

them through each hour of the fatal morning, checking and re-checking their accounts of such objective things as the weather, the crops, what the newspapers said. He made a notebook for each of them. The rest is in his story, which he brought back to the United States in June and deposited with *The New Yorker* in August.

Promise Redeemed

The General Manager, William Shawn, looked it over. It was in four parts. Shawn read them and felt disturbed by the way each piece maintained the suspense by re-digesting the material of the foregoing—a convention *The New Yorker* always follows to make pieces written as a series also stand alone. He could see only one solution, went to the editor-in-chief, and said so. Harold Ross is a permanently indignant man with red hair, who never takes yes for an answer. His assistant's proposal made nonsense of twenty-one years of *The New Yorker's* history. It was to run the story in one great thirty-thousand word outpouring.

Ross paced and swore and wondered. He remembered, however, that in its first issue, in February, 1925, the magazine had printed a simple announcement of its intentions: "*The New Yorker* starts with a declaration of serious purpose." It was nobody's fault but Ross's if the readers had had to wait twenty-one years to watch the magazine catch up with itself. The decision was made. It was shared only with Hersey, a printer, and a copy reader. For the best part of two weeks, Hersey worked in *The New Yorker's* office 16 hours a day, re-writing and slipping the stuff to the printer. Meanwhile the critics went about their criticising, the cartoons were approved in proof, the fashion notes were solemnly okayed. Then came the morning of September 5 and the result I have described.

A Thousand Reprints for Einstein

Ross waited for the subscribers to resign in droves. Only one man, from Brooklyn, wrote to complain he was not amused. Suddenly *The New Yorker* office went down under a bombardment of appeals, applause, and the first congratulations it had ever received from a world-famous physicist and a brace of bishops. The regular three hundred thousand copies sold out the first day. By the Monday, "originals" were being hawked at three dollars a copy. (*The New Yorker* costs fifteen cents.) Fifty newspapers begged to print it, and a deal was made which charged them alike a dollar-and-a-half per 4,000 of circulation, on the understanding that the proceeds should go to the American Red Cross. Einstein asked for and got 1,000 reprints of the piece. A university asked for 10,000 reprints. The transatlantic wires hummed with arrangements to translate it into French, Swedish, Spanish, and Dutch.

In the daze of this second atomic explosion, American journalism doesn't quite know what to think, but shows a communal guilt in feeling it has been caught short. If some grave quarterly like *Foreign Affairs*, or *The Yale Review* had done it, they would have been merely widely praised as fulfilling their heavy responsibilities. But *The New Yorker* decision has done for Hiroshima exactly what *The New Yorker* editors wanted Hersey to do for it. His story, coming from such a quarter, makes Hiroshima more than the catastrophe the physicists say it is. It is the deadliest joke of the ages.

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