

The Free Press Short Story

NON-SKID

BY HENRY CARLETON

HENRY MATTHEWS glared savagely across his desk at the blank wall. The wall had done nothing to offend him, but it was there and the mere fact of its being there was sufficient. Henry hit his lip, and knew that he was unresponsive; he also knew that if he turned his eyes from the wall, he would see Terwilliger, and that if he saw Terwilliger, his rage would make him look ridiculous and silly.

Henry was unmistakably angry. It was Terwilliger's fault. "A few more prima donnas around this office, and we never would get anything done," Terwilliger had barked out for everybody to hear. "Yes, Matthews, that includes you—you principally."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" Henry had snapped back. Terwilliger did not answer, and that, really, was the final straw. Of course, he was right, and that was the rub in the whole affair. Henry knew that if he had been put in charge of the copy room instead of Terwilliger, he would have done the same thing, unless he might have thought of something more caustic to say. The other man was a dull sort, rather thick-headed and wholly unimaginative. Henry never had stopped wondering why Terwilliger had been given the job, and his amazement was increased by the fact that he had rather expected it for himself.

All this went through his mind as Henry glared at the perfectly innocuous wall on the other side of his desk. "There are some things a fellow doesn't have to do," he grumbled to himself, "and I'm not going to take orders from him."

The other copy-writers glanced at Henry, chuckled a little to themselves, and went on with their work. They recognized the symptoms, and those who liked Henry called his outbursts by such names as "temperament," and "artistic impulse"; others, less tolerant, muttered "temper" or "egotism" or "conceit." Both were right; the difference was largely in the point of view. Henry was brilliant, imaginative, and original. In the three years he had been with the Acton Advertising Agency, he had originated more advertising slogans and laid out more successful campaigns than any other man on the staff. Nevertheless, he was the bane of Terwilliger's existence. He would come to the office a habitual half hour late, and then sit on the edge of Terwilliger's desk until he had related all the events of the evening before. He might come back after lunch; then again he might not.

"He's good," Terwilliger would tell Llewellyn Morton, president of the agency. "He's great when he works, and he does more than anybody, but he ruins the discipline of the office. Every other copy-writer thinks he can act just like Matthews, and it won't do."

Mr. Morton, however, liked Henry and his work. "He settles down after awhile," he predicted. "Henry to make matters worse for Terwilliger, knew Mr. Morton's sentiments. Hence he said, 'What are you going to do about it?' Knowing that Terwilliger would have no answer.

This particular morning, his anger effectively dispelled any inclination for work that Henry might have had, and it was characteristic of him that he should leave his work at such a time, without saying a word, and put his hat and coat and started for the door.

"Terwilliger whirled in his swivel chair. 'Where are you going?' 'Out.' 'That Consolidated Motors copy isn't it?' 'Well?'"

"Give it to you to-morrow," Henry was very cool. "I want it to-day." "Henry was firm. 'Listen,' said Terwilliger in a voice meant to be hard. 'I'm in charge of this office, and I want that copy to-day.'"

"You know what you can do," Henry said quietly, certain that Terwilliger could and would do exactly nothing. Terwilliger hesitated. His fingers gripped the edge of the desk and his face paled. "Yes, I know," he said slowly, as though measuring his words. "I know what I can do and I'm going to do it. If you leave now, you needn't come back. The cashier will give you the week's salary."

Henry stood frozen, as though stunned by the unexpectedness of it. He flushed, then paled. Finally he laughed nervously. "Thank you can make it stick?" he asked derisively. "I know I can."

"Very well," Henry turned on his heel and went out. Terwilliger laughed as the door closed. "Guess I showed him," he boasted to the staff, and was surprised when no one replied. Henry had his faults, of course, but the staff liked him and did not want to see him go. Usually he was happy and merry, and for the sake of his friendship, they were willing to forgive the biting sarcasm that followed an outburst of temperament or of temper.

At the cashier's cage Henry stopped to demand his salary. "Retard," Conned. "Kick out in the street," he explained lightly. "It's a cold, cold world."

The cashier was incredulous and went to Mr. Morton with an appeal. "Boss wants to see you," he said when he came

out. "And for godness' sake do a Prince of Wales from that high horse of yours. Your boss will be decent about it, you know."

Henry nodded absently. "All right, but it's no use. You know Terwilliger. The sentence was unfinished as he went into the private office.

"Mr. Morton looked up from his work and studied Henry, for a long moment before he spoke. 'Temperament?' he asked. 'Or temper?'"

"Terwilliger," said Henry. "Oh? Well, sit down. I want to talk to you. Understand I'm not going to interfere. Terwilliger is in charge of the copy room and his decisions are final. This matter is between you and him. On the other hand you are valuable to the agency. You know our business and our clients, and you can deliver the kind of work we want. I do not want to see you go, but if you want to go by the rules—well, you see how it is. Every office has rules, and the cardinal one is obedience to the man-in-charge. In this case that man is Terwilliger. He may be wrong, but if he is wrong, that is my business, and not yours, to find it out."

"You seem to know all about this affair." "We've talked it over." "Then there's nothing for me to say. I think my work has been satisfactory. Up to standard—possibly improving."

"Yes. Your work is all right, and if you were the only copy-writer in the agency, there would be no difficulty, but you aren't the only one to consider. We must have rules for the group, and when one man ignores the rules, he tears down the morale of the office. It is particularly essential that the office be under a central authority. Now you have failed to recognize that, and you have been unfair to Terwilliger. I think you should apologize to him and go back to work. I have nothing to say to Terwilliger. Nothing at all."

"Very well, but don't be hasty. Take a few days to think it over, if you like, and we'll hold the matter open."

"Thank you," said Henry. "That, certainly, is fair enough."

Leaving the office then, he got into his roadster and drove out into the country. The motor purred smoothly and powerfully and the tires rippled softly over the pavement. The cool air sung interestingly in his ears. It was quiet and peaceful, and he always had been able to think most clearly while at the wheel of his car. Often, although Terwilliger never had known it, he had gone out in the afternoon following an especially perplexing morning to think out an advertising campaign or to study out some slogan that would be remembered. Now his thoughts were in a turmoil that he could not dispel.

Suddenly he laughed, and although there was no one to hear, began talking aloud. "I only got what I asked for," he mused, and chuckled as he found himself thinking half admiringly of Terwilliger. "I told him what he could do and he did it."

He sobered. He found himself thinking that he would like to go back to finish the Consolidated Motors copy, and wishing that he could. He had some splendid ideas for it, but apologized to Terwilliger. "What a shame not to have done that. I would never forget it, since the apology would imply a pledge of obedience forever afterward. Terwilliger would always have the advantage over him. Still, Terwilliger, as Mr. Morton had said, had done only what he was employed to do. Henry tried to reason it out that way, to envision the copy room head as a cog in a machine, forced by other cogs. "And I'm the wrench they tell about being thrown into the works," he said aloud to himself. "Childish, too, running out of a job just because I can't have my own way."

That brought him back to reality, and left the imaginary world behind. In another moment Henry turned his car around and was driving back toward the city.

He went to the office and straight to Terwilliger's desk. "Got an idea for that Consolidated Motors stuff," he said. "I'll give it to you in an hour."

Terwilliger said nothing. "What a shame," he considered the return of a sufficient apology and promise of good behavior, Henry did not know. He was elated, for while he had resolved to swallow his pride, the medicine he had determined to take was nothing that children or anybody else would cry for.

It considerably less than the promised hour, the Consolidated Motors copy was finished and turned in. Henry did not stop. He searched for more work and found it. He did everything he could think of, including putting his desk in order, until five o'clock, and the next morning he reported at eight-thirty, instead of nine or later, for the first time in six months. He was back from lunch on time and worked all the afternoon.

Two months went by in which Henry studiously observed every rule of the office. Many of them, he thought, were silly; many more, he reflected, were designed by Terwilliger merely for the display of his authority. Henry said nothing. Never again could Llewellyn Morton think him guilty of a baby trick. It was hard, sometimes, to conceal his resentment, but he managed to do it. "It hurt, too, to know that he was not doing his best work," he could not, under the

new conditions. He took Terwilliger's orders, when he knew that, left to himself, he could achieve better results. Time and again Henry was tempted to resign, but the worst quizzing, ranging letters and kept doggedly at his work. As he viewed the copy room dispassionately he saw that better results, generally speaking, had been obtained, for the others, just as they had followed his lead in ignoring rules and authority, followed him now in his respectful attitude toward the department head.

Terwilliger surveyed the whole aspect with smug satisfaction and took the whole credit for himself. "Poor fish," thought Henry, "he thinks he's good, but the stuff this office turns out is terrible. No imagination. No originality. Just quantity." He found it hard, realizing the state of affairs, to keep up the enthusiasm so essential to creative work, and yet a new account never came into the office, but that he was thrilled by it. He was excited when the order came through for the National Corrugated Soap campaign. Corrugated Soap was a new product, to be announced for the first time through advertisements originating in the Morton agency, and to write the matter for it would be a big feather in the cap of any ambitious young copy writer. It meant pages in the leading magazines. Pages in the principal newspapers, billboards, handbills, and stunts. It was a big contract.

If Henry, thrilled when the contract came to the Morton agency, bringing business and greater opportunity, he thrilled still more when Terwilliger, bearing a sheet of letters and notes, came to his desk. "Here," said the boss, "is the material on Corrugated Soap. Sketch a campaign of six months and do the first month's stuff in detail. I've gone over it, and I want you to stress its purity, its delicacy, its fineness and its odor—I mean its bouquet."

"But you've—I mean you're—" "Are you running this office?" Terwilliger inquired sharply.

"No—I only—of, all right. Just as you say." Henry saw that to explain his own ideas would be useless; worse than useless, it might mean that some body else would get the assignment. He said no more, but spent the rest of the day studying the reports of chemists and analysts and the claims of the inventor. He went into his plans for manufacture and the details for marketing the product.

"By the way," said Terwilliger that night, "I want this job finished a week from to-day."

"A week!" Henry gasped, knowing that such a task would be all but impossible. "Oh, very well."—He was determined to keep his peace with Terwilliger at no matter what the cost.

The next day he drove to the Corrugated Soap laboratories and spent hours in conference with chemical engineers, with the assistants who had made the tests, with the executives, with the salesmen, with the inventor. Before night came, he knew more about Corrugated Soap than any other one man in the world except possibly the manufacturer. Although it was late, he did not stop work. Back at his desk he toiled until nearly morning on preliminary sketches, on instructions to the art department, on the thousand and one things incidental to laying out an advertisement campaign.

When he went home, he had everything ready for filling in the vast amount of detail, and the next day he was prepared to begin writing, and write he did, for ten hours at a stretch. Not until that was finished, did he leave his typewriter, except for a brief half hour for lunch.

Terwilliger looked at him approvingly. "I'll make an ad man of him yet," he told himself with a glow of satisfaction. "All he needed was to be shown what was best."

Henry looked at Terwilliger and ground his teeth. "Conceited boob," he thought, "Thinks because he's boss that he knows all about advertising."

By the middle of the third day Henry had finished the job, according to Terwilliger's orders. True, he had spent little in sleep, and had stopped only momentarily for food, but he had the work done.

He said nothing to Terwilliger. The boss had asked for it in a week; that was orders. The young copy writer locked the copy in his desk and kept on working, telling no one what he was about.

Finally came the day when the copy was "deadlined." Terwilliger asked for it and Henry gave it to him. "Good boy," praised the boss. "You're showing the proper spirit now." When he had gone over the copy, which embodied every idea he had expressed regarding it, he put his approval on it, thinking a wonderful job had been accomplished by getting it done in just that way.

The copy went to Mr. Morton's office, then, for final approval before being submitted to the client. Mr. Morton spent about fifteen minutes in looking it over, and burst into the copy room looking like a human impersonation of a thunder storm. "Who did this?" he demanded, waving the sheaf of papers in his clenched fist. "It's terrible. Worst job I ever saw. The office boy couldn't have made a greater mess of it."

"Matthews did it," Terwilliger said. "But what?" "But nothing. Where's Matthews?" "Here," said Henry. "What is it?" He came up with a smile. "Oh," he said. "Corrugated Soap?" "Yes, Corrugated Soap. You use soap now and then, I take it."

"Occasionally," admitted Henry. "And you've read soap ads? Yes, you write a series like this." Mr. Morton waved the crumpled papers until they crackled angrily. "Awful. Terrible. Why, this stuff might be written about any other soap on the market."

"I know it." The simple statement was charged with meaning, but Henry

SLATS' DIARY

BY ROSS PARQUEAR

Friday—went to a party of the younger set to-night and sum of the kids wanted to play Postoffice so we did and Eisy called me in for a sent stamp. At 1st on acct. they say that kisses has got jerms in them.

But now I believe they are wise things then jerms. Saturday—They was out o' o' b' e' e' l' a' k' i' d' e' r' h' e' r' e' t' o' d' a' y' a' n' d' a' m' a' n' was killed and his wife was sent fer and when they wanted to know how she wood identify him she sed he has ben having a offle mad coif.

Sunday—Annie Franz has disided to put off getting a divorce until after the Depreshun is over. she says she beleves people shul ought to denie their self of sum of the pleasures of Life at this time.

Munday—Ma has got a new party Dress and she says she dussent think pa will like it a tall but then she knoes she cant please evry Body so she is a going to keep it enny ways.

Tuesday—Joe Blunt was let out of jail today witch he was in beuz he was a bootlegger. He sed he got a bad wrake beuz he was heked up behind the Bars under Day life saving time and was left out under regalar Standard time.

Wednesday—In the filology class the teacher ast Jake what was the meaning of the word Pore and Jake sed it meant when you dont have no income to speak of and ect.

Thursday—Ade Emmy says that times have changed a Grade deersence she was a yung ladie. She sed now days when a girl holds a felis hand you dont no whether she is in love with him or whether she is skart of him.

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THE POWER OF BOOKS

The silent influence of books 'ere is a mighty power in the world; and there is a joy in reading them known only to those who read with desire and enthusiasm.

Silent, passive and noiseless though they be, they yet set in acton countless multitudes and change the order of nations.—Giles.

was that Terwilliger was looking the other way.

"Well, Mr. Morton was impatient. 'You don't like this stuff, I judge.' Mr. Morton's visage became purple. 'Do I sound like I liked it?' he shouted. 'Well, not exactly. Shall I do it over?' Henry acted as though he were enjoying himself to the utmost.

"Do it over! My eye! We have to submit it to-morrow or we lose the contract."

"Oh—Henry breathed sympathetically. He opened his desk and took out another roll of papers, outwardly identical to the ones Mr. Morton held in his still clenched fist. "See how you like this," he suggested.

A change came slowly over Mr. Morton as he glanced through the first page. "The non-skid soap—that's Corrugated," he read. "Great stuff, Henry, my boy. 'How often has the cake eluded your eager grasp? How often have you stepped on a slippery, slithery sliding bit of soap on the bathroom floor? Now think what a boon it would be if soap didn't slip! That's the idea, Henry! Great! The Non-Skid Soap—That's Corrugated.'"

He stopped reading Mr. Morton looked mystified, and the happy smile was displaced by an odd expression of bewilderment. "But why did you keep this back?" he asked in a puzzled tone. "Is it a joke? Why did you turn in this other and keep this locked in your desk?"

"Orders," replied Henry, shortly. "Slowly, very slowly, Llewellyn Morton seemed to understand. Then he turned to Terwilliger. "Was this your idea?" Terwilliger bowed his head.

"Well," said Mr. Morton acidly. "As an advertising man you ought to make a good janitor's assistant. You might ask—"

"I'll resign," Terwilliger interrupted. Mr. Morton regarded Henry quizzically as Terwilliger left them. "Anyhow, you took my advice," he said after a moment. Henry nodded, and Mr. Morton resumed. "I hope you've learned that while there may be as much electricity in a flash of lightning, a power house is a lot more efficient in this day and age."

"I guess you're right," agreed Henry. Mr. Morton smiled. "All right, I think you're ready now for Terwilliger's job. There was just one thing that kept you from getting it when Dan died, you know, and you've overcome that. You've—"

he mused over the picture in one of the Corrugated ads, a cartoon of an obese person slipping on a cake of ordinary soap, "—you've become Non-Skid now," he concluded.

THE LADY OR THE BEAR

By Hiram S. Martin

A stranger applied at the police station for lodging, and when asked his name, replied that it was Smith.

"Give me your real name," he was ordered. "Well," said the applicant, "put me down as William Shakespeare."

"That's better," the officer told him. "You can't bluff me with that Smith stuff."

My uncle, Hiram Stevens, after whom I was named, captured a small cub and brought it up as a pet. It would eat almost anything and about as much of it as a pig, so it soon attained considerable size and had very peculiar ways of showing its affection.

At that time my uncle was paying his respects to the young lady who afterward became his wife, and she objected very strongly to the bear. The next Sunday night, therefore, my uncle locked the bear securely in the woodshed, but he had not been very long with his ladylove when the front door was burst in, and the bear rushed in and landed in his lap. That brought matters to a crisis; the young lady delivered her ultimatum—he must either break off the engagement or kill the bear, and so the interesting pet was sacrificed on the altar of Cupid the next day.

NO FOOLIN'

By Hiram S. Martin

Bill had had a nasty fall from the scaffolding at work and his pals flocked around. They were curious to know what the sensation was like. With some imagination, he described all he had felt.

"But what I want to know," said Alf, "is whether it's true that all your sins flash before you. Did yours?" "Talk sense," said Bill; "I fell 30 feet; not 30 miles."

TIME TOO LIMITED

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