

news which the law visits upon the stealing of other forms of property. How can any honest journalist object to that?"

"Can you formulate such a measure so that it will stand Congressional tests?"

"I think I have done so. I have drafted a bill and prepared an argument to go with it which, though by no means perfect, I believe will give a practical application and bearing to the question. You will understand that I have no personal interest at stake, and am not acting for myself at all. At the last annual meeting of the Associated Press I was made Chairman of a committee which was raised to present the case to Congress. Thus commissioned, I came here, and I have proceeded with great deliberation and care, because I was fully conscious of the largeness and newness of the question and the practical difficulties in the way. In the beginning I was not at all clear in my own mind. But the more I have considered and discussed it, the more convinced have I become that the time is at hand when the law should recognize and protect a new species of property which other recognized and protected modern inventions have created—that is, collected news—against concurrent piratical publication."

PROPOSING TO COPYRIGHT NEWS.

THE OBJECT OF THE MEASURE PENDING IN CONGRESS EXPLAINED.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 17.—The following interview has been had with Mr. Henry Watterson touching the proposed measure of newspaper copyright which Mr. Watterson has in charge and is about to lay before Congress.

"Considerable misinformation," said Mr. Watterson, "seems to exist as to the character of the legislation which will be asked of Congress. It can certainly not be described as 'an act entitled an act for the relief of the Associated Press.' All honest newspapers and all honest news associations are interested in its passage. It simply operates to protect property in news from piratical concurrent publication."

"And how can this be done?"

"By a clause in the copyright laws making collected news, the product of skilled labor and outlay, exclusive to those who pay for it for 24 hours."

"Do you mean the news exclusively of the Associated Press?"

"I mean all news and news of every description and every association. As matters are news is not recognized as property at all. Everything about a newspaper office, from the perfecting press to the newsman's pot of paste, is property, and he who steals it falls within the reach and compass of the law. But that which constitutes the real value of a newspaper property—its news franchises, costing vast sums of money and years of special enterprise, training, and labor—has no legal status whatever. It is practically outlawed. Anybody can steal it with impunity. The proposed measure protects it from pirated use and concurrent publication for 24 hours. It creates, indeed, a new property, that is, property in news. No one can oppose it except those who want to rob others of their labor and money."

"How will it act upon the custom of copying from one paper by another paper?"

"It will not affect that in the least. The 24 hours' limitation gives all the latitude needful to honest and legitimate transcriptions from one newspaper into another. The country press is in no wise touched, and I can see no other interest on its part than to approve a measure calculated to elevate and dignify the profession of journalism by giving a certain legal validity and responsibility to the collection and distribution of news."

"What are the prospects of passing such a bill?"

"I have consulted the best constitutional authorities during my sojourn in Washington, and there is a general agreement that there is no constitutional objection to the measure. I have also seen and talked with a number of eminent members of both houses of Congress. I have been surprised to find some hazy prejudices against the Associated Press, the offspring of misadvisement in the main, and some confusion as to the relations of the Associated Press and the Western Union Telegraph Company. There are, of course, no relations, except those of a customer and a common carrier. Barring these immaterial objections, which discussion will clear up, there is an interested and friendly feeling in Congress. The question is a novel one and embraces the whole principle of modern journalism. The railway and the telegraph, which have within the last half-century wrought such changes throughout the world, have completely revolutionized the newspaper. That which we call 'news' is a modern invention, as much as gutta serena or the reaping-machine. It demands the very best and rarest of skilled labor. It involves forecast, organization, and outlay. It is an intellectual and a material product. Why has it not the same right to legal recognition and protection as other classes of property? Let us take an example. Suppose a newspaper published in the city of New-York and sold at 3 cents obtains at great cost and pains a column, or five columns, of interesting and important matter. Should a newspaper issued right alongside and sold at 1 cent be allowed to get an early copy and issue concurrently this very same matter without paying a nickel for it? There is no present law to forbid this. Take another example. The difference in time between points relatively east and west in our vast country enables a publisher who chooses to do so to make use of the enterprise of others. Should the thief at a distant point be enabled by the use of the telegraph to steal the property of those men who have gone to great care and cost to obtain it? Under existing laws I can make a compilation of telegraphic news matter, and issuing this in a book may copyright it. But if I write and wire the *Courier-Journal* a page of valuable matter anybody who sees fit to steal and publish it may do so for the cost of the type-setting."

"How do you propose to define or describe the news to be of copyright?"

"I should include all original, special, and general matter exceeding 100 words sent by post or by wire, and embracing the original communication of information of any and every description. Such an act cannot operate in favor of one newspaper and against another, or one newspaper association over another. It is simply a bar to rogues, and fixes the same penalty upon stealing