

THE COPY-MAKER

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The Copy-Maker by William Farquhar Payson

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WILLIAM FARQUHAR PAYSON

**THE
COPY-MAKER**

“What is copy?” I queried.

“Inky paper about to become inky type,” answered the cynic.

“And journalism after all is only copy-making.”



ND

I had never sung a song in my life.

—Page 67, *Frontispiece*.

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BY
WILLIAM FARQUHAR PAYSON

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TO
MY FATHER AND MY MOTHER

PREFACE

It would be a task of no great difficulty to write here an essay on the true function of the preface. And this might have some savor of originality, for not in all the rhetoric books of my boyhood, nor the lectures of our worthy masters at college, was there a single exhaustive exposition on this subject. Yet, I gravely doubt that even after the ablest possible conclusion to the treatise just threatened (though not for a moment seriously considered) there would still remain the unanswerable question, Why in the world should a book of this sort have a preface anyway? Why try to find some *raison d'être* for "The Copy-maker," in a few introductory paragraphs (of necessity more than half apologetic), when each page newly turned shows indisputably that there is none?

And now that I am on this point, I am reminded concerning my friend, Professor Klatzenberg, of whom mention will be found later, and of his experience with prefaces. Being a man of astonishing versatility, this eccentric genius once enjoyed the good fortune of having two literary works simultaneously published—the one supposedly a most learned book, in two volumes,

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entitled, "The History of Pantheism"; the other very cheap, and very yellow, called "The Memoirs of a Ballet Girl."

Now, it so happened that by some curious mischance the Pantheism and Coryphée prefaces becoming transposed, each appeared where the other should have been. But still more surprising was the result of this error, for (although Professor Klatzenberg denies the charge to this day) I have never yet found a reader of both books and both prefaces who has noticed the transposition.

It may be that in each work treating of the ancients there is after all a marked resemblance between them; or, more probably the readers' non-cognizance is due to the professor's wondrously figurative language. Be this as it may, the fact remains—the "true function" missed its mark.

Therefore, like Professor Klatzenberg, who avoids prefaces as he would a plague, I eschew the "true function" to write only this rambling salutation. And with a hearty grasp of each good copy-maker's hand, a godspeed to all—for theirs is a noble profession when nobly used—farewell to them.

But I shall not forget.

W. F. P.

Feb. 8, 1897.