



## ***Stephen T. Mather, cub reporter***

### ***Stephen Mather, The New York Sun, and James G. Blaine***

We know much about Stephen Mather's time in the borax business and certainly his time in the Interior Department and the National Park Service, but little about his career as a newspaper reporter. However, among materials from the Homestead attic, is a 1915 newspaper article entitled "Millionaire Works for Clerk's Pay in Uncle Sam's Service."

A portion of the article detailing Stephen Mather's reportorial energy is transcribed here:

"...In all stories of cub reporters on New York dailies the cub invariably makes good from the start. Mr. Mather did not. He was quite ordinary for a time. Then his work began to fall off. The office did not know that young Mather had just received news of the death of his favorite brother, and that he was homesick.

Chester Lord, the managing editor, took him aside and told him he would have to brace up, or else seek some other line of endeavor, polite language meaning that he would be fired. About that time James G. Blaine was to speak at six widely separated places in Brooklyn. Mr. Mather was given the assignment to cover them all.

Reporters did not use taxicabs in those days, nor did they have expense accounts. Here was the "plumed knight" galloping in a hack from place to place, to stop, get up, talk for five minutes and go on. Here was the young reporter following, on foot. Of course it was an impossible task for him to keep up. But it is the test of a good reporter to do the impossible, and he was being tested. He did the impossible.

The fact that in college he had done a lot of cross-country running alone saved him. At the wind-up of the evening the hack driver, seeking the Long Island ferry, lost his way and wandered far—on the gallop. Finally the hack driver halted and confessed his predicament. An irate "plumed knight" descended in order to have room to gesture properly while he addressed an audience of one, the driver.

Up came Stephen Tyng Mather, Sun reporter, his tongue hanging out on his chest. 'Young man,' said Mr. Blaine, 'do you know where we are? We want to get to the Long Island ferry.'

Steadying himself against a wheel, Mr. Mather gasped out that they had but to turn the first corner to the right and drive for a mile and they would reach the ferry.

'Thanks,' said Mr. Blaine, climbing in. And then, 'Drive on.'

There was a tragedy in the situation. The thought of giving the reporter a lift seemed to never enter the great man's mind. Away went the hack, its wheels skidding around the corner, and away went Mather on the last lap of his Marathon.

He made it; he turned in a story that had something in it about every single speech Mr. Blaine delivered, and Chester Lord was joyful..."

The article goes on to speak of Stephen Mather's time in the borax business and his charitable activities in Chicago before accepting the position as assistant to the Secretary of the Interior. It concludes with what we know to be Stephen Mather's vision for the national parks...

"...The national park problem,' he said the other day in discussing his present work, 'consists chiefly in making these national playgrounds available and useful to the people. Means of getting to them and living in them economically when one gets there must be systematized better than they have been..."

...'We hope the time will come when an annual visit to a national park will be part of the routine of the average American family.'"

