

## A Reporter's Boy.

BY N. Y. JOURNAL REPORTER.



SOME of the best newspaper reporters can not write a sentence or a paragraph. They are not expected to do so.

It is their business to collect facts, which they relate to others who put them in form as a "news story".

Something is lost of course, by this method of second-hand telling, for a writer cannot reproduce a scene from imagination so well as he could if he had seen it, but the assistants, or "reporters' boys", as they are called, are not sent out alone on any incident that promises much importance. Their work is the small news of the day, which is intended only for short paragraphs. That these results are often interesting enough for long accounts is due, in part to accident; in part, however, to the industry and the understanding developed by long training of native intelligence.

Isaac Hofstein, or Itzig, as he was called for short, was such an assistant. He was a child of the East side tenements, and his work at police headquarters was chiefly among his own people, the Jews of the New York Ghetto. Shrewd and accurate, he was always to be trusted to fetch all the facts and state them correctly. None of the other boys could "beat" him, and none were so accurate as Itzig, who never failed to get names and addresses, and never got them wrong.

This devotior to accuracy and completeness sometimes made his accounts a bore, for he brought in details that were of no use, but it was an invaluable trait, of course, and very rare, except among first-rate men of all sorts. His work was libel-proof, and no other paper could go over his investigation and add new particulars to his story. When he came back he was done, and he would sit down with his notes and tell all about the fire, accident or crime with swift ease and unhesitating assurance.

One day, however, there was an exception. He had been to a fire. To cover so common-pace an incident was child's play to him, and something he liked, because he rejoiced in description and the heroic. It was a never-failing pleasure to him to discover and celebrate a bold rescue by a policeman, a fireman or a neighbor.

"Say, it was great!" he used to say, when he came to tell about such a deed. "William J McGlory, number four truck, twenty-eight years old, No. 17 Cannon street, be—" then laying down his notes Itzig would reproduce, with gestures, grimaces and language, often slangy, a vivid picture. The pic-

turesque details were always as complete as the names, initials, addresses, etc.

But on this day, while several reporters were waiting for his fire story, he was shuffling and hesitating over a fire. His sense of the great was evidently struggling with some other feeling or observation, and it was impossible to make out what was the matter.

"It wasn't much, only a two-alarm fire, and it didn't do no damage to speak of," he said. "Twas n't in a good neighborhood either—just a tenement house, No. 16 Essex street, five story, red brick, full of families with kids, kids by the hundreds, eighty-seven. But you see there was a panic and a—somebody, you know how it is when the geese—the East Side Jews—get a scare turn into 'em! Just describe top-floor families out by way of the roof to the next house, third and fourth cooped up in halls, some of them rushing to the fire escapes, others too askeered to move, just shriekin' and rendin' their garments, as the bible says.

"Across the street," he hurried on, "the other 'Motzos"—another slang word for East Side Jews—"out on escapes with their hands and faces raised to the sky, crying, 'Ei wei, ei wei'. You know how it is. You can describe it and I'll give you the names. But the firemen was late, on account of no one knowing how to ring in the alarm. Samuel Bernstein, forty-two years old, No. 16 Essex, next door to the fire, tried it first, then—"

"Oh, come to the point," I interrupted. "What about it?"

"Well, there was a fire rescue. It wasn't very hard either. You see—"

"Give us the name of the rescuer while you're about it."

"Oh, it was jost a fellow passing by ran in and saved some people, mostly children."

"Didn't you get his name?"

"I got the names of them he saved, which was the most important."

"Well, go on."

"The fire," resumed Itzig, "started in the basement, shoemaker shop, Abram Koswingky, thirty-six years old, married, three kids, oldest four—dou you want names and ages?"

"If they did or suffered anything."

"No, they got out easy by a rear window, through the area to No. 22 back. But the flames were just climbing up the stairways. Escape by the front door was cut off when I got there. I—I happened to be over that way on a suicide and heard the wails, you know. Somebody had to help, or we'd have had a big story, with a dozen roasted to death. Put in, 'Scared, white faces looked out of the windows each second, then disappearing back in the smoke.' It was tough, I tell you. There was a way to get to the third story by the next house. You

could climb from one fire escape to the other and get in the window. Inside the flames was cutting the floor in half. A man and woman and two children in the front room were passed out by the way the man came. Their names—"

"Keep them till afterwards."

"The thing to do was to get to the rear rooms where there was

more of 'em. The man—the fellow that had come up to save the whole crew—had to get down and crawl along on the floor under the flames, and they licked his pack hair off and set his coat on fire. But he got there. And he found two men, three women and five kids huddled in one corner, one woman and two babies unconscious from smoke. The others were getting air by breathing low down on the floor.

"The men had to be made to go down to the rear fire-escape with the women and jump. This took time, and the flames burst out of the rear, cutting off that way out. So there was the five kids. I—I think the man said he grabbed two and was going to throw them out to the old people, but they had run away. So he had to go front.

He started to run for it, but was set fire to and had to lie down and roll the flames out and crawl again. The firemen had come, and they had caught the kids all right. The fireman who caught 'em was Jerry Sullivan, truck eleven the first there, and—"

Give us that later."

"The fellow inside sneaked back the same way and got two more. The firemen had a ladder up to take the children. One was left. As he went back for that he seen the game was up. He had to shake his coat, which was burned, so he whacked it against a wall till it was out, and wrapped the last kid in it.

"Then came the fun. The flames covered the back of the house and was coming out of the window. Housse full of smoke, floors hot, hall-way ablaze, solid you know, hemmed in by fire, babe in arms—that's the feature of the story! The stairways fell, the hall floor curved, the whole building shook. The fellow thought of a lot of things, but they didn't have anything to do with getting out of that hole. There was an awful crash' and he just sank in a heap. Itzig wiped his face. The perspiration that had started to it damped his handkerchief.

"The next thing that man knew, he was in a drug store, No. 28 Essex, and the fire was out."

"But how did he escape?" asked one of the reporters. "Didn't he go down with the walls when the crash came?"

"No, that part of the house didn't fall, and you see, the fireman knew him. When he didn't show up they crossed the air well from next door, got through a window and battered

down the door to the room where he was.

"They found him asleep and—and a feature of the story is they couldn't get the kid out of his arms to save the two separately. They had to carry them out together."

The reporters laughed at Itzig. "What's the hero's name?" asked one.

"Oh, he wasn't a hero. He wouldn't have done it if he hadn't started to, being there first. Besides he didn't save the last child you see, but had to be rescued himself."

"Did you interview him?" queried Chapman, who was writing the story.

"No, not much; he wasn't able to talk."

"Not even to tell his name?"

"He didn't want to," said Itzig.

"But the fireman; you said, knew him?"

"Yes—not very well—only his first name."

"What was that?"

"I—well, I didn't think to ask."

"Didn't think to ask! Didn't think to get the most important point in the whole story! Are you losing your mind?" cried Chapman in amazement.

But one of the other men was of quicker perception. "Was his name Isaac?" he asked.

Itzig flushed:

"Itzig," said a reporter who had gone behind him, "your hair is all burned off and your neck is blistered."

"Yes, and you've got on your Sunday coat," cried another.

"Oh, get out!" said Itzig. "It's so disgusting when you reporters go sticking your noses into other people's affairs!"

### "Try, Try Again."

A little girl was kneeling at her mother's side the other evening, saying her evening prayer just before retiring. The child had been somewhat naughty during the day, and the mother was urging her to keep trying to be good and telling her she should ask God to help her try and try again. Finally the little girl finished her prayer as follows:

"God bless us all and make me a good little girl, and if at first you don't succeed, try, try again."

### God's Punishment.

Mamma (excitedly and sympathetically).—"Never mind, Harold! God will punish Tommy for striking you."

Harold's Brother.—"He has punished Tommy already, I think, mamma."

Mamma.—"How do you know?"

Harold's Brother.—"'Cause I just now busted his drum for him."

Woodworkers, don't forget to send an order for a set of the Forstner Auger Bits. Price, \$2.60 by mail. See ad.