

# THE BELL ROPE.



"I Can See Her Now as She Stood Under the White Magnolias."

By Robert Welles Ritchie

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THEY sat in the hot dark on the veranda of The Club, at Chefoo, the three of them contriving indolently to find some excuse for staving off the time when night-caps would be quaffed and each would find himself alone. Nights in China are lonely for white men who try to live cleanly. One leans heavily upon his fellow's shoulder for assistance in forgetting self—and exile. One talks and listens to talk at night when labor is done with a poignant soul hunger. A new tale in Chefoo is as a new opera in Paris.

"Ghastly business over there," the Englishman said, and with the red coal of his cigar he indicated Nanking, five hundred miles behind the black battlements of the Shantung ranges. New China was there besieging the Old, entrenched behind its seven-foot walls of mediaeval time. Horrid stories were filtering through the screen of the republican forces of burnings and butcheries, insensate reprisals, heads piled like yams in the market square. White men in Chefoo shivered, wondered when the red tide of slaughter would burst the dam of the Shantung ranges and drench the northern coast. Under the starlight the long mountain wall over beyond the jumbled roofs of the native city showed shadowy, unsubstantial.

"So it is with these Chinamen," the Englishman continued, "bland and smiling and respectable as fat jade gods until you provoke them sufficiently and then—savages in the raw."

"But that's the way with all of us, heathen and Christian alike, isn't it?" It was the American who said this. Newest comer to Chefoo, latest member of the club, his was the proper deference of the neophyte; he spoke rarely and then with regard to the English made convention of suspicion against upstarts.

"Not at all—not at all." The third of the group, uncompromisingly Scotch, spoke with asperity. "Among the white peoples—the Anglo-Saxons I mean to say, the weight of ages of law and decency—and all that sort of thing—whatever the provocation, your man of Saxon blood cannot be the brute beast; never!"

"I will give you a story," the American said, simply, and he told this tale, new to Chefoo—

### Life in Tom's Corners.

"I am a Georgian," he began in the tone slightly altered from the conversational that men assume in narrative. "I think that probably my people are more nearly like your people of the northern shires and the southern lowlands than are any others of my country. Simple, unspiced by the fashions and the vices of the big cities, God fearing folk they are. Their Bible is, indeed, their book of laws; their pastor is spiritual and temporal judge. They are, for the most part, blood of the old Covenanters and they live by the iron rule, even as their fathers

did. One who came a stranger to my people in the Georgia foothills would set them down as intolerant bigots, maybe, until he stayed to live with them; then he would learn to know the sweetness of that heart which resolutely fortifies itself against sin because of the jeopardy to immortality. The life beyond is overshadowing; piety is, with these folk, a sort of spiritual mortgage, you understand, which is lifted only by death.

"Here are Anglo-Saxons, as you stipulate, bound by ages of the restraint of law and stern religious conviction. "Tom's Corners was the little town of my birth. It was, and still is, I suppose, a little Sleepy Hollow in a green valley of the Appalachians, as far away from the world as—as Chefoo, say, but not a blasted desert like this place. It was nearly a day's ride from Tom's Corners to Atlanta. We had no neighbor towns jangling out of their blue jeans to make us jealous. We were rural, isolated and contented. Not since the agony and the heartbreak of the great war had anything occurred to disturb Tom's Corners. The sun shone, the rain came down, fields were green, then bare, with the seasons,

and shadows and bloody awakenings—intimate they are, like old daguerotypes. "My father's house was on this long single street, next to it, Squire Massey's. Julia Massey—and, oh, she was a fair little girl with corn tassel hair and blue eyes—this little Julia Massey and I

came readily to her lips still and her eyes were always opened wide to the wonder and the joy of life. But in the mouth, the eyes, the whole fair aspect of her features was the illusive sweetness of a girl's first awakening to the mystery. "I was happy when I was with Julia again. My vanity, maybe, was tickled when my name was linked with hers in the mouth of the village. You understand; youth is so eager, so tingling with the instinct to mate, that it hugs the fancy of loving even as greatly as love itself. Now, as I look back, I do not believe that either Julia or I—no, I do not believe—

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used to stalk Indians in the hollyhock thickets and make cornstalk fiddles when she was in blue gingham pinafores and I wore one-gallus, cut-down trousers. We went to Sunday school together up at Calvary; picnicked on huckleberry parties; nursed families of small robins together in the crotch of the old cherry tree. I used to carry her books to and from Miss Robinson's academy. Yes, sweetheart! You men remember the puppet loves—the first little girl who smiled at

you. When you open some dusty old chest of your mind isn't that first affair the lavender perfume that comes to you?

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tion prompted him to preach on that text? He recited the story of Cain and his brother; he told of God's wrath upon Zimri, the murderer. His speech was simple and homely, but his message sure. He was preaching the Word.

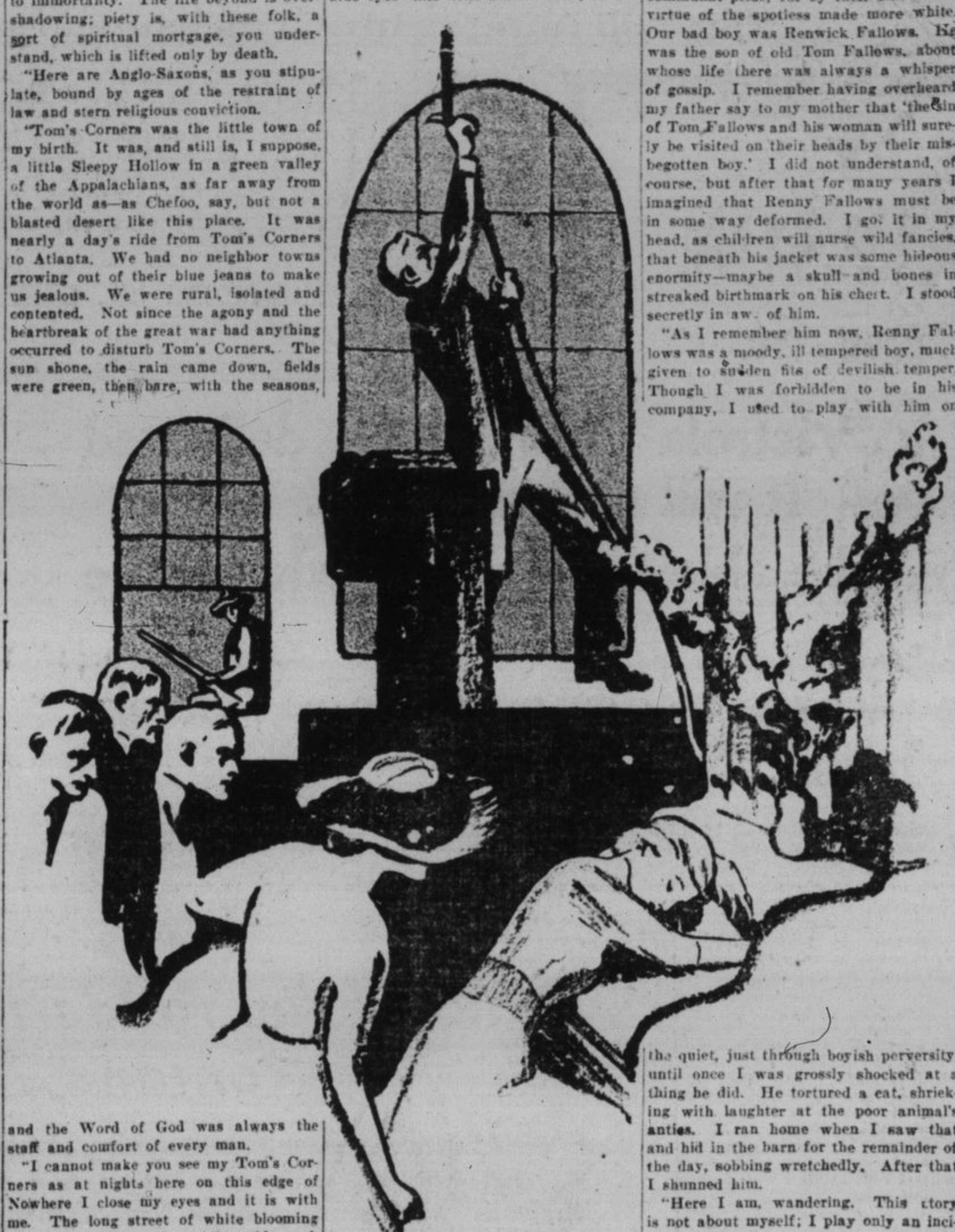
"The sermon ended and the congregation rose to sing the 'Doxology.' Julia took her seat at the organ and pedaled the bellows. "Praise God, from whom all blessing— "A shot! Then a terrible, discordant wail from the organ, ending in a sigh. I think that for half a minute the singing continued. Then silence—absolute silence. "Everybody in the church saw Renny Fallows, a twisted leer on his face, put one hand on the sill of the open window nearest the organ and vault out into the sunlight. Then a sound of horse's hoofs on the sod. "Julia had fallen forward, with both arms spreading over the yellowed keyboard of the organ. It was as if she had dropped to sleep at her instrument; but a thin cloud of smoke was shredding through the golden mist of her hair. Petals of apple blossoms dropped, one by one to her feet.

"Men! He Thundered. 'Men!' "I, standing dazed, awaying under the shock of comprehension, heard a single shout, saw a black coat-figure rush to the bell rope by the pulpit and leap to a grip high above the floor. The bell clanged once. A moan, shivering, sibilant, swept the pews. The gaunt, scrambling shape at the bell rope reached above his head and cut furiously at the rope with a knife. There was a stirring, a murmuring in the benches. "The strands parted just as the first woman slipped to sense the call of compassion slipped tender arms about the dead girl at the organ. He who had cut the rope gathered the coil in his hands and stepped to the middle of the pulpit. His eyes, as I see them this minute, were the eyes of Hosea.

"He held out the bell rope, looped between his hands, with the gesture of a patriarch of Israel dedicating a sacrifice to the Most High. "Men!" he thundered. "Men!" "They jumped from their pews with horse shoutings, then, those God fearing men of Calvary; they took that rope in their hands and hurried themselves out of the church door to the shed where the horses were tied. A roar of hoofbeats died and there was only the sound of women weeping in the church."

"The tale teller stopped abruptly. The room-toom-toom of a bronze gong over in the Taoist temple gave pulse to the silence and the dark. "I take it," the Scotchman began, "that they"— "Yes, they did," interrupted the American, "—to a blasted oak log the burying ground for ghosts." "Again silence. "Extraordinary!" the Englishman while

pered. "But of course the old chap who cut the bell rope was responsible for the whole thing." "As it should be," answered the tale teller. "He was the preacher."



"Julia Had Fallen Forward."



"I Will Give You a Story," the American Said.

## What Doctors Say About the Human Stature

If there is any question which has been asked for ages, and which still remains a subject of controversy, it is that of the influence exerted by geographical location upon the development of human stature. Biologists have always claimed that an important role in the growth of the human skeleton is played by the nature of the soil, the altitude and the geological formation.

Not to go back too far, it was in 1868 that Durand de Gros, while prosecuting anthropological investigations in the Department of Aveyron, observed that in calcareous regions man's osseous system is remarkably well developed and men are tall, while in a granitic district, on the contrary, men have poor teeth, a slender form and are of low stature, particularly in some of the townships which he examined. Similar phenomena occur among animals.

Durand de Gros attributed these results to the difference between the regions. This opinion, while accepted by many people, was contested by others, and since that time, although a great number of works have been published upon the subject, the question has remained an open one.

It is generally admitted, that great development of human nature is a mark of organic progress. Such bodily growth is attributed to improved economic conditions—that is to say, to a diminution of poverty. But the assertion is far from being proved. One might even better interpret it in an entirely different fashion, and it is such a conclusion, in variance with accepted opinion, that Dr. Eugène Pittard has reached in a com-

munication he has made to the Paris Académie des Sciences.

In order to make the question clear, he chose a region, which seemed to offer the best conditions for a study of this kind. He selected the Swiss Canton of Valais, where the three principal factors—geological strata, altitude and orientation of the mountain slopes—present distinctive features, and whose inhabitants, on the other hand, have been carefully studied.

Without being greatly versed in geology it suffices to take a quick glimpse of the principal parts of the Canton of Valais to recognize that its geology is complex, especially in the secluded region on the left bank of the Rhone. The land on the right bank being much more thickly populated, it was on this side that Dr. Pittard made his observations. In a general way it may be said that the soil, apart from certain districts, is from Mount Furca to the river Louza composed of mica-schist and gneiss, while all that portion which extends to the bend of the Rhone belongs to the Jurassic system.

He found that among the inhabitants of granitic districts the average height was 1 metre 633 millimetres while among dwellers upon chalky sites the average height was only 1 metre 621 millimetres.

Does the factor of altitude exert any influence in this respect? While the majority of authorities decline to admit this, it must not be forgotten that Signor Livi, in Italy, and M. Collignon, in France, found that the stature of human beings, although showing diminution at levels just above the 700-metre line, increases again at greater altitudes. As the Canton of Valais includes localities which present a gradual rise between the 380-metre and the 1,936-metre levels, Dr. Pittard divided

the country into five zones of 300 metres each. He found that there is no diminution of stature among people living under the 1,000-metre line, and that in the zone between 1,000 metres and 1,300 metres the stature of the inhabitants diminishes on an average by one centimetre. He further observed that on rising to the 1,600-metre level an increase of stature, amounting to 3 centimetres, is perceptible.

From this examination Dr. Pittard concluded that, contrary to general opinion, high altitudes are far from exerting an unfavorable influence upon human height.

On descending the Valley of the Rhone from Brig to the outskirts of the Vaud Canton one notes that the valley is dominated by two huge mountain slopes—on the right the southern and very sunny slopes of the Bernese Alps; on the left the northern slope of the Valaisian Alps, not so well situated from the point of view of sunshine. It is, however, just on the side less exposed to sunlight that the stature of the inhabitants is greater—namely, 1 metre 638 millimetres, as compared with 1 metre 628 millimetres on the sunny side. The fact is a curious one, but it is partly repeated in each of the different zones except the fourth, that between the 1,000-metre and 1,300-metre levels, where, as stated above, the stature decreases.

In summing up the observations given above it may be stated that when human stature is not unfavorably influenced by geological conditions, such as granitic sites, high altitudes in no way hinder its development.

Nor does the influence of mountain slopes seem to possess the effect which might be supposed. It would seem that the less sunny side of a mountain is the more favorable to life. Hence the conclusion must be drawn that the three factors referred to above do not exert the effects which might be assumed or which are generally considered probable. In fact, it is not impossible, that greater development of human stature corresponds to a lower degree of average organic development.

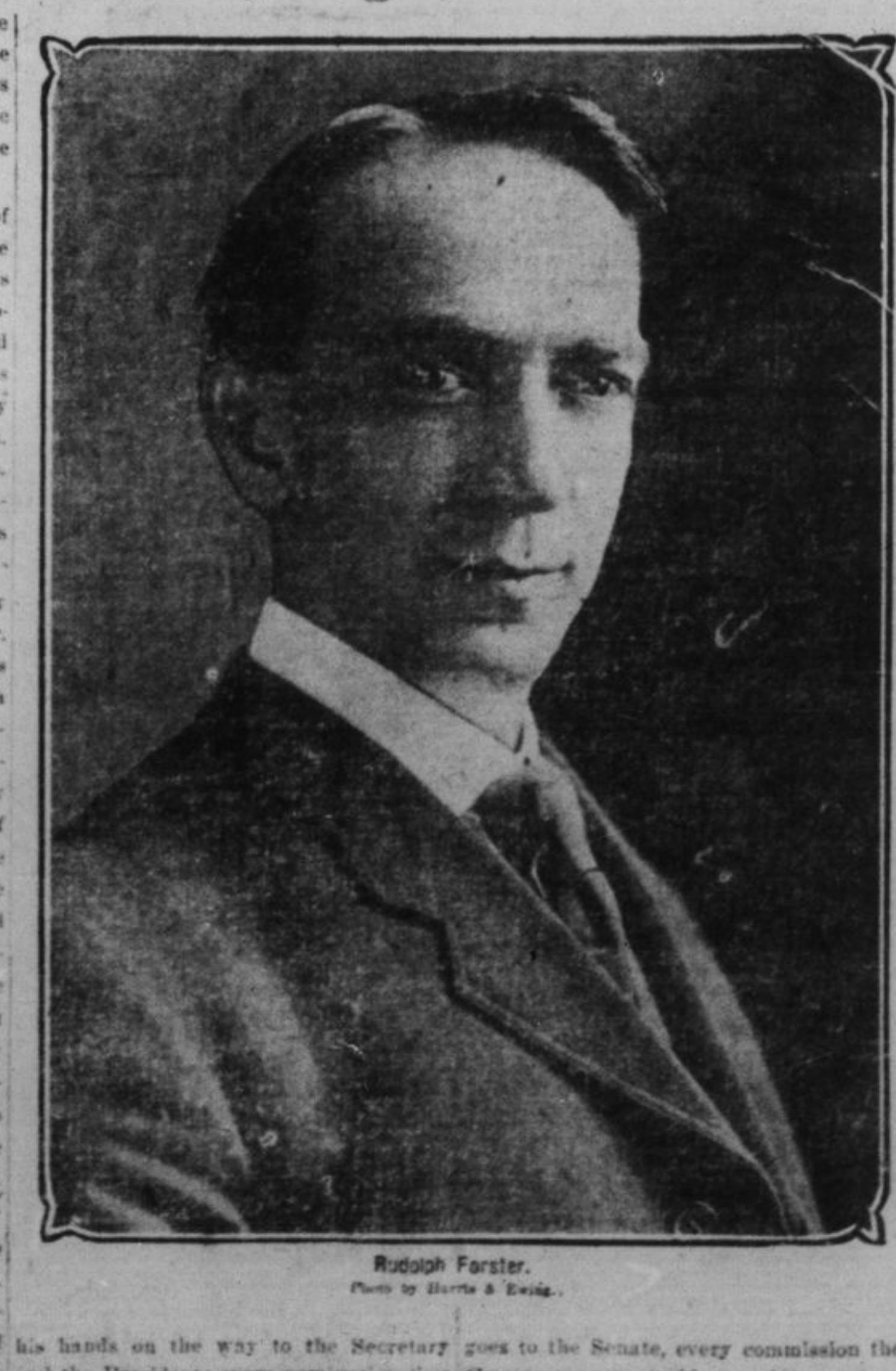
## Mr. Rudolph Forster, Right Hand Man to the President

ON the President's desk in the White House are six push buttons. The one most worn from pressure of his heavy forefinger sounds a buzzer at the desk of Rudolph Forster, his executive clerk.

As "Mr. Forster" is the solution of many a White House problem, when the President in the course of his morning's work desk—no know why a certain appointment was made, who recommended it, what will happen if an incumbent is not reappointed, his hand instinctively moves toward the well worn push button. Mr. Forster is at his side in five seconds. Usually he supplies the information without leaving the room; if not, he knows where to get it.

The public knows about the secretary to the President. Under Mr. Lamont, Mr. Cortelyou, Mr. Loeb and Mr. Hilles this office has come to be as important as a Cabinet portfolio. But outside of Washington little is known of the other members of the White House staff, headed by Mr. Forster. Yet upon the shoulders of Mr. Forster devolves a great part of the business of the Presidential office. He is the buffer between the President and hundreds of thousands of American citizens who have correspondence with the White House. Obviously the President cannot give detailed attention to the many questions on which he must act. He requires that the salient facts of a given question be presented to him so that he may act wisely. The influence of Mr. Forster in public affairs is great, but exercised always with unswerving loyalty to the Chief Executive, wherever he may be.

His is the responsibility for the preparation of the White House mail. All the letters that are received pass through



Rudolph Forster. Photo by Harris & Ewing.

bill which Congress passes and sends to the President for approval or disapproval, he carefully notes. Service at the White House since the first day of the McKinley administration in 1867 has left in his capacious mind a vast knowledge of the policies and politics of three Presidents. The widely divergent characteristics and temperaments of these men would seem to have given Mr. Forster a glimpse of every side of administrative duty.

This explains why he is frequently called into the Cabinet meetings to answer questions about various situations perplexing the administration, the President often calling him to conferences with public men. His telephone is constantly ringing as Senators and Representatives call on him for all sorts of information. Sometimes Senators and Representatives, finding the President busy, are glad to take the matter up with Mr. Forster, who in turn brings it before the President.

The White House is a busy place, but nobody is more constantly "on the job" than Mr. Forster. He works quietly, but swiftly. His remarkable memory enables him to answer an inquiry or dispose of a problem without having to stop to search for facts and figures. Never ruffled, never rattled, his efficiency is oil to the cogs and bearings of the executive machine. His appointment as a clerk at the White House in 1867 was due to Mr. Cortelyou's desire to reform the business methods of the White House offices. His selection was non-political, as was his promotion to the post of assistant secretary to the President in 1867 and his further advancement to the newly created office of executive clerk under Mr. Taft. From three Presidents he has absorbed a large view of national affairs.