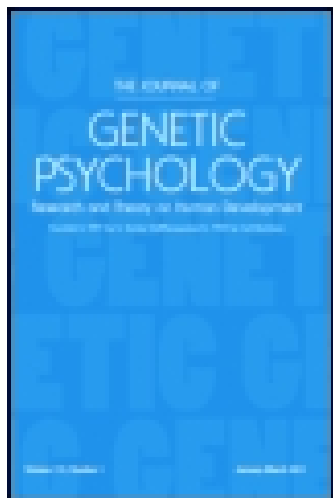


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The Child God

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THE CHILD GOD

By LOREY C. DAY, Baldwinville, Mass.

You may know of Mars and Venus and many other worlds, but I doubt if you ever heard of Exlose. It came out of darkness, shone forth gloriously a few years, and then disappeared. Exlose was an imaginary world and I was its god. Every child is at one time a god. He is the supreme ruler of an imaginary universe. He creates and dominates a world of make-believe geography, make-believe people, and make-believe institutions. He is the First Cause of everything. No river flows, no person speaks, no institution acts, without his willing sanction. Yet he is not a proud god, for he lives among his people and they are all friendly and intensely real to him.

The history of Exlose is not unlike that of Earth. There was an age of Chaos, of War, of Industrialism, and of Decline. Mine was no paradise of kind fairies and special favors. Everything was cold and material, and followed worldly law. From chaos arose no supernatural creation of order, for a systematic unity was a slow evolutionary development. There were no miracles of battle, and victory and fame were attainable only through hard work. Industrialism's progress was gradual and continually beset by war; while even decline followed the natural trend, there being no quick doomsday extinction, but merely a steady scientific disintegration. Down to its finest detail my Exlose reflects its earthly origin—I lived in a materialistic household, read realistic literature, and followed the newspapers closely. Exlose presents the real

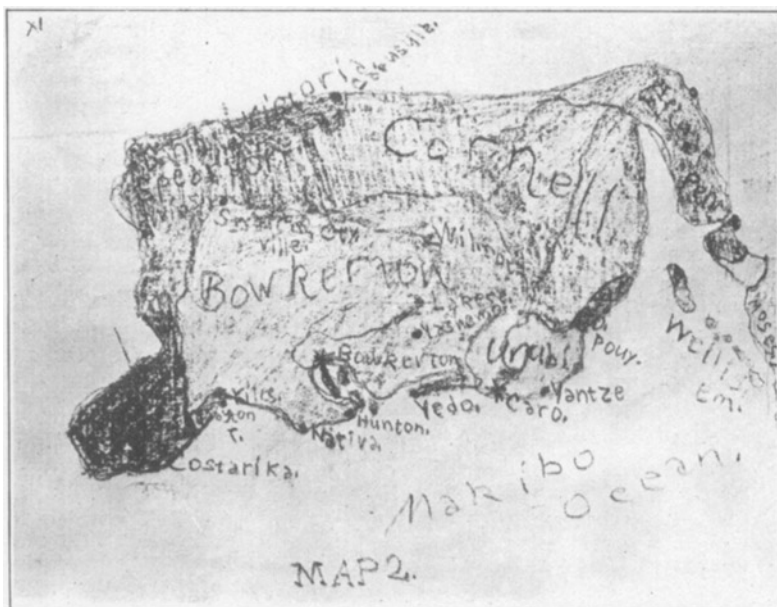
world as it seems to the small boy. It is a kind of imaginative revision of real society.

I was a god with a strong bent for printing and drawing—an editorial god, as it were—and many of my greater activities are preserved as news and sketch in a small hand-printed newspaper. I entered upon the chaotic era at six, while the Spanish-American War was in progress. Maps show the world to be one-sided, flat, and egg-shaped, with my home village at its center, a few nearby towns clustered about, and with "Cabu" (Cuba) set apart in one corner. The land was shattered by peninsulars and gulfs into octopus form, and was entirely surrounded by an ocean of swirling lines. This map often changed. Sometimes a thin rim of "U. S. A." encircled the nearby towns, and both land and sea were constantly shifting about. Generally skyless and weatherless the world would from time to time be set adrift in space among clouds, moon and sun after the careless manner of school geographies.

After Chaos came War. Every boy is more or less a warrior, but the military idea was particularly strong in my group, because of the Spanish, Boer and Boxer conflicts. There were few robbers and pirates among us, for all our energies were absorbed in battle. Slowly the Exlose world developed two distinct aspects, real and imaginary. The real was physical, the imaginary of course mental. The real consisted of wild charges across the fields, the imaginary of scribbled maps and feverish news items. The real was known to all the neighborhood, but the imaginary was a secret between myself and my paper's one subscriber—a gray-haired aunt. A few of my warring comrades, however, discovered our secret, for I was always naming the hills and trees, and allotting fictitious titles.

First campaigns were rather spasmodic, but organization developed rapidly. Each boy was equipped with a wooden gun and, sometimes, with sword, pistol, belt, and camera-box, for lunch. The up-hill bayonet charge was the most popular form of activity, and eating was in high favor when resting in camp. Boys were usually all on one side, with every one an officer, and combating a common make-believe enemy. Two real sides were exceedingly dangerous. There was only one serious two-sided engagement, and that resulted in many bruised faces and the practical demolition of an abandoned horse-car, which played the rôle of ill-fated fortress.

Small realities were the stimuli which set going a large imagination. A good-natured afternoon skirmish became in my paper a battle of this kind:



CONTINENT No. I

(Maps taken from 1st and 2nd editions of "An Atlas of the Exlose World.")

BATTLE OF ZOx.

Sept. 29.—Gen. Day with 35,000 men captured ZoX and 4,000 men. Losses are A. S. 23 killed Kingsure 24 killed A. S. woned 17 Kingsure 18 wounded.

The battle of ZoX was the most interesting battle ever known.

In the Battle 45 shells used.

In the Battle was 25,000 bullets.

The first prisoners were taken in the battle of ZoX.

It was the first (time) Day's wonderful canoon was used in the battle of ZoX.

A more decisive victory was at Grange in the war with the F-L's:

BATTLE OF GRANGE.

Grange, City., Dec. 7.—Specail telegram at 5:30.—The soldiers of our country have done good work and have beaten the F-L's and killed 500 and wounded 178 and 25,000 have surrendered. For a while the air was so full of shells that you could hardly see. The F-Ls only killed 120 of our men and wounded 25. None surrendered.

Signed, Gen. Day and Gen. Den Witts.

Gen. Day had 29,000 men and Gen. Den Witts had 15,000 men.

Ceaseless warfare naturally gave rise to many diplomatic bickerings. My paper frequently published "secret" letters to Gen. Day, coming from the enemy's camp or from some friendly allied ruler. King Lap-tet of Un Se Bal sought to aid me by imparting this valuable geographical information:

Dear Friend;

Sept. 17, 1900.

The name of that Blue contry is Fattleland population 100,000,000. Kingsure Islands are called Hailers Inland population 5,000,000. That pink contry is Linkland population 7,000,000. Them 3 yellow contry are called Liten population 4,000.

Yours truly,

King Lap-tet.

Less studied, but more important, diplomacy was necessary to keep the real side of my world in harmony. There were three of us who had become actively interested in Exlose and, to keep peace, each became a president, and whenever we entered battle it was as allied generals with equal powers. We formed a sort of Triple Alliance whose aim was to keep the whole imaginary world in subjection.

My active militarism was soon to fall prey to imaginative red tape and detail. Under the influence of the United States census of 1900 I became seriously addicted to the use of statistics. Everything on Exlose—area, population, armies, navies—was reduced to tabular form. Half the interest in a battle was the difference it would make in population, and victory was heralded with joy chiefly because it added a few square miles of territory—not that the territory might be valuable, but because it was a few square miles. A new bat-

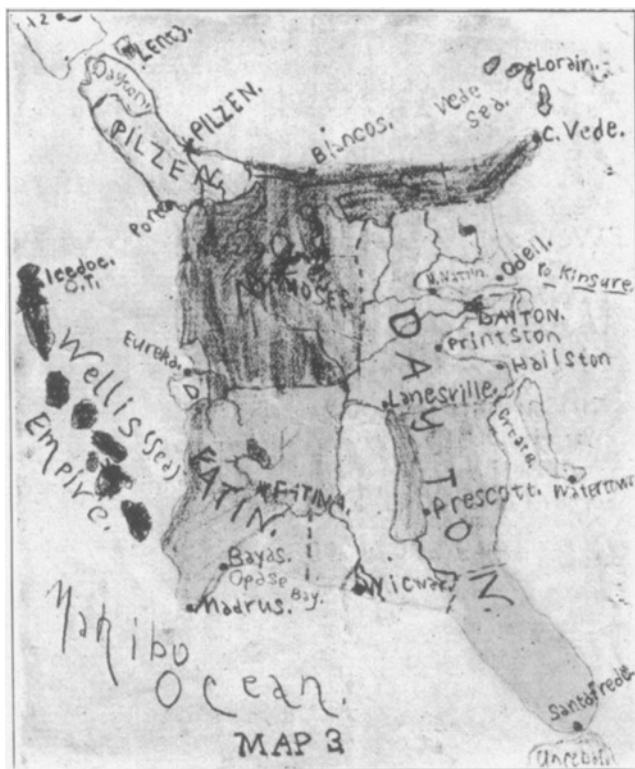
tleship was important not because of the added naval power, but because it had so many smokestacks, portholes and officers. And the most essential thing about a new ally was its flag and uniforms. So long as the flag was multi-colored and the uniforms gay victory did not matter, or would come of itself.

With such attention to detail the means necessarily came to obscure the end. Finding an unlimited field for action in statistics, imagination waxed strong and, finally, the physical side of Exlose was overwhelmed completely. There were no more garden skirmishes and up-hill charges; every battle now took place on paper, and the face of the world was changed at will in the comfortable quiet of my study.

The rough maps showing my village as the center of the world represent the chaotic era. During the military period these maps underwent a complete revolution. The real towns, U. S. A., and even Cabu disappeared entirely, giving way to new, make-believe countries. Earth was cast aside and Exlose entered upon an independent existence. Exlose at first was a mass of islands, with each island a country or province. It is in this island stage that the first great wars take place. But, gradually, under the influence of real-world geography, small continents appear, and on the east coast of one rises the confederacy of "American States," better known as simple "A. S." The capital city is "Printston," and its ruler is the militant President Day.

Around A. S. in nearly every direction were hostile countries, and the President was forced to conquer or be conquered. He directed campaigns in three directions, north, south and inland. To the north he was engaged in a series of bloody wars with Kinsuer, inland with Moses and Fatinland, and to the south with Grenoe and a half-independent union of three large states, Un Se Bal, Mispolie and Lisyvinsue. The northern Kinseur territory was won after a series of land and naval victories, all equally terrible. At last the unfortunate country was thoroughly humbled and, flushed with success, I led my army across the sea to the very gates of the venerable capital city of Czarinae. Moses went down in easy defeat, and was forced to give up half its lands. Fatinland was less easy, my armies being repulsed upon several occasions, but there finally came a sweet revenge when I advanced by river to the gates of the royal palace at Fatima, where I forced the cession of vast territories and the royal city itself.

In the south I encountered more resistance. The south, in real life, was the back yard, and opportunities for fighting



CONTINENT No. 2

there were unlimited, and unhampered by peace-loving neighbors. So it was that Grenoe was last to submit. I met defeat after defeat and sometimes as many men were "killed" on my side as on the enemy's. When I gained victory, however, it was decisive, and offset all previous defeats. One after the other Un Se Bal, Mispolie, and Lisyvinsue fell or, in terror, became my ally; I captured the Shantung peninsular and the fine city of Santefredo. Then the enemy entrenched itself about Wicwar for a last stand. Wicwar was a magnificent city at the mouth of the Prescott River, which flowed through the very heart of A. S., and of course was a highly desirable prize. Situated on a delta the city was hard to approach, but at length my ships and army made a full circle, there was a long siege, and Wicwar fell. Grenoe itself, shorn of all its dependencies, was next attacked—as usual—near its capital, but peace was quickly secured through the cession of Wonderland, a rich peninsular abounding in ores, minerals, and forest products. Later there were short wars for distant colonial strongholds, but the siege of Wicwar marks the practical end of the military era. A. S. had added twenty times to its original area, several million people, and untold wealth.

With no more desirable nations to conquer, the warring president sat back in his editorial chair to plan out an industrial régime. The map was in sad disorder after so much turmoil, and the first step was to establish Exlose on a systematic basis. Continents were reduced to four, with several scattered islands. Then each continent underwent a slow revision. Rivers began to flow in fixed courses, and bays, capes, and all natural features were given a permanent position and a name. Countries were marked off, some with states, and each with a capital city and several lesser towns. My home continent—Continent Number Two—was naturally the most highly developed of the four. A. S., as a name, was superseded by the more egoistic "Dayton," state lines carefully drawn, and cities located at convenient distances. Most of the first cities were sites of famous battles, but as industrialism grew, new cities grew to meet its demands. A play railroad—in reality a hundred yards along the street—was transferred to the map. This railroad, with its branches, demanded the creation of several new towns—and so Beville, Hailston and Chesterfield grew up about Printston. Other routes were imagined and put onto the map, and Kingsbury, Lanesville and York appear. New industries, mineral and oil discoveries, forest areas, farm lands, all came in season, and then arise the "boom" towns of Yava, Farmington, Gold City and Maculay. There were about a dozen states, and

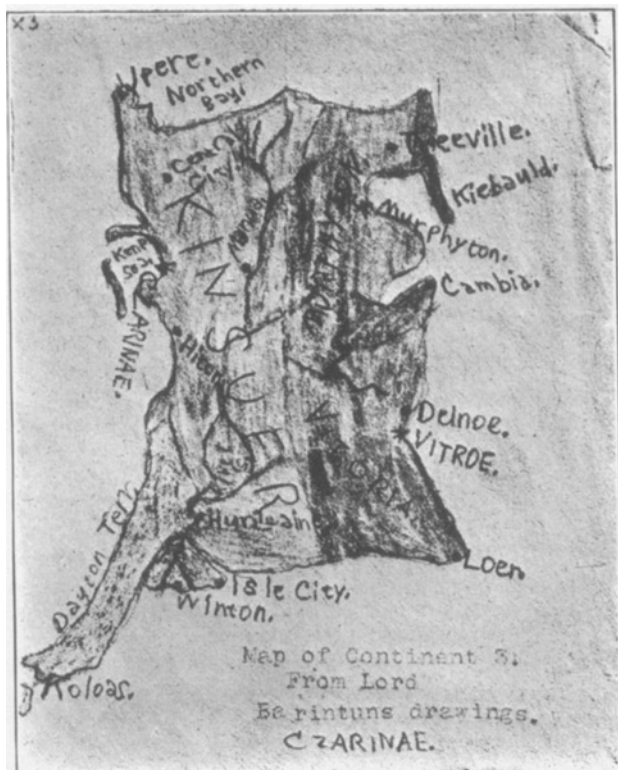
each was blest with a name—Clifton, Mendoceno, Odell, Cornwall and Mantobia were the leaders. And even the railroads did not escape the naming genius—observe the B. & H., Daisy, Clover Leaf, Merchants, Fruit, and the K. & Q.

Every name is reflective of some one or more influences, and all together are significant of the breadth of my experience as a small boy. Beville, Lanesville and Yava can be traced to home experiences, Mendoceno and Cornwall to geography, and Odell and Maculay to my literary acquaintance with great men. My total name creations number over a hundred, and each one is traceable to its source. Some are plagiarisms pure and simple, some are corruptions (conscious or unconscious), and some are inventions built out of old names or from syllables jumbled in play.

Many of the cities were very real to me. Wicwar, vaguely associated with New Orleans, I fancied as a great delta city with wharves and ships, immense warehouses and business blocks. My imagination had surrounded Wicwar with a deal of fine sentiment and, as president and railroad magnate, I often visited there. A peculiar combination of associations explains my favoritism. In real life the city was a certain spot in the garden, its war-scarred history gave to its past a decided glamor, and even the name itself was bound up in pleasant experiences—Wicwar being a conscious variation of Warwick, the name of a small hamlet where I had been several times with my mother.

Printston, my home city, was teeming with life and action. There was a great harbor guarded by impregnable forts at its entrance, and through the city ran the historic Grange River, furnishing generous water power to the factories along its way. Many of the streets were named, and four or five skyscrapers and public buildings were well developed as regards detail of size and arrangement. My newspaper was housed in a splendid five-story structure of brick and granite, situated at the corner of Wabash Avenue and Cross Street, and backing on the river, which furnished power for the presses and other machines. Besides an editorial staff, there was a group of half-imagined employees. I treated all with great kindness, but my best friend was the night watchman, with whom I often chatted familiarly night and morning, while in bed.

The railroads at Printston were of especial attraction, and I frequently rode on the trains out into the country, taking charge of the throttle to relieve some tired engineer. The goal of my journey would be one of the older sentiment-laden towns of the Wicwar type, such as Beville and Hailston, the first two industrial centers, Grange, site of the great battle,



CONTINENT No. 3.

and Chesterfield, a terminal of the first railroad. Saturday nights I planned an unusually delightful trip. My paper was then distributed from a special train to which was attached a private editorial car. Sometimes this private car was my bed, and the wild imaginative joys peculiar to the Saturday night ride no doubt arose from the very real anticipation of a long Sunday morning sleep.

I saw to it that Dayton was ever supreme in population and wealth, but I was generous in extending organization and names to the rest of the continent. The shattered remnants of Moses and Fatin-land were both put on industrial bases; new cities arose to meet the new industrialism. Pilsen, a third country, in the northwest, was similarly developed, and its commerce was facilitated still further by the construction of two long canals.

Continent Number One, associated somewhat with Asia, and the largest of the Exlose land areas, lay to the westward of Dayton and Continent Two. Its chief occupant was Bowkerton, under the rule of a real boy, Bowker, who had generously contributed the whole continent, both in reality—a field—and in imagination—a map. Bowkerton, too, was rapidly spread over with railroads and towns. The capitol, Hanover, was a coastal city with a million inhabitants and comparing favorably with Printston. Rimming the northern and western borders of the country were several minor states and kingdoms. Spearton was a small, half-real republic with a flesh-and-blood president; Victor-Vitoria was a dual monarchy having only an imaginary existence, and peopled by a north European-like race. Cornel, associated with Russia, was the humble remnant of a mighty country which had formerly occupied most of the continent. Cristina, Hibernia and Orubia were three small republics that had revolted from Cornel.

Extending away from the southeast coast of Continent One, and partly parallel to the west coast of Continent Two, were the Wellise Islands. The northernmost of these was Icedoc, seized by Dayton in an early war with Cornel. The other islands, six in number, comprised the Wellise Empire.

The greatest of the make-believe powers was my sometime enemy, Kinsuer, represented in truth as a field directly opposite my home. Kinsuer occupied Continent Number Three jointly with another half-real republic, Murphyton, which was under President Murphy of the diplomatic Triple Alliance. A small central area—Chinaton—was under the protection of both governments, and a southern peninsular was under Dayton rule. The population of Kinsuer in its last census was 41,116,635, its capital was the ancient Czarinae—once threat-

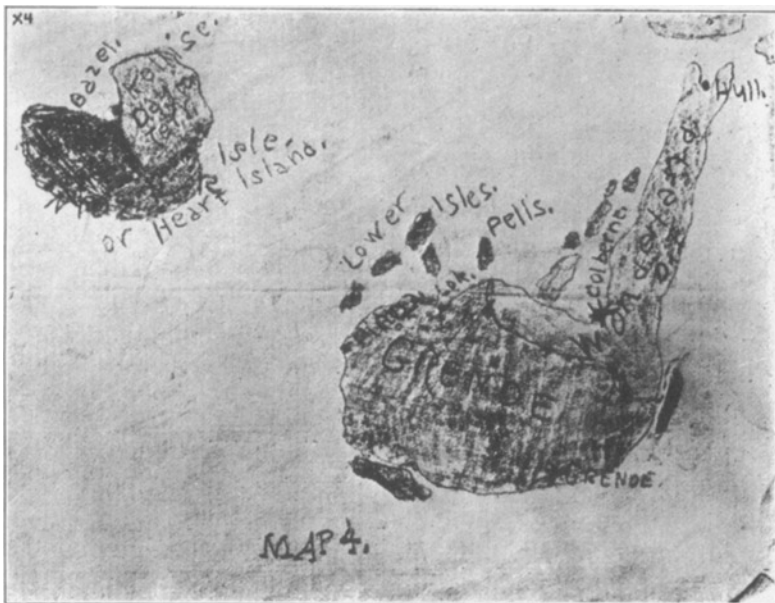
ened by General Day, and its last ruler was the benevolent King George. Kinsuerian culture was in a vague way like that of western Europe, and the entire Third Continent lay in an easterly direction from Dayton, with Czarinae and Printston bearing a relation to one another comparable to that of London and New York. The northern coastline was broken and rocky, and associated with Scotland, while the south was semi-tropical, often swept by wind-storms, and in its geography reminiscent of Greece and Italy.

Southwest of Kinseur and directly south of Dayton was Grenoe. Its people were wild and Chinese-like, while its general map outline and position resembled closely Australia and, like Australia, it was sometimes considered as an island, sometimes as a continent—Continent Number Four. In later times, after Dayton had succeeded in conquering and annexing its more desirable northern territories and islands, Grenoe settled down as a peaceful, progressive nation, and its last monarch, Emperor Wilum IV, was a great educator and very friendly with President Day. It was a universal law that, after the loss of the best land and thriftiest people to Dayton, a country became happy and prosperous, and was everlastingly grateful to its greedy benefactor.

Harte Island, a part of Grenoe, and half the size of the mother country, was the afterthought of a guilty conscience. When Grenoe was at the low ebb of its fortunes, I hastily created this island in the midst of the Makibo Ocean, hoping that perhaps this new territory would at least partly make up for the old I had taken by conquest. Yet there was still a germ of selfishness in this charity, for a portion of the new island was later utilized as a Dayton colonial station.

A second afterthought was Sargwine. A great vacant place in the southern sea demanded another island to balance up the world's land surface, and Sargwine was the fulfilment of this demand. In shape it resembled Cuba, but in position and natural endowment it was more like the Philippines. For a short time upon "discovery" the sole occupants were a few faint-hearted wild blacks, who were easily overcome and subjected to the salutary colonial rule of Dayton. Aggressive Daytonians found rich gold mines and many rare stones, and a providential supply of coal was just sufficient for passing trade ships.

The Adle and Adalia Islands were two A-shaped groups in mid-ocean between Continents One and Two. Both were semi-tropical and populated by a half-civilized brown race. Adalia was fairly high on the scale of progress, and its ruler, the Duke, was a friend and fellow of all the kings and presi-



CONTINENT No. 4

dents in Exlose. During early days there was much fighting in both Adle and Adalia but peace soon came to reign under a strong Duke and, for some unaccountable reason, Dayton never molested him save quietly to negotiate for an open port on a northern island.

This world with such a perfect organization possessed one very serious geographical flaw. It had no equator. Exlose was round, it had a north and south pole, continents, oceans, rivers, everything essential to the welfare of a good world, except an equator. There was a central line of course, but it was not considered an equator, and bore no relation whatever to the sun. The sun followed only the south pole. There were no complications of sunshine and climate on Exlose. There was a plain north and south, with the north cold and the south hot, no matter which hemisphere you chose. The north pole was like Earth's, but the south pole was tropical the year round. Exlose was the product of the northern hemisphere and to the last remained true to its producer. There were no southern heresies such as snow in July and harvest in January.

Of the four hundred million people on Exlose only a small group became more than a mere "public." Personality was a privilege reserved for the very select few. I was much in the society of kings and warriors but I did not regard them as particularly real. General Hay was the only national hero that I endowed with personality and character. He directed many of my campaigns and we were often in conference. He was an elderly man with wide experience and superior wisdom; he was courageous, unconquerable and never known to lose a battle.

An era of war is no time for friendships, but with peace and the rise of industrialism I created a number of imaginary men and women. Most of these later characters were journalists and artists, and they represent the final triumph of the calm editor over the warring president-general. James Howe, the first of the later creations, marks the transitional stage—he began life as plain James Ow, an officer in the Kinsuer wars, but with peace he changed his name and joined my editorial staff. He served as a kind of business manager-reporter, though his duties were rather ill-defined. To Mr. Howe can be credited such frank exaggerations as this:

The U. S. JOURNAL M. B. Carcaltion (circulation) in August was 126,257. in July 114;322 June 103,501 May 94,000 April 87,220.

He is also responsible for purchases of this nature:

2 New Presses 3 boiders (boilers) 892,000 tipe 178 balls of paper.
TOTAL Press \$200 Paper \$85 Tpe \$10 Boiders \$250 (Total) \$545.

Mr. Howe had a son, Jimmy, who was quite as important as his father. When Mr. Ow enlisted in the army, Jimmy was left behind alone and, out of pure kindness of heart, I took the boy into my office, giving him board in return for whatever he might write for the paper. He chose to write weekly letters, in simple straightforward narrative, treating upon the commonplaces of a small boy's life. After a time Jimmy tried to become a humorist through the easy and often ineffective method of bad spelling, and in his later communications it is obvious that he had read Shute's "Real Diary of a Real Boy."

Two notable artists contributed pictures for the paper: Mr. J. J. Jackson furnished maps and sketches, while Mr. William R. Ross drew the comics and more finished illustrations. Jackson was early discharged or forgotten, but Ross continued his work for several years; he was intrusted to make new typographical arrangements, to invent new type faces, and to decide upon color schemes. In fine, he was a personification of the artistic side of my nature.

Various make-believe people, men, women and children, sent brief letters to the editor. Many of them told how well they enjoyed a certain new department or feature. One juvenile department, "J. L. O.," presents this letter-writing habit at its worst, for each week the whole J. L. O. page was devoted to letters telling how the writers delighted in the department the previous week. I tried to imitate the "experience" letters of the Sunday newspaper juvenile pages, but I succeeded in producing only testimonials of artless self-praise. Other correspondents dealt with weighty social problems, as did Miss T. O. Jinks, who takes the palm for keen social insight:

Why Mary I think I will have to marrie about June 2, 1865. Yes I agreed. We wont gurriel like other people do. after they marrie their saying stop reading the news Oh do stop But we won't do that will we John. Oh, Corse not I won't do that. But they did when they married.

The Miss Jinks of real life was my aunt, who had been happily married nearly fifty years, but who was still skeptical about matrimony.

As publisher I had to buy imaginary printing supplies (through Mr. Howe, of course), and for this need several imaginary business houses were established. These houses were only half personal. I transacted business with the make-believe owner or manager, but my chief interest was in the purchase and payment. I patronized most the King Engraving Company, situated across the river from my office build-



CONTINENT No. 4
(Upper part, showing islands between Conts. 2 and 4)

ing in Printston; the Arlington Paper Company and the Oldberg Ink Company were two other friendly concerns. Oldberg was a city name and entirely impersonal in its associations, but Mr. Arlington of the paper company was at one time active in Dayton politics as a senator, and I often called him in to act as presidential advisor in perilous crises. There were other people but none were so vividly realized as these. I occasionally made out a cabinet list, consulted a governor or mayor, or praised an explorer, but few had names and none had well-developed personalities.

There were times when a wife moved dimly by my side. She had no particular name, and it would be absolutely impossible to describe her. In a vague way she was kind, good-natured and quiet, and possessed the happy faculty of disappearing when not wanted. She may have been a shadowy reflection of my mother. When I acted as president she was always near me during state functions, and as railroad magnate she often used to ride with me on a special car, but in war and on all boisterous occasions I forgot her entirely. And it is the beauty of imaginary people that when they are forgotten they do not exist.

My weekly paper tolerated imaginary news for four years. Three years it was scattered at random with the real news, but on the fourth it was carefully segregated in a column by itself, under the title of "M. B. (make-believe) News." Then it disappeared entirely. Exlose, however, was endowed with great vitality, and continued to exist even though newspaperdom was closed to it. The paper dropped it on the transitional stage between war and industrialism, at a time when industrialism was sorely beset by fire. The excitement of war lacking, new factories were burned daily, and railway trains were continually leaving the track or breaking through bridges. The fire at 211 Wabash Avenue is representative:

FIRE!

Feb. 16.—There was a great fire to-day at 211 Wabash Ave. in J. C. Tombs & Co., new shop started last week in Tub buissness for printers to wash type in. The fire broke out at 4.15, and was put at 5.40. Cause is not known.

But as quiet settled down upon the land type, ink, paper, toy and furniture factories began to prosper without fire, and trains kept steadily to their tracks. With this peaceful uninteresting stage Exlose ceased to furnish news material. At last I realized that perhaps my aunt could not appreciate the subtleties of my fanciful imagination. There is little record of later industrial developments. A factory arose, flourished awhile in imagination, and left no trace except in memory.

Later geographical and political evolution, however, is well preserved in a series of small atlases—published by The Dayton Times Company at Printston, edited by ex-Senator J. M. Eldbridge, with statistics compiled by Mr. C. F. Fredericks, and maps designed by Mr. William R. Ross. The third and last edition of the Exlose Atlas appeared when I was fourteen. At that time I was passing from the fanciful imaginings of childhood to the more worldly day-dreaming of adolescence.

This strange World was at its hight shortly after the rejection of "M. B. News" from the papers, when I was eleven. At no time did I have so little regard for reality and so great a regard for the make-believe, as then. Half my life was lived in the imaginary city of Printston, and I was a more patriotic citizen of Dayton than I was of the United States. But as I approached adolescence I sought about more and more for realities. I became interested in things mechanical, and such real trivalities as windmills and bicycles set at nought the fine dreams of republics and empires. Such charming and ideal personalities as Mr. James Howe, or Jimmy, or Miss T. O. Jinks, and even my shadow Wife were all dropped for more earthly acquaintances within my social circle.

My last dalliance with the make-believe was shortly after the publication of the third atlas. Flushed with the new interest in baseball and baseball leagues I forgot the real world for a moment, and compiled a list of eight Daytonian cities, adjusting to them a daily imaginary league standing. Despite the worldly taint of this aftermath, old Exlose associations were strong, and the sentimental cities of Printston and Wicwar were given the highest standing and best players.

Exlose was a strange medley of history, geography and current events, all presented with a materialistic undertone. Why so few rewards and no fairies? I read few fairy stories. Why no kind providence and angels? I had little religious training. Why so much war and politics? I read the daily newspaper. Why so much industrialism? Mine was a manufacturing town. Nature gives the boy an imagination, but she leaves Society to supply its furniture.