The Man in the Slot

Nineteen minutes before a big city newspaper's first edition goes to press, Page boy sits a stone's throw away from the city editor's desk.

The city editor reaches for his phone, calls the make-up editor in the composing room. "How are you doing?" he asks. "This City Hall story looks pretty vital ten minutes, the responsibility rests on the make-up editor. "We're tight, Araf," he calls to the man in the slot. "We're going to be tight. Keep it down," warns the slot man. "Cut it a third."

A dozen considerations furnish their chain lightning across the slot man's mind. Tyler's story... Tyler's original, and a better-knock of style, written to impress, yet complete in every essential detail.

The slot is not a glamorous job. It hasn't been since the days when newsprint was a luxury. The slot man must be direct, keen, competent, and able to read a story and cut it to the right length in a few seconds.

All this has used up fifteen seconds. Colihan has nine and a half minutes to cut and edit and write a top headline and sub-headline. Every line of both headlines must count exactly as much as any other paragraph, word, or space, figuring in as a half line and as a sentence, in a column.

Then the slot man will take just fifteen seconds more to review Colihan's work, change "hurried" to "terrible," whip the whole composition for lines, and shoot it to the news editor in the composing room.

There's a farther reason why Tyler's original, and a better-knock of style, written to impress, yet complete in every essential detail.

The slot is not a glamorous job. It hasn't been discovered by Shaler's alley or the fiction magazines. It takes a mind of its own, a mind of its own, to do the work of a lifetime. It takes a mind to work with the world's activities, the world's news, the world's doing? It takes a mind of its own, to do the work of a lifetime.

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