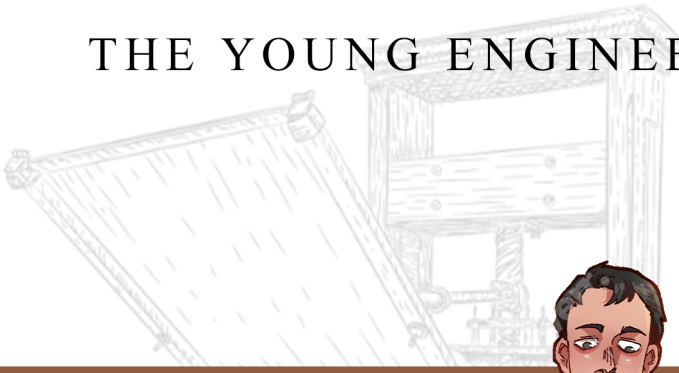


THE YOUNG ENGINEERS



PAUL AND THE PRINTING PRESS



DISCOVER HOW PAUL UNLOCKS
THE MAGIC OF BOOKS AND THE
PRINTING PRESS

SARA WARE BASSETT

Also by Sara Ware Bassett

THE YOUNG ENGINEERS

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THE STORY OF

The Story of Glass
The Story of Leather
The Story of Silk
The Story of Sugar
The Story of Porcelain
The Story of Lumber
The Story of Wool

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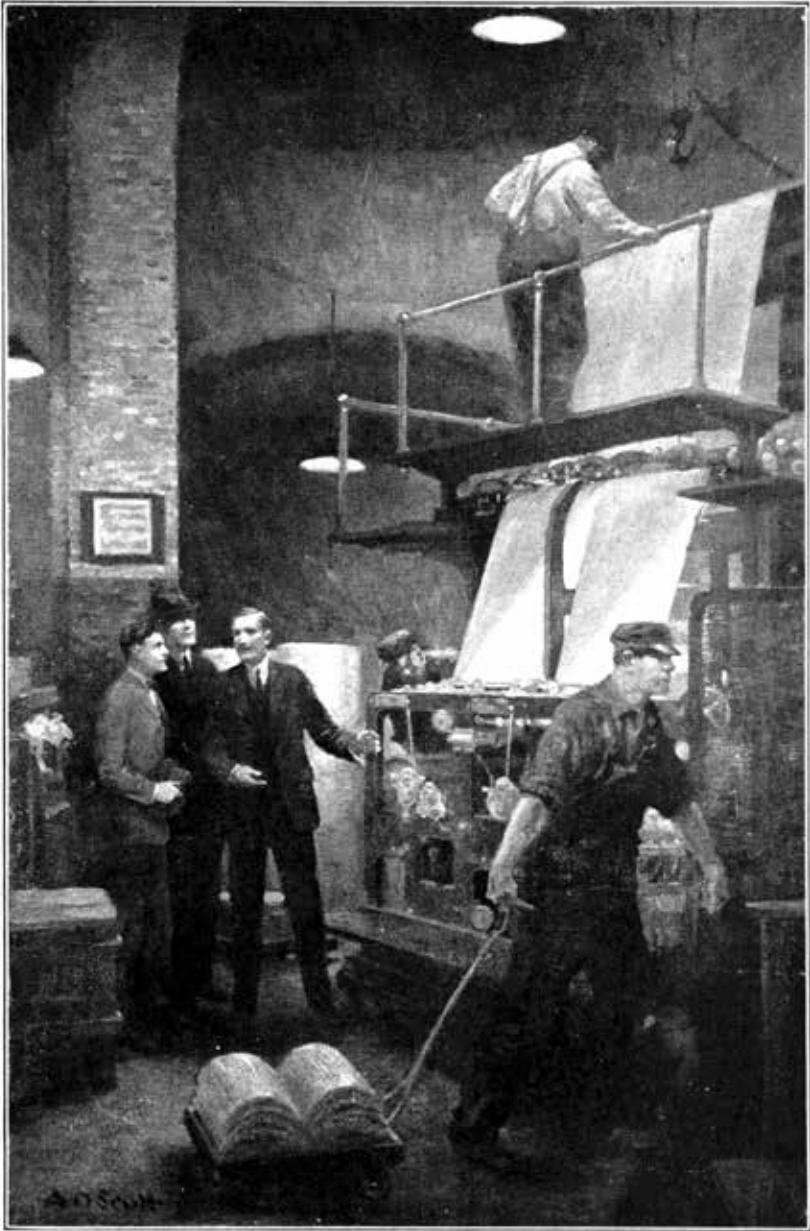
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PAUL AND THE PRINTING PRESS

by

SARA WARE BASSETT





PAUL GAZED UP AT THE PRESSES THAT TOWERED HIGH ABOVE HIS HEAD.

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“... Beneath the rule of men entirely great
The pen is mightier than the sword. Behold
The arch-enchanter’s wand!—Itself a nothing—
But taking sorcery from the master-hand
To paralyze the Caesars—and to strike
The loud earth breathless!—Take away the sword—
States can be saved without it!”

—BULWER-LYTTON, *Richelieu*

CHAPTER I

PAUL CAMERON HAS AN INSPIRATION

It was the vision of a monthly paper for the Birmingham High School that first turned Paul Cameron's attention toward a printing press.

"Dad, how much does a printing press cost?" he inquired one evening as he sat down to dinner.

"A *what?*"

"A printing press."

Mr. Cameron glanced up quizzically from the roast he was carving.

"Aren't you a trifle ambitious?"

Paul laughed.

"Perhaps I am," he admitted. "But I have often heard you say, 'Nothing venture, nothing have.'"

It was his father's turn to laugh.

"Yet why does your fancy take its flight toward a printing press?"

Eagerly Paul bent forward.

"Why you see, sir," he explained, "ever since I was chosen President of '20 I've wanted my class to be the finest the Birmingham High ever graduated. I want it to leave a record behind it, and do things no other class ever has. There has never been a school paper. They have them in other places. Why shouldn't we?"

Mr. Cameron was all attention now.

“We’ve plenty of talent,” went on Paul with enthusiasm. “Even Mr. Calder, who is at the head of the English department, asserts that. Dick Rogers has had a poem printed in the town paper—”

He saw a twinkle light his father’s eye.

“Maybe you’d just call it a verse,” the boy smiled apologetically, “but up at school we call it a poem. It was about the war. And Eva Hardy has had an essay published somewhere and got two dollars for it.”

“You don’t say so!”

“Besides, there is lots of stuff about the football and hockey teams that we want to print—accounts of the games, and notices of the matches to be played. And the girls want to boom their Red Cross work and the fair they are going to have. There’d be plenty of material.”

“Enough to fill a good-sized daily, I should think,” remarked Mr. Cameron, chuckling.

Paul took the joke good-naturedly.

“How do people run a paper anyhow?” he questioned presently. “Do printing presses cost much? And where do you get them? And do you suppose we fellows could run one if we had it?”

His father leaned back in his chair.

“A fine printing press is a very intricate and expensive piece of property, my son,” he replied. “It would take several hundred dollars to equip a plant that would do creditable work. The preparation of copy and the task of getting it out would also take a great deal of time. Considering the work you already have to do, I should not advise you to annex a printer’s job to your other duties.”

He saw the lad’s face cloud.

“The better way to go at such an undertaking,” he hastened to add, “would be to have your publication printed by some established press.”

“Could we do it that way?”

“Certainly,” Mr. Cameron nodded. “There are always firms that are glad to get extra work if paid satisfactorily for it.”

There was a pause.

“The pay is just the rub,” Paul confessed frankly. “You see we haven’t any class treasury to draw on; at least we have one, but there’s nothing in it.”

The two exchanged a smile.

“But you would plan to take subscriptions,” said the elder man. “Surely you are not going to give your literary efforts away free of charge.”

“N—o,” came slowly from Paul. Then he continued more positively. “Oh, of course we should try to make what we wrote worth selling. We’d make people pay for it. But we couldn’t charge much. Most of us have been paying for our Liberty Bonds and haven’t a great deal to spare. I know I haven’t.”

“About what price do you think you could get for a school paper?”

“I don’t know. I haven’t thought much about it. Perhaps a dollar, or a dollar and a quarter a year. Not more than that.”

“And how many members would be likely to take it?”

Paul meditated.

“There are about fifty seniors,” he said. “But of course the other three classes would subscribe—at least some of them would. We shouldn’t confine the thing simply to the doings of the seniors. We should put in not only general school news but items about the lower classes as well so that the paper would interest everybody. It ought to bring us in quite a little money.

Shouldn't you think we could buy a press and run it for two hundred dollars?"

"Have you considered the price of paper and of ink, son?"

"No; but they can't cost much," was the sanguine response.

"Alas, they not only *can* but *do*," replied his father.

"Then you think we couldn't have a school paper."

"I did not say that."

"Well, you mean we couldn't make it pay."

"I shouldn't go so far as that, either," returned Mr. Cameron kindly. "What I mean is that you could not buy a printing press and operate it with the money you would probably have at hand. Nevertheless there are, as I said before, other ways of getting at the matter. If I were in your place I should look them up before I abandoned the project."

"How?"

"Make sure of your proposition. Find out how many of your schoolmates would pledge themselves to subscribe to a paper if you had one. Then, when you have made a rough estimate of about how much money you would be likely to secure, go and see some printer and put the question up to him. Tell him what you would want and find out exactly what he could do for you. You've always been in a hurry to leave school and take up business. Here is a business proposition right now. Try your hand at it and see how you like it."

Mr. Cameron pushed back his chair, rose, and sauntered into his den; and Paul, familiar with his father's habits, did not follow him, for he knew that from now until late into the evening the elder man would be occupied with law books and papers.

Therefore the lad strolled out into the yard. His studying was done; and even if it had not been he was in no frame of mind to attack it to-night. A myriad of schemes and problems occupied

his thought. Slowly he turned into the walk and presently he found himself in the street.

It was a still October twilight,—so still that one could hear the rustle of the dry leaves as they dropped from the trees and blew idly along the sidewalk. There was a tang of smoke in the air, and a blue haze from smoldering bonfires veiled the fall atmosphere.

Aimlessly Paul lingered. No one was in sight. Then the metallic shrillness of a bicycle bell broke the silence. He wheeled about. Noiselessly threading his way down the village highway came a thick-set, rosy-faced boy of sixteen or seventeen years of age.

“Hi, Carter!” called Paul. “Hold on! I want to see you.”

Carter grinned; stopping his wheel by rising erect on its pedals, he vaulted to the ground.

“What’s up, Paul?”

Without introduction Paul plunged into his subject. He spoke earnestly and with boyish eloquence.

“Say, Cart, what do you think of ‘20 starting a school paper?”

“A paper! Great hat, Kipper—what for?”

Kipper was Paul’s nickname.

“Why, to read, man.”

“Oh, don’t talk of reading,” was Melville Carter’s spirited retort. “Aren’t we all red-eyed already with Latin and Roman history? Why add a paper to our troubles?”

Paul did not reply.

“What do you want with a paper, Kipper?” persisted Melville.

“Why to print our life histories and obituaries in,” he answered. “To extol our friends and damn our enemies.”

Carter laughed.

“Come off,” returned he, affectionately knocking Paul’s hat down over his eyes.

“Stop your kidding, Cart. I’m serious.”

“You really want a newspaper, Kip? *Another newspaper!* Scott! I don’t. I never read the ones there are already.”

“I don’t mean a newspaper, Cart,” explained Paul with a touch of irritation. “I mean a zippy little monthly with all the school news in it—hockey, football, class meetings, and all the things we’d like to read. Not highbrow stuff.”

“Oh! I get you, Kipper,” replied young Carter, a gleam of interest dawning in his face.

“That wouldn’t be half bad. A school paper!” he paused thoughtfully. “But the money, Kip—the money to back such a scheme? What about that?”

“We could take subscriptions.”

“At how much a subscrip, oh promoter?”

“I don’t know,” Paul responded vaguely. “One—twenty-five per—”

“Per—*haps*,” cut in Melville, “and perhaps not. Who do you think, Kipper, is going to pay a perfectly good dollar and a quarter for the privilege of seeing his name in print and reading all the things he knew before?”

In spite of himself Paul chuckled.

“Maybe they wouldn’t know them before.”

“Football and hockey! Nix! Don’t they all go to the games?”

“Not always. Besides, we’d put other things in—grinds on the Freshies—all sorts of stuff.”

“I say! That wouldn’t be so worse, would it?” declared Melville with appreciation.

He looked down and began to dig a hole in the earth with the toe of his much worn sneaker.

“Your idea is all right, Kip—corking,” he asserted at length. “But the ducats—where would those come from? It would cost a pile to print a paper.”

“I suppose we couldn’t buy a press second-hand and do our own printing,” ruminated Paul.

“Buy a press!” shouted Carter, breaking into a guffaw. “You are a green one, Kip, even if you are class president. Why, man alive, a printing press that’s any good costs a small fortune—more money than the whole High School has, all put together. I know what presses cost because my father is in the publishing business.”

Paul sighed.

“That’s about what my dad said,” he affirmed reluctantly. “He suggested we get someone to print the paper for us.”

“Oh, we could do that all right if we had the spondulics.”

“The subscriptions would net us quite a sum.”

“How much could we bank on?”

“I’ve no idea,” Paul murmured.

“I’ll bet I could nail most of the Juniors. I’d simply stand them up against the wall and tell them it was their money or their life—death or a subscription to the—what are you going to call this rich and rare newspaper?” he inquired, suddenly breaking off in the midst of his harangue and turning to his companion.

“I hadn’t got as far as that,” answered Paul blankly.

“But you’ve got to get a name, you know,” Melville declared. “You can’t expect to boom something so hazy that it isn’t called anything at all. *Don’t you want to take our class paper* won’t draw the crowd. You’ve got to start with a slogan—something spectacular and thrilling. *Buy the Nutcracker! Subscribe to the Fire-eater! Have a copy of the Jabberwock!* For goodness sake, christen it something! Start out with a punch or you’ll never get anywhere. Why not call it *The March Hare*? That’s wild and crazy enough to suit anybody. Then you can publish any old trash in it that you chose. They’ve brought it on themselves if they stand for such a title.”



"THE MARCH HARE!" HE REPEATED WITH ENTHUSIASM. "YOU'VE HIT IT, CART!"

Paul clapped a hand on his friend's shoulder.

"*The March Hare!*" he repeated with enthusiasm. "You've hit it, Cart! *The March Hare* it is! We'll begin getting subscriptions to-morrow."

"You wouldn't want to issue a sample copy first, would you?" Melville suggested.

"No, siree! That'll be the fun. They must go it blind. We'll make the whole thing as spooky and mysterious as we can. Nobody shall know what he is going to eat. It will be twice the sport."

"But suppose after you've collected all your money you find you can't get any one to print the paper?"

"We'll have to take a chance," replied Paul instantly. "If worst comes to worst we can give the money back again. But I shan't figure on doing that. We'll win out, Cart; don't you worry."

"Bully for you, old man! You sure are a sport. Nothing like selling something that doesn't even exist! I see you years hence on Wall Street, peddling nebulous gold mines and watered stocks."

"Oh, shut up, can't you!" laughed Paul good-naturedly. "Quit your joshing! I'm serious. You've got to help me, too. You must start in landing subscriptions to-morrow."

"I! I go around rooting for your *March Hare* when I know that not a line of it has seen printer's ink!" sniffed Melville.

"Sure!"

Melville grinned.

"Well, you have a nerve!" he affirmed.

"You're going to do it just the same, Cart."

There was a compelling, magnetic quality in Paul Cameron which had won for him his leadership at school; it came to his aid in the present instance.

Melville looked for a second into his chum's face and then smiled.

“All right,” he answered. “I’m with you, Kipper. We’ll see what we can do toward fooling the public.”

“I don’t mean to fool them,” Paul retorted. “I’m in dead earnest. I mean to get out a good school paper that shall be worth the money people pay for it. There shall be no fake about it. To-morrow I shall call a class meeting and we’ll elect an editorial staff—editor-in-chief, publicity committee, board of managers, and all the proper dignitaries. Then we’ll get right down to work.”

Melville regarded his friend with undisguised admiration.

“You’ll make it a go, Kip!” he cried. “I feel it in my bones now. Hurrah for the *March Hare*! I can hear the shekels chinking into our pockets this minute. Put me down for the first subscription. I’ll break the ginger-ale bottle over the treasury.”

“Shall it be a dollar, a dollar and a quarter, or an out and out one-fifty?”

“Oh, put it at one-fifty. We’re all millionaires and we may as well go in big while we’re at it. What is one-fifty for such a ream of wisdom as we’re going to get for our money?”

Melville vaulted into his bicycle saddle.

“Well, I’m off, Kipper,” he called over his shoulder. “Got to do some errands for the Mater. So long!”

“I can depend on you, Cart?”

“Sure you can. I’ll shout for your *March Hare* with all my lungs. I’m quite keen about it already.”

Paul watched him speed through the gathering shadows and disappear round the turn in the road. Then, straightening his shoulders with resolution, he went into the house to seek his pillow and dream dreams of the *March Hare*.

CHAPTER II

**THE CLASS MEETING AND
WHAT FOLLOWED IT**

The following day at recess, after a noisy clamor of conversation and laughter, the class meeting came to order.

“I have called you together to-day,” began Paul Cameron from the platform, “to lay before 1920 a new undertaking. I am sure there is not one of you who does not want to make our class a unique and illustrious one. The Birmingham High School has never had a paper. 1920 has the great opportunity to give it one and to go down to history as its founder.”

He paused.

“The big dailies do not appreciate us. They never write us up. Why should we not write ourselves up—chronicle our doings, that such noteworthy deeds may never be forgotten?”

A ripple of laughter greeted the interrogation.

Paul saw his advantage and went on. He painted in glowing terms his dream of the *March Hare*. Every instant the interest and enthusiasm of his audience increased. Once a storm of clapping broke in upon his words but he raised his hand and the noise ceased. Quietly he closed his modest speech with the suggestion that a managing board be appointed to put the project into operation, if such were the pleasure of the meeting. Before he could seat himself a dozen boys were on their feet.

“Mr. President!” shouted Melville Carter.

“Mr. President!” came at the same moment from Donald Hall.

“Mr. President! Mr. President!” The cry rang from every corner of the room.

Paul listened to each speaker in turn.

1920 was not only unanimous but insistent upon the new venture.

In less time than it takes to tell it Paul himself was elected editor-in-chief, an editorial staff had been appointed, Melville Carter was voted in as business manager, and Billie Ransome as publicity agent. Nor did 1920's fervor end there. Before the meeting adjourned every person in the class had not only pledged himself to subscribe to the *March Hare* but had promised to get one or more outside subscriptions.

Paul, descending from the speaker's desk, was the center of an admiring and eager group of students.

“I say, Kip, where are you going to get the paper printed?” questioned Donald Hall.

“I don't know yet,” replied Paul jauntily.

“We'll have to see how much money we are going to have.”

“Why don't you get Mel Carter's father to do it? He publishes the *Echo*, and Mel is our business manager. That ought to give us some pull.”

Paul started.

“I never thought of asking Mr. Carter,” he returned slowly. “I don't believe Melville did, either. He's kind of a grouch. Still, he couldn't do more than refuse. Of course the *Echo* is pretty highbrow. Mr. Carter might feel we were beneath his notice.”

“No matter,” was Donald's cheerful answer. “I guess we could live through it if he did sit on us. Besides, maybe he wouldn't. Perhaps he'd enjoy fostering young genius. You said you were

going to make the paper worth while and something more than an athletic journal."

"Yes, I am," retorted Paul promptly. "We've got to make it tally up with what the subscribers pay for it. I mean to put in politics, poetry, philosophy, and every other sort of dope," he concluded with a smile.

"You certainly are the one and only great editor-in-chief!" chuckled Donald. Then he added hastily: "There's Melville now. Why don't you buttonhole him about his father?"

"I will," cried Paul, hurrying across the corridor to waylay his chum.

"Hi, Cart!"

Melville came to a stop.

"Say, what's the matter with your father printing the *March Hare* for us?"

"What!" The lad was almost speechless with astonishment.

"I say," repeated Paul earnestly, "what's the matter with your father printing the *March Hare*? He prints the *Echo*. Don't you believe he'd print our paper too?"

Melville was plainly disconcerted.

"I—I—don't know," he managed to stammer uneasily. "You see, the *Echo* office is such a darn busy place. My father is driven most to death. Besides, we couldn't pay much. It wouldn't be worth the bother to the *Echo*."

"Maybe not," said Paul. "But don't you think if your father knew we were trying to run a decent paper he might like to help us out? Who knows but some of us may become distinguished journalists when we grow up? There may be real geniuses in our midst—celebrities."

"Great Scott, Paul, but you have got a wily tongue! You've kissed the Blarney Stone if ever man has!"

But Paul was not to be cajoled from his purpose.

“Won’t you put it up to your Pater when you go home, Cart?”

“I ask him!” exclaimed Melville, drawing back a step or two. “I couldn’t, Kip. Don’t put me in such a hole. I wouldn’t dare. Straight goods, I wouldn’t. You don’t know my dad. Why, he wouldn’t even hear me out. He’d say at the outset that it was all rot and that he couldn’t be bothered with such a scheme.”

“You absolutely refuse to ask him?”

Melville turned a wretched face toward Paul.

“I’d do most anything for you, Kip,” he said miserably. “You know that. But I couldn’t ask favors of my father for you or anybody else. He isn’t like other people. I’d go to any one else in a minute. But Father’s so—well, it would just take more nerve than I’ve got. He’s all right, though. Don’t think he isn’t. It’s only that he’s pretty stiff. I’m afraid of him; straight goods, I am.”

Paul nodded.

“I see.”

There was an awkward pause.

“Would you have any objection to somebody else going to him?”

“You?”

“Possibly.”

“Not the least in the world,” Melville declared. “I don’t see why you shouldn’t if you want to take a chance. You’ll have no luck, though.”

“He couldn’t any more than kick me out.”

“He’ll do that all right!” Melville exclaimed, with a grin.

“What if he does?” asked the editor-in-chief with a shrug of his shoulders.

“Well, if you don’t mind being turned down and swept out of the office before your mouth is fairly open, go ahead.”

"I shan't go to the office," responded Paul deliberately. "I shall go around to the house."

"Good heavens!"

"Why not?"

"Well, I don't know why—only it makes Father as mad as hops to be disturbed about business after he gets home."

"I'm not supposed to know that, am I?"

"N—o."

"Then I shall come to the house," reiterated Paul firmly. "Your father will have more leisure there and I think he will be more likely to listen."

"He won't listen to you anywhere."

"We'll see whether he will or not," said Paul. "At least I can make my try and convince myself."

"It'll be no use, Kip," persisted Melville. "I hate to have you disappointed, old chap."

"I shan't be disappointed," said Paul kindly. "I shan't allow myself to expect much. Even if your father does turn me down he may give me a useful pointer or two."

"He won't do anything for you," Melville asserted dubiously. "He'll just have nothing to do with it."

In spite of Paul's optimism he was more than half of Melville's opinion.

Mr. Carter was well known throughout Birmingham as a stern, austere man whom people feared rather than loved. He had the reputation of being shrewd, close-fisted, and sharp at a bargain,—a person of few friends and many enemies. He was a great fighter, carrying a grudge to any length for the sheer pleasure of gratifying it. Therefore many a more mature and courageous promoter than Paul Cameron had shrunk from approaching him with a business proposition.

Even Paul did not at all relish the mission before him; he was, however, too manly to shirk it. Hence that evening, directly after dinner, he made his way to the mansion of Mr. Arthur Presby Carter, the wealthy owner of the *Echo*, Birmingham's most widely circulated daily.

Fortunately or unfortunately—Paul was uncertain which—the capitalist was at home and at leisure; and with beating heart the boy was ushered into the presence of this illustrious gentleman.

Mr. Carter greeted him politely but with no cordiality.

"So you're Paul Cameron. I've had dealings with your father," he remarked dryly. "What can I do for you?"

Paul's courage ebbed. The question was crisp and direct, demanding a reply of similar tenor. With a gulp of apprehension the lad struggled to make an auspicious opening for his subject; but no words came to his tongue.

"Perhaps you brought a message from your father," suggested the great man, after he had waited impatiently for an interval.

"No, sir. Father didn't know that I was coming," Paul contrived to stammer. "I came on my own account. I wanted to know if you wouldn't like to print the *March Hare*, a new monthly publication that is soon coming out."

"The *March Hare*!" repeated Mr. Carter incredulously.

Paul nodded silently.

"Did I hear aright?" inquired Mr. Carter majestically. "Did you say the *March Hare*?"

The title took on a ludicrous incongruity as it fell from his lips.

"Yes, sir," gasped Paul. "We are going to get out a High School paper and call it the *March Hare*."

Mr. Carter made no comment. He seemed too stunned with amazement to do so.

“We want to make it a really good paper,” went on Paul desperately. “The school has never had a paper before, but I don’t see why it shouldn’t. We’re all studying English and writing compositions. Why shouldn’t we write something for publication?”

“Why, indeed!”

There was a note of sarcasm, or was it ridicule, in the words, that put Paul on his mettle.

“We intend to make it a good, dignified magazine,” he went on quickly. “We plan to have the school news and some more serious articles in it. We’ve got a managing board, and an editorial staff, and all the things papers have.”

“And why do you come to me?”

“Because we need a printer.”

“You wish me to print this remarkable document?”

Paul smiled ingenuously. “Yes, sir.” There was a silence. Mr. Carter seemed too dumfounded to speak.

“You see,” went on the boy, “getting out a paper would give us fellows some business experience and at the same time some practice in writing. I believe we could make the thing pay, too.”

“How many subscribers have you?”

“I had two last night—myself and another boy,” Paul replied. “But to-day I have a hundred and fifty; by to-morrow I expect to add about two hundred more.”

“Your circulation increases rapidly,” remarked Mr. Carter, the shadow of a smile on his face.

“Yes, sir, it does,” came innocently from Paul.

“How many numbers would you wish to issue annually?”

“Ten. We’d want to bring out a paper the first of each month from October to June. With our studies, that would be about all we could handle, I guess.”

"I guess so, too," agreed Mr. Carter caustically.

"How large a paper do you plan to have?" he added an instant later.

"Oh, I hadn't thought much about that. It would depend on how much space we could fill up. Perhaps twenty-five pages."

The magnate nodded.

It was impossible to fathom what was going on in his mind. Was he preparing to burst into a tirade of ridicule, or was he really considering the proposition?

"We'd want some good sort of a cover, of course," Paul put in as an afterthought.

"In colors, I suppose."

"Yes, sir."

"And nice paper and clear print."

"Yes, indeed," said Paul, not noting the increasing sarcasm in the man's voice.

"How much would you charge for an annual subscription?"

"A dollar and a half."

"Have you any idea what it would cost to get out a paper such as you propose?" There was a ring of contempt in the words.

"No, sir."

"Well, it would cost a good deal more money than you have to offer, young man." With a cruel satisfaction he saw the boy's face fall.

"Then that's the end of it, I guess, so far as your firm is concerned," replied Paul, turning toward the door. "I'll have to take my proposition somewhere else."

Something in the boy's proud bearing appealed to the man. It had not dawned on him until now that the lad actually considered the proposal a strictly business one. He had thought that he came to wheedle and beg, and Mr. Carter detested having favors asked of him. Calling Paul back, he motioned him to sit down.

"I'm not ready to wind up this matter quite so quickly," he observed. "Let us talk the thing over a little more fully. Suppose I were to make you a proposition."

Leaning forward, he took a cigar from the library table and, lighting it, puffed a series of rings into the air.

"There are certain things that I want to do in Burmingham," he announced in leisurely fashion. There was a twinkle of humor beneath the shaggy brows. "Your father, for example, doesn't take the *Echo*. He has none too cordial feeling toward me personally, and in addition he says my paper is too conservative. Then there are firms that I can't get to advertise with us—business houses in the town that are not represented on our pages. And lastly, Judge Damon has constantly refused to do a set of political articles for me. Put those deals through for me, and I'll print your *March Hare*."

He leaned back in his chair, regarding Paul with a provoking smile.

"But how can I?" gasped Paul, bewildered.

Mr. Carter shrugged his shoulders.

"That's up to you," he said. "Sometimes fools rush in where angels fear to tread. Your father, for instance, will certainly want this venture of yours to succeed. Tell him that if he takes the *Echo* instead of the *Mirror*, or in addition to it, it will be a big help to you."

"But my father—" burst out Paul, then stopped suddenly.

"I know he doesn't like me," put in Mr. Carter calmly. "We differ in politics and we've had one bad set-to on the subject. He won't take my paper—wouldn't do it for love or money. I know perfectly well how he feels."

"So that's why you want to make him do it?"

"Never you mind, sonny. I want you to get him to. That's enough," was the curt retort.