* was begun and carried on by Mr. Munsey in the face of warnings that it meant loss of circulation for his newspaper, warnings that it entailed charges by those selfishly interested in the grab that he was unsympathetic, heartless and even mercenary—warnings of an even uglier nature. . . . He took that stand on conscience and conviction, regardless of possible sacrifice of circulation of his newspaper, regardless of any consideration except public duty. . . . No other newspaper on either side of the great bonus controversy has waged anything like the campaign the New York *Herald* has waged against it under

Mr. Munsey's immediate direction, with all his deep-seated conscience, his powerful personality and his utter disregard of mere personal or material consequences to himself, his properties or his interests.

* * * * * *

There was nothing like a Democratic President in the White House to make Munsey conscious of his Republicanism, and the accession of President Wilson produced its effect with promptitude. Munsey's Republicanism became more rampant and deep-seated with every hour of Wilson rule. He returned in 1914 from his interrupted summer vacation in Europe, having already contributed $25,000 in London to a hospital ship, and prepared to be as disgusted as was the House of Morgan with the peace and neutrality of President Wilson. His mounting nationalistic fever throbbed to the belligerency of Colonel Roosevelt, and he burned with Rooseveltian emotion throughout the war.

The newspapers of Saturday, May 8, 1915, were filled with the first shocked, incomplete accounts of the sinking of the *Lusitania* by a German submarine, and in the midst of the excitement the voice of Munsey burst in from New York by long distance telephone upon J. Edwin Murphy, managing editor of the Washington *Times.*

"Has Wilson declared war yet?"

"No, Mr. Munsey."

"Is he going to?"

"I don't think so. He hasn't indicated it."

"Well, where is he?"

"He is out playing golf just now."

"My God! Send out and get him right away. Tell him to declare war against Germany at once."

Furious, Munsey hung up the telephone and set himself to compose an editorial for the New York *Press.* It concluded:

> When all this was happening, accounts that wring the soul of all humanity save that of German blood, the President went off to the country for a day at golf.
>
> Great God!
>
> Has there been such a spectacle as this since Nero fiddled at the burning of Rome?

Delighted when the United States at last did enter the war, supporting every war measure with enthusiasm, comparing President Wilson's war speeches with President Lincoln's, still Munsey returned quickly to the dank twilight of his Republicanism. He fiercely attacked President Wilson's appeal before the Armistice for the election of a Democratic Congress, and when the treaty and the League of Nations were tossed into the arena, he hesitated not a moment before drawing his sword. He pressed and maneuvered the Republicans toward the most extreme opposition. Henry Cabot Lodge was not more implacable.

The text of the original League covenant was published February 14, 1918, and the next day the *Sun opened* with a standoffish reserved editorial, "Will It Be Anything More Than Another Hague Tribunal?" Five days later the decision was clear and sharp, "The more the *Sun* studies Mr. Wilson's scheme for a League of Nations, the more amazed it is that he, the President of the United States, could permit himself to father such a project."

Day after day the *Sun* led the attack. Within the first week it was cannonading with virtually all the stock arguments and verbal clichés whose repetition was to hammer life out of the proposal: rallying the Irish opposition, quotations from Washington's Farewell Address, fears for national sovereignty, sneers

at Wilsonian idealism, invective at this "pernicious" and "fatuous" and "dangerous" scheme.

* * * * * *

Munsey's political appetite burned and sought sustenance concurrently with his hankering for journalistic success. Like a team abreast his two ambitions drew him forward. He bought the New York *Press* in 1912 and wielded it valiantly to push Colonel Roosevelt toward the White House. In 1916 he bought the *Sun* and, combining it with the *Press* to make a heftier blade, he belabored President Wilson and cut broad furrows for the advance of the Republican, Charles Evans Hughes.

In 1920, the next Presidential election year, he bought the *Herald,* forging for himself and his cause a weapon of still more heroic strength. And with the election of Harding that year, the overthrow of Wilson, the repudiation of the League of Nations, Munsey for the first time in his life found himself an authentic President-maker, deliriously swept in upon the victory tide.

The commander of the host was his own protégé, Will H. Hays. George W. Perkins, Munsey's friend, had been the principal factor in selecting Hays for party chairman, and from Hays' first appearance in New York, Munsey had taken a proprietary, almost a fatherly interest in him.

His friend, in the flush of success, stood at the new President's elbow, and his own services and deservings were paramount. He had put fight into a dispirited party when President Wilson seemed invincible, and throughout the long battle his voice had been loud and bold. He had as great a part as any other publisher, as great as any man outside the Senate, greater than most Senators, in the defeat of the League. And the party knew it. The world knew it.

Munsey was a proud man after that triumph of November, 1920. Lord Northcliffe, with his London *Times* turning out the Asquith Government during the war, had accomplished no greater labor. Congratulations and praise showered upon Munsey. The press of the country abounded in speculations as to what should be his reward. Colonel Roosevelt, in 1912, certainly would have honored him with the highest distinctions if he had won. Hughes in 1916 could have denied him nothing. But now at last the party was in a position to give, and few were so worthy as he to receive.

The reward Munsey coveted was to be Secretary of the Navy. In straightforward fashion he went to his friend, Will Hays, and asked for it. This assertion is made upon the word of Will Hays himself.

Since it was found inexpedient for President Harding to appoint him, we are restricted here to the imagination alone for a picture of Munsey as head of the United States Navy. But with Munsey's temperament in mind, his mania for change as shown in Boston, New London, New York, Baltimore and wherever else he put his hand, his inexhaustible fussiness, his relish for trappings of grandeur and dramatic gesture, the onlooker cannot but feel that President Harding deprived the navy of a purple and unforgettable experience.

As months passed, however, the report spread that Munsey was being saved for ambassador to Great Britain. But his friend, Colonel George Harvey, was appointed, served and returned home. Again it was freely predicted that Munsey's turn had come. But President Coolidge also passed him over and named Senator Frank B. Kellogg.

It was a catastrophe, and in the first sting of it Munsey let down his reserve before H. J. Wright, then his assistant on the *Sun*.

"I thought the President should have asked me to be ambassador," he said. "I wouldn't have accepted it. I wouldn't have left my papers. This is my post of duty. But he should have done me the honor and let me have the refusal."

He shook his head.

"Newspapers have no power whatever," he stormed. "They have no political power and no social influence. I thought once that they did, but that is a perfect illusion.

"A perfect illusion!"

In the light of Munsey's political services and his commanding position, it was strange that he should have been denied. Why was it? The answer is speculative. It is gossip of the capital. It is supported partially by these points: That it is widely believed among Washington's older business community resident there during the Harding administration, and it has been confirmed by financial and political personages who had a reasonable opportunity to know.

President Harding's nearest friend was Edward Beale McLean, publisher of the Washington *Post,* a convivial spendthrift, inheritor of a fortune, a publisher as unlike Munsey in personal qualities as any in the country.

Upon Harding's nomination, McLean placed himself and his resources at the disposal of his friend, and in generous return he was allowed a favorite's powers in the new government. Between election and inauguration, Harding entrusted numerous private confidential missions to McLean, many of them relating to appointments, and it was to the McLean residence in Washington that the Hardings came on the eve of inauguration.

Although wealthy, McLean frequently was hard up and bankers found his obligations slow to collect. Now it happened, according to this story, that McLean had given a cer-

tain promissory note to a Washington bank and, after failure to collect, it had been discounted and passed on to another bank, and repeatedly discounted and passed on, until it reached the Munsey Trust Company. There it was held as of a value of $40,000.

The Munsey Trust Company demanded payment, but without obtaining satisfaction. It demanded again and again. It proceeded with the usual insistences and warnings. McLean did not like this treatment. Munsey himself, perhaps, had nothing to do with dunning him. Certainly the transaction had nothing to do with Munsey's fitness to be ambassador. But it rankled.

And this was the reason, as the story runs, that when Munsey's name was presented to President Harding, the influential McLean, the courtier and insider, was able to reach over the President's shoulder and reject him.

* * * * * *

Munsey's dream of the New York *Herald* and his fancy of political refulgence now alike were dissolved. The money remained, his first ambition and final consolation.

"Forty years, forty failures, forty millions," wrote Arthur Brisbane when Munsey bought the *Globe* in 1923.

"He has worked the forty years and more; he has had the forty failures and more; he has GOT the forty millions and more. The last statement answers everything in this land of the free."

Life had yielded things to Munsey abundantly, but he was a sad and lonely old man. As the years advanced, he talked more about his money. "Frank," he said more than once to Frank Hofer, his waiter at the Ritz-Carlton, "if you had thirty or forty million dollars, what would you do with it?"

He would listen patiently as the waiter outlined an idea for cultural philanthropy. He thanked him. "That is a good idea. I'll make a note of it and do something about it. I have left all my money to one institution, but I think I must change my will."

"He talked to me about everything," Frank Hofer recalled later. "He said to me, 'Frank, I'm going to leave something for you in my will.'

"Well," added the waiter, "after I am at the Ritz twenty-five years, I hear those words so often, they don't mean anything. But I really believe he felt it. He just didn't get around to it."

Munsey in his New England heart disapproved of the fashionable rich. He talked often of the hard work of the fathers and the callousness of the children. Success, he said, was "like piling up a big fortune in front of cattle."

He asked advice of his friends about disposing of his money. He wanted "to plump it all in one place."

Applicants for money were a procession. Waiters and bellboys would stop him in the hotel corridor and ask three or four thousand dollars with which to set up in business. Invariably he refused, gravely explaining his principles of thrift, but he was open to any story of illness or actual need, quick to send a contribution.

"What will I do with my money?" he said to William Lincoln Palmer. "I don't know. But I've made up my mind that where I give it, there will be no graft. I don't want anybody given a soft job and paid for it with my money because he happens to be a nephew of some politician.

"I have studied the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The trustees get nothing in compensation for their services. There is no shakedown. Every dime spent at the museum receives its

equivalent in value. There is strict accounting. I don't care whether my money goes for art or for some other good cause. But as it is my money, I have a right to do with it as I please, and I am going to see that it buys an equivalent of honest value."

On another day he told Palmer:

"I'd like to help a lot of people if there were some way of giving them the knowledge of how to use money.

"If I gave you $100,000, I'm afraid it would injure you. You're not ready for it. It wouldn't be a kindness to you. You've got to earn your own. You've got to suffer first, perhaps being hardly able to pay for a bottle of milk, before you understand the value of money. My one desire in life now is to get one hundred cents value for every dollar I spend."

In his early success, Munsey was fond of saying in speeches that every New England boy was born with two great purposes in life—getting on in this world and getting into heaven. To the first he remained loyal to the end. His hope of heaven became more dim and less important, but in fading it left a void in his heart, and as the gray twilight wrapped around him, he was subject to gray moods.

Palmer one day found him looking down from his window onto the street. "What is the big idea of all this crowd rushing about?" he mused. "Half of them don't know where they are going. Why the rush and hurry and bustle? They'll be in time for their funerals.

"Now my life—I feel that in some ways it has been a failure. I'll give you three reasons. I have no heirs. I am disappointed in my friendships. And I have no clear views on great religious problems.

"The idea of marriage, I have come to believe, is to produce

an heir to represent you, to step into your shoes after you are gone. I have no heir to represent me. When I was a young man the girls I proposed to wouldn't have me; they thought I was too poor and never would be able to support them properly.

"To-day I have forty million dollars, but what has it brought me? Not happiness. Where can I leave it? I have made up my mind to leave it where I made it—in New York City, and where I can get its equivalent in value.

"Now here's another reason for feeling like a failure. No man of great wealth has many friends. When my father died, Mr. Morgan was willing to send a carload of flowers if necessary. He seemed to me to be a superman almost, and I wanted to count him as a friend. We worked together in the market at times, because I tried always to have ready money, large amounts of liquid cash, and he knew I could take advantage of any opportunities that he might have.

"But I was always afraid of him. It seemed to me he always had a knife sharpened and ready for me, if I ever made a misstep, to plunge it into my back. I remember how Charles W. Morse—who also came from Maine—was caught over-certifying a check, and the bankers put him behind the bars."

Munsey sadly took from his pocket a list of names.

"This memorandum lists more than $265,000 in debts owed me by personal friends. I do not believe they ever intend to pay me, but that is not the worst; I have lost them as friends. They try to avoid me on the street. They say to themselves, 'There comes Munsey, trying to push me to the wall and get the last cent out of me.'

"I have written to them saying, 'My dear Friend: I don't want you to pay me any money; I want you to be my friend again.' And they write back a formal answer, 'I am trying to pay you, but it is impossible to send you any money now.' I tell

you, Mr. Palmer, a man of great wealth has but few real friends.

"Another reason that I feel that my life is a failure is because I have no religious faith. When I came to New York I was a strong believer in the Christianity that my mother taught me and I joined the Presbyterian Church.

"After I became prosperous, the pastor of a fashionable church, a friend of mine, came and asked me to give him $10,000 a year to supplement his salary. He said he could not live on what his church was paying him; and as I liked him and believed in him, I gave it to him. About three months later I came into a club, and there was that pastor sitting there, visibly intoxicated, and I went up and questioned him. He said he always had wanted luxury and was never able to afford it until I gave him the money. That is what I had done.

"Few men can handle large sums and not be corrupted. I should have known better in the case of this minister. There is not one man in a hundred who could have a million dollars in the bank, suddenly given to him, and not be ruined by it."

After this experience, Munsey said, he decided to investigate religion, and methodically he invited a Catholic Priest, an Episcopal rector, other Protestant clergymen, to answer his questions.

"I came to believe," he said, "that whoever created the world has stepped aside, and I cannot see that life has any meaning at all for me at present. When I gave up my belief in immortality, it took all the starch out of me."

In depressed moments Munsey was capable even of envying the genealogist: "I send you to Europe to look up my ancestors and you have a good time. I go across the water myself and can find nothing interesting. Your clothes are as good as mine, and your real needs are met as well as mine. Last night I saw

you at Sherry's eating a good steak and you enjoyed it. If I were to eat a steak, I'd be sick for a week.

"Men give up their health to get money, then give up their money to get health, and in the end get nothing."

But dark moods did not prevail for long with Munsey. His egoism saved him.

"New York University has given me a degree and Bowdoin likewise," he remarked to Palmer. "It was not because I am a good speller. I can't spell cat. But I can hire a good speller for $10 a week. They gave me a degree because, all things considered, they esteemed me much above the average of human beings."

* * * * * *

Among the memories of Munsey stored away by the men who worked on his papers is one simple little picture of him at the height of his power and fame while proprietor of the *Herald,* a scene observed by Walter Davenport.

One New Year's Eve Munsey left word at the *Herald* that he wished Davenport to write the story of a dance which he himself was attending at the Ritz-Carlton, that the reporter was to be in evening clothes at midnight just at the elevator doors on the ballroom floor. The story, he specified, was to be about a column and a half or two columns in length.

They met, and Munsey greeted Davenport with grave friendliness. Then slowly, wearily, he led the way around the ballroom, nodding to his acquaintances as they sat in self-sufficient little groups at the edge of the floor, greeting them and receiving their greetings in return. They walked along slowly, Munsey all the time repeating in a flat low monotonous voice:

"They seem to be having a good time. They're trying to have a good time. But not so good a time as we used to have

long ago in Maine. Not so good a time. Not so good a time as we had when I was young in Maine."

They circled back to the door again without having tarried with any group or any person, without having been stopped by anyone, and the millionaire stiffly extended his hand.

"Well, good night, Mr. Davenport. Good night."

The elevator arrived and Munsey stepped in alone and went on upstairs to his rooms.

Chapter XVIII

FORTY MILLIONS

For four decades and a little more Frank Munsey lived in New York from the time he arrived as a rustic with $40 seeking his fortune until he was given his august farewell, and as he himself became great the city around him likewise changed almost past recognition.

The metropolis spread out to include a population five times as great as New York in 1882, and it reached upward to the spire of the Woolworth Building, sixty stories above Broadway.

In place of General Grant, the most conspicuous citizen now was Daddy Browning. The annual "Artists and Models" revues, begun in 1923 and showing the way to enlarged areas of feminine exposure, were giving the theater its great and imitated sensation. People on the street were whistling and humming a song called "Yes, We Have No Bananas." The great news story of 1925 was the monkey trial at Dayton, Tennessee. Cross-word puzzles were a national passion. Channel swimming was gripping the international imagination. The speakeasy was creeping out of hiding to its place as an adornment of the town. Wall Street speculation, an expanding bubble, had passed from the hands of gentlemen to become a common gamble, followed even by taxi drivers and chainstore clerks. The clumsy John F. Hylan, who liked to belabor Munsey as a tool of the interests, was almost ready to yield the Mayor's office to James J. Walker, which meant gayer days and nights ahead politically. New York was up to its ears in one of the historic silly seasons.

It was a painful time in which to grow old, and for none more than for Munsey. The note of 1925 was jazz. Munsey always had demanded to be taken seriously, moving with distinctly a pompous step, busily piling up accomplishments and acquisitions as his credentials to position, scorning frivolities and no less diligently avoiding the development of simple personal resources and deep social ties. Times had changed since he arrived in New York, and since he reached that point at which he might boast, "I don't have to do anything in this world I don't want to do."

Nowadays Munsey found often enough that he must do things he didn't want to do. He had to rest, and the old pride of working eighteen hours a day was forever beyond him. His grip had relaxed on the *Herald,* and that prize had slipped away. His magazines were running largely on the pull of gravitation. His flagship, *Munsey's,* soon to be appraised at a mere $50,000, *Munsey's,* which had earned him one of the greatest fortunes ever spun out of a printing press, was no longer an advantage to his name. The great trust organization which was to make him immortal had not materialized. He had no place in politics. All the cloud-capped towers of his dream were dissolved.

Six months after Munsey had sold the *Herald* to its death—his final contribution to weeding out the New York newspaper field—Bernarr MacFadden, as if with mocking intent, had started a new paper in the clearing, and it was a sex-dripping tabloid, the *Evening Graphic.*

Munsey had lived amidst history, but the other actors, his gods and heroes, were off the stage now. Many a night he was forlorn and unhappy at the memory of them, Blaine, Morgan, Roosevelt, Northcliffe, his dear friend Perkins, and other companions of his life, every one of them gone.

His blood relations were of no value as companions. He

wished he had married. He wished for a son, who might be perhaps a comforting associate, who certainly could receive his properties after him. That, as he said and apprehended, was the purpose of marriage, to provide a successor for property. And the Chief now, himself, was brittle, white-haired, lonely, a weary gray wolf, still holding his great possessions but contemplating an infinite void.

If only this old materialist might have heeded long ago the urbane advice of Henry James to "live all you can," instead of following Horatio Alger to his ultimate triumph! Now he must have said with the older man in James' story, "It's too late. And it is as if the train had fairly waited at the station for me without my having the gumption to know it was there. Now I hear its faint receding whistle miles and miles down the line. What one loses one loses; make no mistake about that."

Thirty years before, Munsey had received the gift of power and a free choice, the opportunity to select what life should give him. Whatever intangibles he might have tried, since there was everything to choose from, what he did wish for was all that he could see, for "riches, power, position, the world, the great big world," and he had seen no more. He had craved scope, and he had it, all over the surface of the world. He wanted to be like the important men of the city. Many times over the wish had been gratified. With the final consolidation of his properties in 1924 his life had been wrapped up in a large neat tight package with no ends loose, set to one side with no particular address written on it and with nobody coming to claim it.

* * * * * *

"How long hast thou been a grave maker?" had asked Prince Hamlet in that scene cartooned by Norman Lynd, and Frank Munsey sweating at his trade must have pointed to the New

York *Continent* tombstone dated 1891; there were visible also the evidences of the *Godey's Lady Book* debacle in 1898, the *Daily News* early in the new century. And the Boston *Evening Journal,* the Philadelphia *Times,* the New York *Press,* killed outright, and so many others it was hard to keep the count. Not in malice, but cheerfully apt with a gravedigger's quiddity over each in turn, down into the earth he had thrust them while the mourners stood helpless. He had seen the mighty *Herald* to its end and sepulture, while he himself lived on in the ripeness of his days, a leading citizen, a cornerstone of the community.

And then at last, quickly, Munsey himself died also. He was stricken with appendicitis on December 12, 1925, and on December 22, about sunrise, at the age of seventy-one years, four months and a day, he died.

No one of his own family was present. The nearest, his elder sister Emma, Mrs. Hyde, who had known early poverty as bitterly as he, was snugged down for the winter under the distant sunshine of Florida. Prominent acquaintances were called in on several lingering midnights to wait at his hospital door that he might not be so utterly alone and unattended. Clergy from the Cathedral of St. John the Divine were hurried to him for ghostly reassurances. Lawyers and business managers bustled in and out of the bedroom. At the end, as Munsey gave up his last breath in the winter dawn, he was surrounded by a tense, painfully sympathetic circle of men, his upper employees and business associates, each of whom was then or until recently had been supported from his payroll.

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Munsey had expected to live longer. His strength seemed equal to many more years, and his arrangements were far from complete. When he saw that death was not to be sent away, he

hurried to make terms. He was allowed a brief hesitation, and with his final attention he attacked that problem which long had vexed and confused him—his vast property and what to do with it.

George Perkins had nursed the idea of employee participation in the ownership of corporations, had lectured Munsey about it and convinced him in principle. He thought of applying it on the *Sun*.

"Had Mr. Munsey lived," said William T. Dewart in a statement accompanying the publication of the will, "or had not his passing been so sudden, these large and profitable businesses would have been mutualized, or partially so, in a way beneficial to all of those who have of late years made substantial contributions to their great success. This intention Mr. Munsey expressed to me with great earnestness only a few weeks before he was stricken."

To many another, too, he said he was not satisfied with his will; he expected to go into the matter carefully and find perhaps some different beneficiary from the one designated which might give him a better equivalent for his money. And he expected to make larger provision for some of his employees.

On his deathbed, then, the restless Munsey, whose life activity had been a constant process of revision and upsetting, put his mind on a final change. He sent for his friend and attorney, Charles E. Rushmore, told him of new dispositions he wished to make, had another will written. But his signature was essential, and always when the document was brought to him with the pen, for lack of strength he put it aside to wait another day.

* * * * * *

What had Munsey done with his money? That was the overshadowing interest when he died, and nothing else concerning him was to be mentioned with it. With no son or heir to inherit

it, no hint from him as to his intentions, the great fortune was adrift, a fortune directly affecting hundreds of persons who earned their living from it, challenging the attention of millions of onlookers.

The public, accustomed to Munsey's blunderbuss spending, entertained itself now with speculations. The men on his papers, long-suffering under interference and insult, remembered his words, "I have no one to leave my money to, you see——" and they stirred with an unconcealed hope. Newspaper men and women generally, aware of Munsey's worship of Commodore Bennett, wished he might lend a hand toward the speedier opening of the Bennett Home for aged and needy journalists. Munsey had had forty years to puzzle over the riddle of wealth, and now his answer was in. What would happen to his two remaining newspapers? What memorial would he build for himself? Whom would he reward?

With such a mystery overhanging, even the grandiose funeral in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, to which Munsey had paid his $100,000 in advance, was incidental.

However, no plume or wreath of dark formality was omitted from the ceremonies. Flags hung at half staff for Munsey over public buildings, even over the State Capitol and Governor's Mansion at Albany. President Coolidge telegraphed a lengthy eulogy, the first received from many high personages in both America and Europe. For a day the body rested in state in a shadowy north chapel of the cathedral, to be visited by any who wished.

Then on Christmas Eve, a day clear but freezing, with a sharp river wind blowing across Morningside Heights, the bronze coffin, blanketed in roses, was borne before the cathedral's high marble altar, into the midst of such a company of eminence and wealth as the new stone walls never had looked upon before.

Governor Smith and Charles Evans Hughes stood at the head of the thirty-four honorary pall bearers—Vanderbilt, Astor, Rockefeller among the names, and ex-governors, ambassadors, cabinet ministers, senators, judges, generals and an admiral, bankers and publishers. A niece of Munsey's was there, and some cousins; Titherington, after forty faithful years, and Dewart; and committees from Munsey's clubs, appointed representatives from his newspapers, clerks from his grocery stores, policemen and firemen for whom his papers had helped get an increase in pay—a crowded attendance of delegations and officialdom. The Bishop read the service. Three hymns were sung. A girl's sob was heard—a strange, exotic sound amidst those stiff and correct façades.

But the newspaper men who had worked for Munsey, whose lives had been touched most intimately by him, were not generally to be seen at the cathedral. His papers of course went ahead busily getting out editions. But the men who had free time, those with days off and the ones who had worked for him on some job in the past, did not turn out to the funeral nor feel an impulse to leave their benediction with him. Downtown at the office of his papers, however, at the hour of the funeral, there was a moment of silence and bowed heads, interrupting the work, and then at the *Telegram* the men looked up and, before returning to pencils and typewriters, they comfortably lighted their tobacco and puffed clouds of smoke into the undisturbed air.

Munsey's bronze coffin was placed in a vault until the next May. Then, when spring was blossoming in Maine, it was taken back home to the hard and rocky soil which was so much a part of his being and which he so proudly loved, to rest beside the bodies of his father and mother in the village cemetery at Lisbon Falls.

* * * * * *

For six days after the funeral, expectant silence; then the will was made public.

Munsey gave his millions to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

He who adored to appear different from other men and to do things in his own individual fashion had reserved a last jolt for the curious—this posthumous lavishness toward an institution with which he was not connected by any visible cord of sentiment, which it is uncertain he ever visited in his life, in a sphere apart from his interests and his work.

The public howled its disapproval. Those who had disliked Munsey before, and those who had felt merely a failure to be warmed by his personality, united their voices now in the loudest and most baffled of all the outcries against him. He was denounced by pulpit and press. But if any vibrations of the chorus ever reached to the peace of that bronze coffin in the lonely vault, we may be sure that the Titan within, who had shown such indifference to the public during his life, now accepted the uproar as a certain sign that he had been right.

There was no codicil or last-minute alteration. The will made large bequests to Munsey's sister, nephew and niece, generous bequests to many cousins, gifts and annuities to a large number of old acquaintances, most of them in the state of Maine. It bestowed from $10,000 to $50,000 each upon some seventeen employees who already were receiving the largest salaries. To the numerous expectant small folk who had worked for him it gave nothing.

In conclusion, Munsey took his place among the princely and monumental benefactors of public causes. He gave considerably to Bowdoin College, the Maine State Hospital at Portland, Central Maine General Hospital at Lewiston. And all the residue and remainder of his uncounted millions he

gave to the Metropolitan. No one was surprised more than the trustees of the museum themselves.

The pleasantly rounded sum of $40,000,000 was a symbol of Munsey's fortune, and it is likely that at some moment in his life he did hold values of so much as that. Values fluctuated, however, and in April, 1929, an appraisal put the estate's net assets at $19,747,687. There had been various debts, claims and commissions, and the lawyers cut in for a reported $800,000. It was figured the Metropolitan would receive $17,305,594. Six years later, hard times had shrunken the residue to approximately $10,000,000. But at that it was the largess of a Medici.

The will was dated June 21, 1921. At just that time Munsey was contemplating his first trip to Europe after the war. He was nearly sixty-seven and could not shut his eyes to the need for some orderly plan to conserve and dispose of his property in case of sudden death. He went to his old lawyer acquaintance, a fellow-member of the Union League Club, David B. Simpson, made the will in a hurry, and four days later sailed on the *Olympic*.

Simpson occasionally would confide to some intimate at the club the story of how the will was written. Munsey had had his mind clearly made up in advance as to the beneficiaries and what each should receive, and he dictated his notes rapidly.

"Now, who will be your residuary legatee?" asked Simpson.

"What's that? What is a residuary legatee?"

"That's the one to get whatever is left after paying the specific bequests."

"Oh," said Munsey. "Well, give it to the Metropolitan Museum."

The story, secondhand from Simpson, has the authentic

sweep of a Munsey gesture. But more went into it, even as a provisional and intentionally temporary clause, than the impulse of a moment. Munsey had crusaded thirty years earlier in his *Daily Continent* to open the Metropolitan on Sundays. He approved its financial system. He was a perfunctory member at $10 a year. David Simpson himself was warmly interested in the museum and talked often of its merits.

But beyond all these considerations it is valid to suggest that neither impulse nor study was the controlling factor upon Munsey in this important selection. The idea was born legitimately of his deepest instincts, and a lifetime of investigation could not have improved its fitness.

The Metropolitan was a perfect choice. It allowed a touch of the bizarre and independent, but with iron-bound guarantees. It was as respectable as Grant's Tomb, was already approved by the gifts of Pierpont Morgan, the Vanderbilts and others of the class to which Munsey had attained, was the biggest art museum in the country and the richest, might be depended upon never to spend money upon anything embarrassing or incorrect. The Metropolitan was opulent and famous, ponderous and upstage, cautious and of an excellent front. The bequest was an inspiration for Munsey, pure and flawless.

* * * * * *

Munsey left orders that his newspapers be sold. It was natural and not surprising, although other publishers had ordained differently. James Gordon Bennett, who also died without a successor of the blood, insisted that his *Herald* should be carried on forever. Joseph Pulitzer founded a school of journalism, and by recurrent prizes linked his name firmly to the practice of journalism, and he admonished his sons never to part with the *World*. Both of these plans speedily failed, but the intention revealed the men's hearts.

In his turn, Munsey directed his executors and trustees to convert everything he had into money, to sell his real estate, his bank stock, his grocery stores, his magazines, and his newspapers—one along with another, no preferences, no exemptions. It was again the acme of fitness, for as Munsey had left no son, so he had left no newspaper tradition. His name meant the demolition of papers, not any way of building up a paper. A great newspaper going on into the distant future in his name would be the ultimate irony in monuments.

Munsey's fitting memorial which he chose for himself will be the eminence and enlargement of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Titians it is enabled to buy, the scholars it can endow, the larger buildings it can erect. Within the museum today, at the foot of the main stairway, set into the wall, is a large tablet, "Benefactors of the Museum, MDCCCCXX——," a tablet containing sixty or seventy-five names. And there in the cold stone, at the bottom of the first column, may be read the neat credit line which preserves this hero of a success story against the forgetfulness of humanity, the carved name of "Frank A. Munsey."

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