

# WHAT THE TYPEWRITER NEEDED<sup>1</sup>

BY M. LYSTER

WHEN Jane Dunne gave up her post as secretary to the celebrated authoress, Mrs. Isabel Ford, she established herself with her typewriter, a table, a chair, and a cupboard in Number 10 Martin Street. There was such a demand for space that she had a hard fight to secure this corner of an office near the window at the top of the five-storied house at twelve pounds a year.

She established herself in the dual capacity of typist and authoress. She advertised in the newspapers, on the one hand, as a person who typed from dictation and from manuscripts at one shilling and sixpence a thousand words, carbon copies ninepence (unreadable manuscript a speciality), literary, legal, and scientific work, and on the other as a person who could supply the cinemas with plays for their screens, the magazines with stories, and the general public with occasional poems for marriages, christenings, golden and silver weddings, and deaths.

Advertising in the first capacity she gave her own name, and in the second she assumed the nom de plume of Vera Verity.

The first offer she received was for typing, and it was at a price that exceeded the figure she had quoted herself. But the acceptance of it was not altogether simple. She was called to the house of a scientist living outside town to take the contents of a short book daily in dictation. Before she could present herself there she required new shoes and a new pair of gloves.

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She felt that in her present shoes no one would trust her to do proper spacing or punctuation.

But all the money she had was predestined to paying for part of the table she worked on, or part of the cupboard, part of the chair, or the rent. She reviewed everything in her possession, and everything she had was either too worthless for others to take or too precious for her to part with. She might as well, she said to herself, lose her livelihood, her typewriter. Once again she looked round the office: table, cupboard, chair, chair, cupboard, table. That was all there was, and there was nothing to be got out of them.

Then came a pregnant thought. Why not raise money on her typewriter with Mr. John Cox who had sold it to her? She would not be wanting it at the scientist's, as he was to supply everything at the house.

She delicately propounded her scheme to Mr. Cox, who replied with incision although his eyes were dreamy:—

'You want me to lend you the money?'

'Yes,' said Jane.

'How much do you want?'

'Five pounds,' said Jane.

'I'll give you six,' said John Cox. 'If you don't pay me, I'll keep the typewriter.'

When Miss Dunne returned at the end of the week from having taken twenty-five chapters in dictation on the sugar in a rabbit's blood, she claimed her typewriter. But now she was in an equally difficult position, for

the ten guineas she had received from the scientist were all mortgaged to different creditors. She could pay only four pounds to Mr. Cox. But he agreed to let her have the machine if she gave him an I.O.U. for the remainder.

Somehow this first great sweep seemed to be all the luck she was to have. For three whole weeks she sat in her office and no one wanted a line typed or composed. No one wanted anything whatever from Jane Dunne or Vera Verity. Her friends were doing their duty telling people about her, and they were telling her that she must advertise and wait. That was the beginning, they said, of every business, to advertise and to wait.

Four times a week she told the public that an educated young woman called Jane Dunne would type manuscripts at one shilling and sixpence a thousand, carbon copies ninepence (unreadable manuscripts a speciality), and once a week she told them that Miss Vera Verity would supply the cinemas with plays, the magazines with stories, and those who were being born, buried, and wed with poetry suitable to the occasion.

But they did n't want poetry, — no matter what they were doing, — and they did n't want typing.

She had seen enough of heartbroken authors coming to solicit the influence of Mrs. Ford not to put her trust in literature, but typing — typing . . . The world surely wanted machinery, wanted business, wanted typing. Yet nothing happened.

As she had much time to spare, she had made several prose sketches, and at last she reopened her neglected typewriter to type them. But it seemed to be in the general conspiracy against her. The spacing was no longer to be relied on, the margin-regulator did not work, the bell had given up ringing, and altogether the machine had a queer

lagging way with it. Once indeed, as if it had a malicious will of its own, it cut an obituary poem in two. When this happened she thought of Mr. Cox, but she had no two pounds for him, and could not face him.

Watching idly from the window one day, she noticed that someone was moving into the house. It was the office underneath that was to be occupied. It had been taken long ago by a man who was to come from the country, so she had heard. Five days after the office had become occupied she received a letter. Across the top of the envelope was printed '*The Western Turret*, 10 Martin Street,' and inside there was a letter asking her if she could do a little work for the editor of this paper, a certain Christopher Lane. So as to begin work immediately, she called at the office that afternoon.

The office of Mr. Lane had a tumultuous and scattered appearance, and he was engaged in searching it. As soon as he saw her he stopped and began to explain. He had only just come to Dublin. He had been working on a paper in the West. He was starting the *Western Turret* with a friend. The friend was engaged on the advertising portion. His secretary had fallen ill. Unfortunately her typewriter was locked, and he was searching for the key of it at that moment. The first number was announced for the end of the week. This was Wednesday and, though all the material was ready, no editing had been done. Having said this he returned to search once more for the key of the typewriter with the greatest concern.

'I,' said Jane Dunne, observing him, 'have a typewriter upstairs. It has not been working very well lately, but I will fetch it down.'

She felt that to explain the case of the typewriter might, even under the circumstances, spoil her chances.

When she returned with it, a new crisis seemed to have arisen, for Christopher Lane was speaking with agitation through the telephone.

'I must go out,' he said to her as he put down the receiver. 'I'm afraid the political article is off.'

Thus Jane was abandoned in the office of the *Western Turret* with no instructions as to what she was to do. She endeavored to tidy the papers that were scattered everywhere on the tables, desks, and floor, but her work was in vain, for the gust of wind that came through the broken window continued to work havoc with them again. After two hours' waiting she went upstairs, leaving word where she was to be found with the charwoman who had just arrived.

Early next morning she found a note marked 'Urgent' in her office. It was addressed to Miss Vera Verity. 'Can you do Woman's Page?' it ran. 'Please reply to *Western Turret*.'

This was a matter with which Jane was not going to deal immediately. It might be difficult for Christopher Lane to recognize her dual personality. The business man in him might suspect the typist of being too artistic, and the writer in him might suspect the author-ess of being too commercial.

When he came in an hour later he was so much oppressed and in such confusion of mind that he could not listen to the messages from the caretaker. He called for Miss Dunne immediately, and then began to examine her typewriter.

'There is a screw missing in it,' he said. 'I am going out to get one.'

'By the way,' he called out as he disappeared, 'I have asked Miss Verity upstairs to do the Woman's Page. The lady who was to do it has disappointed. She is a friend of the man who wrote the political article, and she has strong political tendencies herself. His work

could not go in as it was, and he would not alter it. She refused to have anything to do with a paper that so compromised its principles and would not stand for freedom and independence of thought. She has left some cookery recipes behind, so that may be a help.'

Although Christopher Lane scoured every shop in Dublin for a screw, he could not find the right one. Oh, he was the greatest fool in Europe, with a secretary ill, a typewriter locked with the key lost, a political article that could not go in, and a Woman's Page that had let him down. At least the short story remained to him, and the writer of it had once got a prize.

It was nearly luncheon hour when he got back to the office. What a cold, dark day it was! One could hardly see by the light that crept in through the windows of the *Western Turret*. It was a winter's day all wet and sighing under the sky, unredeemed by that white glory of snow that makes winter smile in her calm radiance at the colored days and the troubled leaves of summer.

Jane had brought cups and tea and jam and bread and butter from her cupboard upstairs, and Christopher struck a match to light the fire. A red flame smouldered through the jagged sticks and paper, and the coal, which had a sullen gleam of its own, died when the red embraced it. As Jane watched it in her anxiety to boil the kettle, the edge of a burning paper caught her eye, the title-page of a story. She pulled it out to let in air, and another leaf came with it. She began to read, and she could see, though there were only a few lines, that the writing was good. The author's name was Daniel Scott—surely a good short-story writer.

Turning from the fire, she observed that Christopher Lane was once more absorbed in an uneasy search.

'We are going to have lunch now,' she said. 'Won't you sit down?'

'I am looking for the short story and the poem,' said he.

'Is the short story,' said Jane, suddenly feeling cold air come from the very fire, 'by Daniel Scott?'

'Yes. How splendid that you have found it.'

'It lit the fire,' said Jane, recoiling herself under the blow she gave.

But Christopher Lane, all action and concentration, rang the bell.

'Did you,' he said to the caretaker, with red lights of battle between his brows, 'set the fire with papers you found here?'

'I did not set the fire,' said the caretaker, 'but the charwoman who was here yesterday set it. I never touch written pieces.'

And with red signals flashing to answer his, she left.

Christopher Lane sank into a chair.

'*Western Turret*,' he moaned; '*Western Turret* — to be out by the end of the week — no typewriter — no political article — no Woman's Page — no short story — no poem — nothing but editorial notes.'

For them Jane Dunne feared, too.

'Where are they?' she said.

'In my head,' sighed Christopher Lane.

'Thank God for that,' said Jane.

Jane Dunne was a good girl, a kind girl. She made tea for Christopher Lane and spread jam on his bread and butter, and then she said that at least the typewriter difficulty could be mended, for she knew a place where he could get a screw.

So after lunch she unfolded the tale of John Cox, and explained the lanes and side streets he would have to traverse to reach his office — for the *Western Turret* was complicated by the fact that the editor came from the West.

'I am looking,' said Christopher Lane to John Cox, on arriving at the office, 'for a screw.'

He explained at length, but John Cox seemed not to understand. So Christopher made a drawing of the section of the typewriter where the screw should be.

John Cox looked with the eyes of a seer before him. Out of a visionary past he spoke, and yet with an edge of reality that cut keen.

'We have,' he said, 'a customer called Miss Dunne.' He was twisting as he spoke a small object in his hand. 'She left her machine here, and we took out a screw, just like that screw, for a customer. But I believe you are from the West,' he said cordially. 'I am only back from Galway.'

He dropped the small object from his hand.

'Have you,' said Christopher Lane, 'another screw like that you took from the machine?'

'Oh, no,' said Cox negligently, 'not another like that. No —' and he turned to answer the telephone.

'Good afternoon,' said Christopher, taking the small object from the table.

Flying through the town as if he bore the hidden treasure of a palace with him, he reached 10 Martin Street, and fitted the screw marvelously and surely to Miss Dunne's machine.

Now they had a typewriter; but where was all the rest to come from?

He glanced about the bare office of the *Western Turret*. Again and again they looked. Then they looked out into the street. There was a world out there full of everything but help. Obviously there was no one to help them but themselves. Christopher Lane was faltering, but Jane stepped in with high and new-born courage.

'My pseudonym,' she said, 'is Vera Verity. I will do the Woman's Page. You will do the political article. The

editorial notes you have. I can do all the typing. If we can't manage a poem between us, the caretaker's husband once got ten and sixpence for a poem in a Sunday paper, and we'll pay him that for another.'

'But,' said Christopher, at once credulous and incredulous, admiring and doubting, 'the short story, the well-written story, the story of a prize short-story writer, what shall I do for that? Where shall I find another like that, in the one day that is left, or ever, ever again?'

'You won't find another like it,' said Jane Dunne.

'Then,' said the editor, climbing down rapidly to despair, 'where shall I find any short story?'

'If any short story will do,' said Jane, 'we have the story — the story of the screw of this typewriter.'

Christopher raised his head.

'It's an idea,' he said. 'Who would have thought that there was a story in the screw! But, by Jove, there is a story — it has a story. And let's settle this: if we can get the paper out by Saturday we must continue with you as assistant editor. I can easily arrange with the landlord to extend our premises to the next floor.'

## HOW TO RECOGNIZE THE NORTH POLE<sup>1</sup>

BY CHARLES NORDMANN

ASIDE from the purely geographic questions that it raises, the North Pole suggests a number of extremely curious problems in astronomy and in the physical properties of our own globe, some of which I wish to sketch in this article. The occasion is the more opportune since Amundsen's recent exploit has drawn all our eyes — by which I mean our minds' eyes — toward the mysterious northern summit of our planet.

One often hears the question: How can polar explorers tell where they are, and how far they are from the pole? Contrary to an opinion which is rather widely spread, there is no special sign at the North Pole or in its vicinity, or any characteristic landmark that enables it to be recognized. There was a time, not very long since, when many

people believed that the axis of the earth was a real object stuck through the globe somewhat as a spit is stuck through a chicken whirling before the flame, and the strange appearance that the earth must have at the point where this 'big axis' penetrated it has set many an imagination to work. One even finds traces of the notion in Cyrano de Bergerac. But nowadays everyone understands that the earth's axis is nothing but an immaterial — and in a certain sense ideal — line; and people know that the North Pole is not marked out by any topographical peculiarity.

Then how are we to recognize it? The compass is an obvious suggestion; but unfortunately the magnetic pole, toward which the compass points, does not in the least coincide with the pole around which the earth revolves, being separated from it by more than two

<sup>1</sup>From *Illustration* (Illustrated literary weekly), July 18