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JOURNALISM OFF ITS FEET. Reporters take wings to boom circulation. A Flying Machine tried on Staten Island with varying results. Sometimes the Journalist ploughs the Earth with his ear and sometimes alights on his neck.

In and around the city there are a dozen men or more who have at one time or another tried to fly. The majority of them are now walking lame or have not or recovered the full use of their arms or have repaired ribs or some other disability consequent upon their efforts to invade the realm of air. This doesn't prevent other enthusiastic amateurs from trying to play bird, and as surely as comes the spring, so surely does some aspiring genius bump himself violently against Mother Earth through the medium of wings that fail to fly. The latest experiments in this line have been going on for a fortnight now under the fostering care of the new journalism.

A sensational Sunday newspaper, desirous of doing something even more startling than sending its intrepid women reporters on heart shaking trips in the terrifying horseless carriage or compelling them to pass a whole night in the dread labyrinths of the Weather Bureau, sent abroad and bought a so called flying machine from Herr Otto Lilienthal of Berlin, who has been practicing with artificial wings for some years, not without considerable success although he has never attempted anything more than air sailing. The huge wings ordered from him arrived after some delay in Custom House, the authorities being much put to it to determine on what basis to tax them

When they had been taken out of the Custom House all that was wanting was somebody to put them on. None of the representatives of the new Journalism was quite up to aerial trips, so the newspaper hired two men in whom the love of life burned low, to tackle the job.

The party adjourned to a hill on Staten Island with the machine and a set of rules forwarded by Lilienthal, the gist of which was that it is not advisable to take a first flight in a high wind, and that the aeronaut who has ambition to live and tell of his experiences should exercise extreme care in handling the apparatus. Herr Lilienthal ought to know for he has broken himself in several places in the interests of science. There were other rules, but they referred in intricate terms to the management of the wings and tail in steering, and nobody understood them.

All being ready, an athletic youth who had been selected as the first victim girded on the pair of aeroplanes and poised at the top of a steep hill while the dozen aerial reporters of the new Journalism grouped below all gave orders and advice at once. Finally the aerial editor called out:

"Are you all read?"

"I g-g-guess so," replied the athlete with the wings, with a voice of suspicious unsteadiness, "but the w-w-wind is doing queer things with these wings."

"Start then," commanded the aerial editor, "Run down the hill as fast as you can and launch yourself into the air."

Thus exhorted, the athlete started down the hill. On he came in a series of short, wild leaps like a barelegged buy in a nettle bed, but he still clung to earth.

"Launch yourself! Why don't you launch yourself?" shrieked the aerial editor wrathfully. "It says in the rules you must launch yourself."

"Launch your own self," yelled back the would-be flyer. "It won't take me up. Hi! Look out! I'm coming! Stop me, somebody."

If the machine wouldn't go up, it would at least go ahead. Down came the athlete like a winged avalanche upon the group, sending them tumbling in all directions, and after some intricate evolutions he came to a stop chiefly by reason of several of them who had contrived to attach themselves to his legs and coat tails.

"Is the flying machine hurt?" was the first thing the aerial editor asked after wiping the blood from his face.

"Flying machine be damned!" howled the athlete. "Take 'em off! Hurry up, too, or I fall over 'em and smash 'em to smithereens. I'm done. I've got enough. You don't let me get in that murder trap again. Take 'em off, I say."

"Why didn't you steer with the tail," demanded the aerial editor angrily. "I told you to turn it down."

"It turned me down," said the athlete. "You go on and try yourself. I wouldn't tackle it again for a farm."

Then a second victim was brought forward. He is an artist and his knowledge of flying machines up to that time had been gained by having copied some of Lilienthal's designs. What he had seen the athlete try to do made him a little cautious and the "sudden rush from the top of the hill," to which he was exhorted in unison by those below, consisted in a very lady like chasses down the slope, terminating in a tentative jump that didn't take his feet three inches from the ground.

"Go harder," shouted the assisting reporters, poising their pencils in the air. "Run and take a long jump."

"I don't believe it's any use," replied the artist doubtfully. "The thing won't raise me. There ain't a single flit in it."

Again he started and again failed to rise. A further attempt resulted in his rising about a yard revolving on his own

axis, and landing with considerable abruptness on his neck. Evidently the thing would never be a success that way. The aerial editor has an idea.

“We’ll tie a rope to him and fly him like a kite.”

Attempted remonstrances by the artist were cut short by the enthusiastic shouts of the entire staff, and a rope was soon tied around the experimenter’s waist. All concerned attached themselves to the other end of the rope, and at the word started on a run. Anyone who had ever seen a paper kite bunt and batter along the ground can appreciate the unpleasant features of the artist’s progress for a few yards. All the breath was knocked out of him, and he didn’t recover it until he found himself twenty-five feet above the earth, hovering. He had shut up like an arrow from a bow.

“Hooray yelled the earthlings below. What’s the matter with the flyer lies? He’s all right. Go on and fly.”

“Ow,” shrieked the amateur bird, “I’m going to fall. Help! Help! Hang on! Hi! Keep on pulling. Go on! Don’t let me fall! Help!”

“Go ahead and fall,” shouted back the crowd encouragingly. “Throw your weight back. Flap your wings. Stretch your legs forward. Waggle your tail. You are all right.”

“No, I ain’t,” howled the unhappy artist. “I don’t know what to do. I’m balanced here. Oh! Help! I’m going.”

A peculiar thing happened. The flying machine turned slowly backward, and with a dive slanted down to earth, landing on the tip of one wing with a tremendous crash. They extricated the amateur bird from the wreck and sent him to a doctor to be patched up. He had ploughed a hole in the ground with his head to the great detriment of one ear and part of his scalp, and several of his ribs were the worse for wear. As for the machine, that was in no condition for further experiments. The aerial editor who had his pictures of a mere speck in the sky, representing the flying machine, all ready for the text Sunday issue had to give up all hopes of getting the article prepared in time. To find a man who could mend the thing was a hard job. One was found, however, and the athlete who had made the original attempt was persuaded to make another try. After a number of attempts he finally got himself launched, skimmed along the earth, his feet dragging, and finally, with the exhortations of the aerial editor and his staff to curl to “curl up those damned long legs” ringing in his ears, he succeeded in detaching himself from terra firma for a distance of about forty feet, after which he trailed some distance further before standing on his head as a finish. Measurements of the space from start to this undignified finish were made, and the “flight” was declared to be seventy-five yards. It was voted a grand success. The meeting then adjourned after unanimously resolving that “man can fly.”

In comparison with this forty-foot-in-the-clear flight, it is interesting to note that Herr Lilienthal succeeded two years ago in soaring 300 yards from a low hill against a stiff breeze. There seems to be no danger of his record being broken at present in this vicinity.