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Rochester Journalism

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Rochester Journalism Forty Years Ago

THE MEMORY OF SAMUEL H. LOWE—A BRAVE JOURNALIST, FEARLESS IN PROMOTING A RIGHTEOUS PRESS; A TIMID JOURNALIST, FEARING LEST HE ABUSE THE POWER OF THE PRESS; WHOSE DAILY PRINTED LINES EXTENDING THROUGH THE YEARS, REFLECTED THE HEIGHTS AND THE DEPTHS OF HUMAN KINDNESS—HAS BEEN OFTEN TO THE FORE, WHILE I HAVE PENNED THESE MEMORABILIA.

MYRON TUTHILL BLY.

The Daily Record Press.
Rochester, N. Y., 1922.

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THE CHAPTERS OF THE BOOKLET

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The House of Birth.

The huddling of the waiting horse car passengers, as though to fend the cold. The panes of the corner gas light, frosted with the first of the season's snow flakes. Those are recollections of the bleak November evening in 1879 when I approached Smith's Arcade to initiate my service on the staff of the Morning Herald. The ground floor corner of the arcade, facing Main and Exchange streets, housed Hay's jewelry store. The diamonds were left in the show window all night. There were few thieves abroad in those days. It may be, however, that the proprietor had special confidence in newspaper men. Next door, on the Main street side, was the steep and narrow staircase leading up to our quarters on the second floor and over the jewelry store was the business office. A new member of the staff was prone to glance at the diamonds as he passed to the staircase. When he became seasoned his interest in them waned. It dawned on him that he would never buy them out of the going newspaper wage of the time.

The composing room occupied the west end of the floor, overlooking Main street and Pindell alley. On the ground floor beneath it, was the grocery store of James M. Backus. He carried both wet goods and dry provisions as was frequently then customary. The wet goods were retailed and consumed at the back of the store. The compositors were always haggling about the possession of those type cases standing over the spot where the smell through the floor was best. When a newspaper plant was established above him, Mr. Backus was greatly worried lest the compositors would intrude behind the tiers of champagne cases, piled high at the rear of his store and rub elbows with his kid glove customers. His fears were groundless. They found the portions served at Peter Sheridan's place, one door up Pindell alley satisfactory. When the average compositor—and they were about all on the average—passed his dime over the bar for whiskey

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straight, he was more solicitous as to the quantity to be served him than the quality. Editorial forces were not entirely free of bibulous habits. For reasons which will be mentioned, the making of a morning newspaper was far more arduous than now. The use of stimulants to counteract loss of sleep, mental and physical exhaustion was not considered a breach of ethics. Editorial rooms were constantly supplied with liberal samples of new brands of liquors in return for newspaper mention. City reporters had liquor thrust upon them from right and left. Neither the managing editor nor the editor, who were the founders of the Herald and the principal owners, ever touched alcohol. They would not long endure a man on the force who indulged. They reasoned that his copy had to be watched and his intellectual vision might be clouded at the wrong moment. He was considered an avoidable thorn in the side. They were founding a new daily without a subscription list or an iota of established good will upon which to build. There were unavoidable thorns a-plenty in wait for them. They had to endure an intemperate composing room force. A strictly temperate force could not have been secured. It was in the trade. Experience proved too that the newswriter who became an habitual drinker, sooner or later lost his efficiency for the profession.

A side light on the life we led is disclosed by the character of our work rooms. The editorial rooms were the little offices along the main street front, between the business office and the composing room. The location had its advantages. When a man muttering slander ascended the staircase, he first encountered the business office and just naturally blew in there. The person behind the counter could easily shoo him down the hall and set him onto the men in the editorial rooms who were primarily responsible for his ire. These rooms were stuffy and smelly. They were always redolent of rancid paste and roach powder. The tables were sandwiched in—I was about to write desks—I would have eggregiously blundered. The desks were all kitchen tables with raw deal tops. The floors were rarely free of litter. Tom Bell, a short and testy man was the janitor. That was his business in Smith's Arcade for many years and he became the character janitor of the city. We called him the roach sexton. If we said it to his face, we dodged a paste pot.

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The Herald was three months old when I began to carry on with it. But it was already out of swaddling clothes, had skipped the period of knickers entirely and was sprinting to adolescence. Merchants began to come voluntarily to the counting room and proffer their advertising. There were periods when the circulation increased at the rate of fifty per day. This does not refer to transitory increase due to important public events or adventitious circumstances, but a permanent increase upon which the publishers could count through thick and thin. Comparing the newspaper clientele of that day and this, a daily increase of fifty then would be equal to one hundred and fifty now. The publisher of today who finds his circulation bounding upwards at the latter rate is likely to rub his eyes and ask where the lightning struck. The rapidity of growth astonished journalistic circles. The story is worth preserving. I will endeavor to tell some of it. The personality of the men whose life work is woven in it will be interesting. Some characteristics of the friendly citizens of that day, who went out of their way to give the Herald a boost, may not be amiss. It may be said in passing that the key to the success of the venture lay in the consistently pursued policy adopted by the management of separating the kernel of the news from the chaff, publishing the kernel and discarding the chaff.

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The Rewards of the Life.

In the Herald's youth there were mechanical conditions giving rise to its policy of separating the kernel of the news from the chaff, printing the kernel and discarding the chaff. Mechanical conditions imposed condensation and terse statement. It was a miniature sheet compared with present day newspaper sizes. It was composed of four pages, never more nor less. The limitations of the old single cylinder press on which it was printed, from the original type, were not conducive to expansion and contraction to fit the volume of news and advertising. Those four pages, however, were sure to contain the imprint of all the news of the world, of western New York and of the city, which was worth printing. The mass of telegraphic news delivered to it by the virile press association to which it belonged, was so edited and whipped into such shape that the first page contained all that was worth while. The local page contained all the city news and left some space for advertising in the shape of interesting "reading" notices. No display advertisements were allowed there and no advertising matter which did not set forth something of real interest, in an interesting way. Its bold face non-pareil body type was readable and enabled it to print a third more news to the column, than its contemporaries. This body type in conjunction with a carefully selected head lines series, imparted an attractive mechanical appearance.

Mechanical conditions however, never dominated the literary policy of the paper. That policy was fixed and inviolable. A man whose training, habits of thought or powers of expression, did not enable him to conform to it, was not a welcome addition to the editorial staff. The literary ideal was drummed into us from the day our service began. It was something like this: Write your copy so pithily; in such clear statements; in such short, well-formed anglo-saxon sentences, that it will hit your reader in the face; that he who

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runs may read; that it will compel interest on the part of the man who is not interested and does not care to be interested.

We were never confronted with the problem of filling the columns. We had ever with us the problem of printing all that should be printed. There was no occasion for manufacturing news—running emptyings—we called it. The foregoing is not to be construed as condemnatory of simulated news. Statements of fact dressed up as news have their very proper place even in a daily paper. There are readers who would not read an informative or educational article were it not sugared with news. I am mindful too that more readers of my newspaper day were of anglo-saxon extraction. The live happenings of the day appealed to them when clearly stated in short, anglo-saxon terms. Moreover, as one grows older, one becomes more cautious about condemning anything. It is on the theory that:

"Nothing on the earth doth live,
But to the earth some precious good doth give."

The printed languages of western and middle Europe contain involved sentences and complex phrasing. But the immigrants of those countries must struggle with an acquired language in order to acquaint themselves with the news of the day. Why shouldn't simplicity of style be as acceptable to them as to the more nearly anglo-saxon newspaper clientele of the seventies? In any event, it can be safely said that the composing room foreman of the Herald's youth was not required to have on hand some standing galleys of "Specials" or miscellany to fill the gaps.

Thrice blessed is the man who has undergone the baptism of service in the making of a daily paper. One of his happiest rewards is the power, unconsciously exercised, of appraising newspaper contents at their true value. A glance at the headlines enables him to distinguish the real news from that which has been gowned and millinered. He unconsciously separates the sheep from the goats. If newspaper readers, in the mass, were baptized, there would be less big dailies published. It is not the lot of every journalist to possess that other and more intangible power—the power of quick decision

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as to what to print and what to leave unprinted. It is not an acquired power. While it may be broadened by practice, it is an inborn power. It is exercised through the sense of smell, by the man born with the journalistic nose. That is another story.

To tell wherein lies the fascination of the journalist's life requires a dissertation. If one were to try it in a single phrase, the phrase might read: the continuing novelty of daily duty. It is a continuous performance with a new show on every hour. The thought is illustrated by the old story of the man climbing the mountain of knowledge. With each hard-earned, upward step he is blessed with a new joy. Should he reach the summit, in his hour of triumph, he may turn himself about, box the compass surveying the knowledge of the whole world, and say: "I know it all." Forthwith he is bereft, not only of the joys which he had but of the hopes of future joys. Life looks dreary from both extremities—the retrospect and prospect.

The news writer begins each day's duty with high hopes; with the assurance that on that day he is to learn something new. He is not to repeat the experiences of yesterday. He is to add a new thought to his thesaurus; to look through some new vista; to see life at a new angle. The new angle may be only slightly more acute or obtuse than the angle at which he saw life yesterday, but there will be variance enough in degrees to bring him new experience. The opportunities of breaking into the profession are few compared with the number of those who essay it. There are few prizes to be won. It would seem appropriate to assume that the man who has broken in and has made a clean success of it and remains in until it has become a habit and captured one of the prizes, could easily break out. When he tries it, he finds his mental attitude has become so constructed or reconstructed that he is unfitted for anything else. No other vocation seems to be open to him. After all it is his real preference to carry on, doing thankless work, thankless because it is impersonal. The newspaper job, in the average if not in the prizes, is a thankless job. Critical readers would fain render meed for a good piece of work. They cannot. The worker is unknown. Pur-

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suant to the ethics of the profession he remains unknown and receives no meed until:

"The leaves of the judgment book unfold."

Then receiveth he his meed. Today, the day after, all his working days, he "writeth in water"—in the daily current of life. His writing endureth in the hour it is read. If deeply written it may endure until the end of the day. It vanisheth with the current in which it is written. It is replaced tomorrow. He who writes only to serve his fellows, without thought of self, finally graves himself on the hearts of his readers who never know the graver.

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The Smeller of News.

This chapter is about the journalistic nose. It pertains to the inborn power of some men to smell news in the air, in the sea and in the earth beneath. It is to be illustrated by pictures from life. They are from the life of a man who could scent out a woodchuck hole in the middle of a city street and by smelling around the mouth tell whether there was any news down below worth digging out. The story goes to show that journalists of the kind who capture one of the few prizes which the profession has to offer, are born, not made. A pointer dog may have a resounding pedigree and he may have had the best training which the dog trainer can impart. If he hasn't the natural power of scent he will never make a hunting dog. On the other hand, however keen his scent, he must have an education to properly fit him for the technique of his art.

The life is that of a man who shall remain unknown even as he worked unknown to and unthanked by the readers of the various dailies which he helped to make. We will call him Bill. First and last he did a little "hacking" for a number of papers. He was a newspaper camp follower, satisfied with such pot luck as came his way, taking many rebuffs like a good sport. The lure of the life and his natural qualifications for it, brought it to pass that he clutched the skirts of an editorial staff as a bird's toes automatically clutch the perch. He gloried in the success of the paper to which he was allowed to contribute, never asking or expecting thanks if his contribution helped to make the columns interesting. He shared in the general depression when his paper failed to get an important pieces of news. He long since received the posthumous thanks which are the reward of the journalist for his unknown and impersonal work during life. His name is legion but newspaper men of the early eighties will recognize this Bill.

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I recall the occasion when his power of smelling news was first brought to my notice. On the way to report for duty one day, he overtook me and we walked together. We met a man with whom neither of us was acquainted. The man nodded as we passed, evidently knowing our vocation. We had gone only a few steps when Bill stopped short and said: "I believe that man knows something." Like a flash he ran back and overtook the stranger in front of Reynold's Arcade. As I looked that way I saw Bill taking notes. In the next day's paper the best piece of news on the local page was Bill's.

He had one deficiency and one thorn in the flesh. They rendered him unavailable to the Herald other than as a temporary substitute or on special occasions. His deficiency lay in the fact that he had not received the grammar school education of that day. Much travail on his part did not result in copy up to the paper's standard. There were no inside or rewrite men. Every man on the news staff must be a "leg" man, going out on his own legs, gathering his news, writing the copy and reading the proof.

We will forget the thorn in the flesh so far as we may. The fiber of which Bill was made was not strong enough to decline the liquor which was free to reporters at most bars. On a blue Monday when some of the staff were sick or absent, to Bill was entrusted the reporting of the grand circuit races. At the beginning of the night trick Bill did not appear with his notes. At ten o'clock there was anxiety over his absence. At eleven o'clock he staggered in. Forty years of mature reflection has never brought to me a perfect comprehension as to how Bill mounted the staircase to the second floor of Smith's Arcade. Some of the men helped him to an old carpet covered couch standing in a corner and went through his pockets. There were exclamations of delight when his note book was found. They became exclamations of dismay when the notes proved to be quail tracks running up and down and across the pages. At the intersection of the perpendicular and horizontal tracks were the places where the quails had stopped to scratch for food. Bill got no nearer the reporter's stand than the bar beneath. Between drinks he had careened to the bar room window overlooking the track and solemnly

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recorded his impressions of what was going on. We pinned the leaves to the wall. Works of the impressionist school were not then so common.

Toward midnight I was ordered to go out and cover the races. I took the only trail which led to the news. The Clinton hotel occupied the site of the building on Exchange street now the new home of the Lincoln Branch of the Alliance bank. Across the entire front was a wide porch with a row of chairs. Bert Sheldon was a typical landlord of the old school. He could stand in the lobby of his inn, grasp the hand of the traveller who registered there ten years before and call him by name. Beneath the porch was the entrance to the Kremlin dining hall made famous by Norman Day, whose hobby was a big roast turkey on the sideboard the year round. Newspaper men dropped in there after a night's work and pointed out to the sleepy waiter the cut of turkey which looked good to them.

But going back to the story. The horsemen were housed at the Clinton. I roused the night clerk from his cot behind the desk and in the name of the Herald commanded him to awaken the sleepers and get us the news. We went through the corridors banging the doors. We were compelled to make the rounds because frequently an occupant could give us an accurate report only as to those events in which he had an entry. When we came to a man who knew only facts already gathered, regrets were profusely scattered in the name of the Herald. The results when tabulated composed a fairly accurate statement of the names of the winners. The grosser errors in the record of times might be passed on to the compositor.

Bill's power of scent helped him ferret out the news. It was a greater help in measuring the value of news. When a well wisher came to the editorial rooms and with bated breath whispered about a big item, Bill was the one most likely to have time on his hands. His handling of the situation was always a display of the consummate art of the born journalist. He gave the visitor a look over and took a few sniffs of the atmosphere about. Before the opening sentences of the story were well out, he had sounded it to its depths and determined

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the space it was worth. It it was real news, off went his coat. If it was worth only two sticks of type, he gave it only two sticks of his time, though he had nothing else to do.

Poor Bill! Your scent of the news at the top would have sufficed to guide you safely to the summit of an unscaled mountain. You had God-made attributes beyond the common run. Their full fruition was blasted by a man-made evil.

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The Leg Man.

I have suggested that the work of making a daily paper was more physically and mentally exhausting in the seventies. The statement is entitled to elaboration. Its force is best appreciated by mentioning present day agencies which facilitate the collection and printing of news. Those which promote the collection of news are first in importance. Among them are the telephone, the motor car, the bicycle, electric street cars, interurban electric lines, greatly increased means of transportation via the steam railroads and extensions of the telegraph. Agencies which facilitate the editing and printing of the news are such as the linotype machine, the typewriter, stereotyping and the fast web press. At the beginning of my newspaper life less than half the rural hamlets of the county were in communication with the city, particularly at night. Their accidents, homicides and disasters must be covered and reported. Our only way of reaching them was by horse and we overdrove many a horse trying to get copy back in time for the going to press. The Herald inaugurated the policy of printing all the legitimate news of the territory. Other papers had to follow. Herein lay one explanation of the fact that the name of the Herald was anathema to its contemporaries.

Newspaper men will appreciate the comparative ease with which they now gather certain classes of city news when their attention is called to the assistance rendered them by the fire alarm signal system and the police telephone system. At the time to which these memories relate, watching the blotter at police headquarters brought no fish to a reporter's net. The latter contained no reports except as a patrolman occasionally came in with a prisoner or for repairs to himself. The newspapers frequently had important city news before it was known to the police. The headquarters men

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complained if one of our devils failed to deliver to them the first copies off the press so they could read about the happenings of the night.

This condition cut another way, however. When the forms went to press and finis was written to the work of making that day's issue, the city editor began to worry about the news he may have missed. His daily, nerve-wracking experience was the opening of the pages of his contemporaries. When a telegraph editor observes that the telegraph page of a contemporary contains a piece of real world news which he didn't get, he dismisses the subject with the thought that readers will doubt the genuineness of the news because his paper doesn't have it and forget it. In any event the press association to which his paper belongs is an entity with shoulders broad enough to carry the blame. A failure to print local news cannot be readily passed on. It is a chicken which always comes home to roost. It flies straight to its perch on the city editor's head.

There were other reasons why the Herald's name was anathema among its contemporaries. It was printing all the news in a condensed and interesting form. It was selling for two cents at a time when the standard newspaper price was a half dime. Its circulation was increasing faster than its cylinder press could print. Its name was never mentioned by other papers. It was ignored for a considerable period after its publication began. I recall the day when this studied policy of silence ended. The incident is illustrative in other ways.

I was returning from an assignment, on a blustery, fall night. As I passed a gas lamp I overheard a conversation between a couple of men leaning against the post. The words came clearly through the snow flecked air: " * * * the barge went down and Arnoldt's son is drowned with the rest." They proved to be employees of the Bartholomay Brewing company. In that connection they had heard of a marine disaster somewhere on Lake Ontario, in which a son of the secretary of the company had perished. No report of the disaster had been received at our office and after I

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had handed in the copy of my evenings assignment, I was ordered to cover the wreck. It was getting late. Fred Southgate, the foreman was beginning to hint about locking the forms. It was his custom to begin hinting under his breath early in the night. As the fatal hour approached we heard his quiet tones coming down the hall: "Get your copy in." The copy which was not forthwith placed on his composing table, went to the discard. He was bound to see that the forms were locked on the dot and trundled out to the press and that the early morning mails be not missed. We tied to Fred.

The directory showed that George Arnoldt, secretary of the brewing company lived in Strong street, now Columbia avenue. The house still stands behind the stone buttress which turns the corner into Seward street, aged under the winds and weathers of the forty years since I roused its master that wintry night. I girded my loins for the run, laying aside top coat and waist coat and buttoning tight the under coat. The sprint was out Plymouth avenue and down Strong street. Ten minutes of precious time was lost in rousing the family and securing some-one's presence at the door. Mr. Arnoldt had no details of the wreck. His son was a member of a harbor contracting firm. The partners had been engaged on a contract at an eastern port and were sailing for Charlotte to lay up for the winter. The entire working force, composed mainly of Rochester men, had embarked on a barge in tow of a tug. Mr. Arnoldt's only news was contained in a telegram received early in the evening stating that the barge had foundered and it was feared all on board were lost.

My home run was at an even better pace than the outward run. Mr. Arnoldt had told me that he had not been interviewed by the representative of any other paper. It looked like a "leave" and proved to be one. The story was therefore allowed two-thirds of a column. The bare facts which had been gathered would not fill that space. A description of the marine scene at the hour of the foundering was a real necessity in order to make the story complete. It happened that I had just completed for a publication other

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than the Herald, the copy of a critique of the marine canvas of Alfred Perkins: "Off a Rock Bound Coast." I was familiar with Lake Ontario in her angry moods. The description was woven into the copy and the allotted space filled.

The second day after the story appeared when we arrived at the editorial rooms to report for the day, we were met by Jacob A. Hoekstra, the city editor. He was greatly agitated. His exploded words suggested incoherency. He branished a newspaper overhead. The ice had been broken. An influential daily had finally printed the name of the Herald. The Buffalo Courier had sheared out the story of the shipwreck, headlines and all and credited it to the Rochester Herald.

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Making Folks Believe.

Forty years ago the phrase "newspaper propaganda," roused no disturbing devil in any man's breast. It was rarely heard or read. We had not with us the professional publicity man—the man who for a consideration makes the public think as his employers want the public to think. He is ordinarily a newspaper man by right of birth who has graduated from the ranks. His graduation is upwards or downwards according to the subject of his labors and one's point of view. He finds the handsomer emoluments of the propagandist's art, preferable to the straight practice of his profession.

It is an art. I have suggested that one of the newswriter's rewards is the ability to appraise a newspaper's contents at their true worth. Now that we have come to it, we are bound to admit that this ability has its limitations. The exceptions, however, are just enough to prove the rule. The most seasoned journalist cannot always detect the hand of the propagandist, when a master of the art guides the pen. The managing editor who first admits the matter to his columns knows. But that is another story. If I were to write the story from my own point of view, it might not be wholly a mess of condemnation. The man who fathers the printing can be likened to one who utters negotiable paper. It may be regular paper, entitled to pass from hand to hand, in honest circles, in the ordinary course of business. In the courts, however, the word utter has a sinister sound. It is often used in relating a forgery. But this is all beside the road to the story of once upon a time when the Herald engaged in propaganda and if we dally beside the road we will not finish the story in this chapter.

The founders of the Herald were Samuel D. Lee and Samuel H. Lowe. When I joined the staff, Mr. Lee was the managing editor and Mr. Lowe the leader writer. Their co-operation was most perfect and between them there was

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constant supervision of all copy which the paper printed. Mortifying inconsistencies which occasionally manage to ingratiate themselves into the columns of the best regulated newspapers, were very rare. Among the public welfare measures which Mr. Lee and Mr. Lowe determined to advance soon after they started the paper, was that of a public park system. The foundation of their determination was the desirability of water frontage and riparian rights and their enhancement along with the industrial development of society. Editorially, they called attention to what they deemed an urgent necessity—that the municipality seize the shores of the river for public uses before it was too late. About that time Dr. Edward M. Moore began agitating a public park system, involving the shores of the river above and below the city. The Herald gave him and his little coterie of friends its most cordial support. Systematic agitation was necessary for the reason that the project required the expenditure of a large sum of money for those times.

When I was assigned to take charge of the propaganda I found the assignment congenial. In my boyhood the river and I were chums. I loved it in its midsummer peacefulness. I admired it in its springtime anger. My birthplace was beside one of its upper reaches. In the still spring nights, it sang to me through the open window in its murmur among the flooded willows. The advancement of its interests was a labor of joy.

The public had then no lawful access to the water's edge except along the lanes leading to the bridges. Rochester, like the average utilitarian city of the western world, had built costly bridges without any bridgeheads. In this second decade of the twentieth century we have a city planning commission and while it functions we will have no more bridges without suitable approaches. We began the agitation by covertly printing a paragraph now and then, featuring a citizen's inability to enjoy the contentment of the water side or casting a line when the fishing was good, without trespassing on private property and that no one who respected law and order cared to become a wilful trespasser. A time came when a privately called meeting was held at Dr. Moore's home

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in Fitzhugh street. Some of the attendants, like William S. Kimball, Mortimer Reynolds, H. Austin Brewster, Lewis H. Morgan and Silas Walbridge, were Dr. Moore's neighbors. The object of the meeting was not so much to decide that a park system should be established and determine the lands to be taken, as to formulate plans for winning over the electorate.

The problem was to instill the rate payers with a vision of service to themselves partially and principally for their city and the generations to come after them. The plan adopted at this meeting was the obvious one of utilizing the power of the press. It involved the publication of interviews with citizens who had made successes of their own businesses and were entitled to be interested in the city's business. The interviews were to be printed as far as possible in connection with local happenings, making them appropos. They were to be prepared in advance and kept standing on the galleys so that in case of a happening worth a news paragraph, it could appear along with the interview. These interviews, so far as the Herald was concerned at least, were to be so pithy and pointed that the average reader would read every line. The press was also to accentuate the necessity of public breathing grounds and the natural beauties of the river scenery. The meeting then went so far as to allocate the interviews. It was agreed that there should be no anonymous interviews. There must be no foundation for a suspicion that any of them were manufactured to order in the editorial rooms.

Patrick Barry, offered to be responsible for interviews relating to the flora of the river shore region. His technical knowledge gave prestige to matter of that character printed in connection with his name. Dr. Moore illustrated his versatility by agreeing to furnish interviews bearing upon the river's geology. The subject of the fauna of the river region went begging but word went out to amateur local naturalists that communications concerning objects discovered in their rambles, would be acceptable and bird and snake stories of the gorge began to come in. Lewis H. Morgan, a most delightful man to interview, graciously descended from the eminence of his knowledge to the little things of Indian

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lore hovering about the region. It goes without saying that he could glorify an unseen Iroquois long house and the Hanford Landing trail, just as Mr. Barry could glorify the gnarled old junipers clinging to the sides of the river gorge.

A local propaganda with such support could not fail of success. It succeeded before it was fully launched. Before the line of interviews had been completed and while some of the earlier numbers were standing in the galleys, the electorate cried out in its sleep and when awake: "Bring on your park system and tax us for it"! It took some years of negotiating between those who wanted the parks to come free of all political influences and those who would have them party adjuncts, before they materialized through a special act of the legislature calling for a strictly non-partisan park commission rather than through an amendment of the city charter. No good would be accomplished by publishing that part of the story. The need of keeping park management separate from political management was more urgent then than today and the parks having been born as a purely business proposition have fortunately remained a business proposition, so far as their management is concerned. I have confessed to having engaged in newspaper propaganda. If it were wrong, I am prepared to shed a tear—just one.

When the New York Central tracks crossed the city's streets at grade, an average of a victim a week was slain. Two were maimed. The Herald engaged in a propaganda to abolish the evil and in due course the tracks were elevated. If Messrs. Lee and Lowe were still in the journalistic harness, would they strike at the system under which three times as many a week are slain and maimed on the highways by motor cars? If they started striking they would keep striking with a passion to win. The prize would be worth while. They might not win it unaided. A press, banded against the wrong, can force a remedy.

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In the Limelight.

The daughter of the house has warned me that if these chronicles fail to contain a chapter about public speakers whom I have reported, they will fail to truly chronicle. "Billy" had in mind the days when platform speaking was an art and big and little towns presented their winter course. We will have the chapter, however, with Gough, Phillips, Talmage, Cooke, Billings and other professionals of the craft left out.

I entered the University in 1876. I wanted to stay entered to matriculation. The money to keep me there had mainly to be earned from day to day. I carried on by taking such odd jobs in newspaper work as fell my way. I shortly got onto the regular salary list of a weekly, the Rochester Sunday Herald. Its publication had been going on for some years before that of the daily Herald began but it had no connection with the daily. The latter published no Sunday edition for a number of years after it was founded. I had become the editor of the weekly when I left it to take a reporter's position on the daily. I considered the change to be several steps upward. The weekly belonged to the other class. As its editor I could do little to change its tone, because its policies were dictated by the owners. They ran it in a manner which they believed was best suited to make it a paying proposition. When one's favorite paper breaks out editorially and espouses a course which one thinks is perfectly damnable, one best not inquire as to who is the crooked thinker on its staff. The owners are not likely to be publishing a paper just out of love for journalism. Men do not ordinarily put a lot of thousands of dollars into a business if they cannot manage that business as they desire and they may not always manage it in the way a few people or the minority would like to have them manage it. Ideal journalism is most likely to exist when the editors are also the owners and those were the conditions under which I began to carry on with the Herald.

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It happened that the very first deliberative body whose proceedings I was called upon to report resulted in a debate that stirred the nation. It was the debate between George William Curtis and Roscoe Conkling at the Republican State Convention in the fall of 1876. It was held in the large auditorium on the top floor of the City Hall. It was well known that Mr. Curtis was coming to the convention prepared to state his views upon party management and policy. Few of the delegates and none of the spectators, however, looked forward to a personal debate between the leaders of the two factions within the party, abounding with such bitterness and passion. Curtis first spoke from the floor. Conkling was at all times on the platform. When Curtis rose to reply the delegates were in a state of great excitement. He was compelled to take the platform. The speeches of Curtis were more finished and scholarly than those of Conkling. He made no personal attack on his opponent or those who differed with him. He had the galleries with him. Conkling had the delegates with him. He could afford to say most anything. Conkling abounded in sarcasm. While his language lacked the polish of that of Curtis, it was effective oratory for the occasion. The appearance, rhetoric and diction of Mr. Curtis were immaculate. Conkling recognized this and was angered. The climax of the debate came when Conkling hissed: "Man milliner."

As soon as the debate began I realized that it would be of national interest and readers would want the exact and actual words of the speakers rather than a paraphrase. I adopted a procedure which I afterwards followed in reporting platform speeches. It involved quoting short passages, verbatim. They were selected with the view of illustrating the thread of the discourse and were connected up by paraphrasing. After I began reporting for the Herald I found this method well suited to the paper's needs. It was not its policy to publish speeches of great length and it could not use long, drawn out copy, unless, as occasionally happened, the matter was of extraordinary local interest.

One of the most difficult speakers I ever attempted to report was Robert G. Ingersoll. He employed no manuscript,

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was highly polemic and his words came on at express train speed with dynamic force behind them. His platform speeches related to his peculiar views upon ethical subjects. They were radical views for that day. They roused the passions of hearers who would not accept them and he seldom finished an address without interruptions. He gloried in an interruption and flailed the floor with the interruptor. The method of reporting which I have described was well adapted to the preparation of the copy of a report of one of his lectures. A paraphrase of one of his speeches would naturally include many words from the vocabulary of the reporter rather than from the vocabulary of the speaker and would result in a more or less inane report.

I have alluded to Mr. Ingersoll because I happen to recall an incident which occurred the last time I reported him. He was speaking in the old opera house on South St. Paul street. I had a table to myself in the flies where I could take off my coat for strenuous work. He was very sensative about being mis-reported. A report in the shape of a running commentary on the speech with a few of the speaker's words omitted or a few wrong words included could easily result in producing a misconception of the speaker's peculiar views. On the following day when I reported for duty I found him in the editorial rooms chatting with some of the boys. He said he had dropped in to tell the Herald that it had reported him correctly because it had printed his own words.

At the time of the death of Judge Sanford E. Church, it was arranged that on the way from Albany to Albion, the funeral delegates should stop over at Rochester and that George Raines should deliver a funeral oration. The appointed place for the obsequies was the lobby of the old Osburn House, now the site of the Granite building. The hotel occupied no part of the ground floor and the lobby was reached by a broad flight of steps from Main Street adjacent to Darrow's book store. My arrival at the scene was delayed. I found the staircase packed. Some policemen were vainly trying to get fainting women out of the ruck. Mr. Raines was then approaching the perihelion of his powers as a forensic orator. His voice carried from the lobby to the street, but his words were indistinguishable. Efforts to get within a suitable dis-

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tance of the speaker failed but the orator must be reported. Mr. Raines unexpectedly went on to Albion with the funeral party, not to return until the following day. The time was before the introduction of the telephone. Immediately upon the Judge's death I had been despatched to Albion to gather material for copy about his home and village life and I was reasonably familiar with the record of his public life. I had reported Mr. Raines many times and was familiar with his style. Late that evening after efforts to obtain a line on his speech had failed, I wrote up a report of the oration. About noon the next day Mr. Raines appeared at the Herald's business office. Mr. Frank T. Skinner, the business manager, happened to be behind the desk. Mr. Raines abruptly put the question: "Who reported my speech at the judge's funeral yesterday?" Mr. Skinner disclaimed any knowledge of the subject. Mr. Raines then asked for a dozen of the day's papers. Mr. Skinner felt sure that a sale of a dozen papers over the counter was good for twelve law-suits but he handed them over. As Mr. Raines put them under his arm and walked out he muttered: "I didn't say a —— word of it, but it's better than anything I did say."

Forty years ago a larger percentage of the population attended church regularly. This statement does not infer that the city has become worse. A larger percentage of the whole attended church because for instance, a smaller percentage of the whole was European born and accustomed to the European continental Sabbath. The Herald endeavored to keep its readers informed upon the pulpit thought of the time. A large proportion of them wanted to be informed. It was not common for the city pastors to furnish the press with manuscript of their sermons. We had to go out and get what we wanted and that meant real work. Very naturally, we elected to report pulpits conveniently located and those where one would hear something interesting, stated in an interesting way. Above all, we sought those speakers who were easy reporting subjects. I will presently state what is meant.

I recall three pastors whose churches were in convenient distance of the editorial rooms, who filled the bill. They were: Dr. James B. Shaw, of the Brick Church; Dr. D. W.

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C. Huntington of Asbury Church then located on the present site of the East Side Savings bank and Dr. T. Edwin Brown, of the Second Baptist. There were others whose sermons were equally reportable, like Dr. A. Judson Barrett, Dr. Samuel M. Campbell and Dr. W. D'Orville Doty. I mention the three because the reporting of them happens to be the more indelibly impressed upon the retina of my memory. All three had a deliberate and measured style of delivery whereby they were easily followed. They were analytical. The headings of their analyses were pegs upon which their hearers could hang up the thoughts of the speakers for future reference. What their congregations could do the average reporter could do. They hewed to the line. They made no eloquent chance remarks which became pitfalls for the unwary reporter. Haphazard thoughts, alien to the theme, abounding with good rhetoric and eloquently put on the spur of the moment. frequently make a vivid impression. When a reporter falls to them his report becomes a spoiled report. The reader's thought is diverted from the speaker's theme and the speaker is mis-understood by those who did not hear him. He is misreported though his audience understood.

All three of the pastors mentioned occupied their pulpits by divine right. President Martin B. Anderson formulated a crucial test of a man's right to be a preacher of the gospel. About the time when star preachers came into vogue and drew handsome salaries, some of his men were casting sidelong glances at the ministry as a way of getting a good living. He discouraged such a course by occasionally saying in his chapel talks: "Some of you young men come around to me, now and then, and tell me that you've got a call to the ministry. I tell you that you haven't any call to be a preacher of the gospel until you have an overpowering conviction that you are not good for anything else."

Dr. Shaw in particular frequently ended his sermons by summarizing. The summary was his peroration. It made an excellent paragraph to place at the beginning of a report of the sermon. His congregation hung to every word until the end. His gently modulated voice suggesting peace and rest and his face seemingly framed in light, betokened him a minister of God by divine right.

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The Griller and the Grilled.

Forty years ago has a more euphonious ring than forty-five years ago. But, to be precise, forty-five years have passed since my superiors had a right to call me cub. One of the outstanding journalistic mutations which have since occurred relates to the demeanor of members of the press toward each other. The better type of the modern newspaper, in print at least, doffs its hat to its local contemporaries and wishes "the top o' the mornin' to you." It is no longer in good form for editors and publishers to use their columns for wash tub purposes. They may still think about the despicable fellows who run the other sheet but they are not so prone to think aloud in their own print. That is still the province of journalists of the latin American capitals. When I was a cub, however, newspapers did not always sail the streets with their arms in loving embrace about each other's necks. They were more frequently locating each others fifth rib.

The foregoing reflections result from a recollection of the most disagreeable assignment ever entrusted to me. It was an assignment to go out and get certain interviews and write them up in the most peppery style I could command. The most poignant recollections of the retired newswriter, who, in his day, wanted to be and act the gentleman, will cluster around interviews he was compelled to make in the course of his duties. One gentleman doesn't crave to intrude upon the privacy of another gentleman and ask pointed questions about private views upon social or political questions or the affairs of private life with intent to publish the answers. Particularly is this true when the interviewed man knows that if he refuses to answer, answers may be put into his mouth or his refusal to answer may be so twisted as to subject him to public ridicule. I would prefer to think that the particular interviews I was ordered to procure were designed to test my ultimate fitness to be a newswriter, just as the Iroquois

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father took his son far into the forest and left him to fast in order to ascertain whether the boy had the making of a warrior. I am sorry to say that the language used in connection with my orders forbids this interpretation.

I was ordered to go out and interview John E. Morey the first, of the Union and Advertiser and Dyer D. S. Brown of the Democrat and Chronicle about questions of newspaper comity. I will be very frank. When I reached the street I came to a dead stop. Which should I first interview? In my own mind I felt that the proper course of procedure depended upon which of the gentlemen happened to be wearing the softest shoe at the time. If I could leave the first interview with a sound body, my chances of getting back to the editorial rooms to write my report, would be much better. The locus finally determined the course to be taken. The stair case from the walk to the office of the Union in the block opposite the court house, had hard, iron treads. The way up was steeper than present day architecture approves. The way down would be steeper still, if a man took it head foremost his motion accelerated by force from behind. Egress to the street from the Democrat office seemed less dangerous and I pulled myself together to interview Mr. Brown first. I was graciously received and the subject of the interview was calmly discussed. Some misapprehensions were removed and I learned that he knew much about managing a big newspaper. I started for the Union office as chesty as Bob Acres when the pistols were out of sight. I was fully relieved when Mr. Morey also received me graciously and he too gave me a dispassionate statement of his view of the matter. Before I left him I had found that his brain behind the business management was helping to make the Union pay. It goes without saying that after I made a verbal report and misconceptions had been corrected no peppery copy was written and no report of the interviews published.

At the time of which I write the Herald espoused the cause of no political party. It was more than independent in politics. It reserved the right to support any party or any candidate for office or political preferment which it deemed worthy of support and to oppose any man or measure.

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Mayor Cornelius R. Parsons was, for a long period the titular head of the dominant party. We were frequently directed to interview him upon matters relating to the welfare of the municipality. We tried to keep the people informed about the expenditure of the public money. Mayor Parsons could give a delightful interview upon subjects upon which he wanted to be interviewed. If the reporter was receptive and printed what the mayor wanted printed, the printing was quite surely grinding the mayor's ax or some other ax. When the mayor did not want a subject discussed in the press, he was a past master at turning the interview into another channel. The breaking in of a cub reporter was a time worth while. He was assigned to interview the mayor upon a subject as to which, it was well understood, the mayor would not be interviewed. We held our sides when the cub came back, absolutely innocent of any information upon the subject assigned him and brimming over with the greatest piece of news ever published about some wholly unrelated subject. We had a way of putting the mayor on record, however. We would first go to Alderman Michael H. Fitzsimons or to John Bower, the most eminent municipal accountant of his time, and get priming. We would then go to the mayor and ask him to admit or deny. Whichever he did our purpose was served.

Interviewing a man upon civic matters, who has not formed well considered opinions was time wasted. In these days a reporter can sit by his desk phone and call man after man until he finds the man who knows something and is willing to talk and no great amount of valuable time is lost. In the day of the Herald's youth when one had to go out and perhaps spend the afternoon or half the night finding the man to interview, time was of the essence of the matter. We had therefore a tabulated list of men whom we knew where to find at a given hour and who had formed opinions upon certain subjects.

I recall some of the men on that list. For instance when we wanted an interview upon a civic subject or a legal subject affecting the public interests, it was safe to go to Theodore Bacon. A reference to his availability illustrates the case.

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He had pronounced opinions. They were expressed in delightfully terse and perspicuous english. His punctiliousness and learning eminently fitted him for public office. His utter loathing of ward politics and his abhorance of party bosses, kept him on the off side.

On our tab list also were business men, engaged in manufacturing or commerce. If a man on the tab, was tried once or twice and found to be incapable of giving us information as to other than his own business, a query mark was placed against his name. The dependables, the men who knew business at large, were underscored. A time came when the rumors of the street announced that Mr. Eastman had perfected the photographic film. I was ordered to get the news. The solitary clerk in the little office made this statement in an unequivocal tone: "No sir. No one can see Mr. Eastman. He is in the dark room. If we should open the door, we would let the light in." Light was just what I was after. I tacked and pointed for another quarter. Two of the men who were financing the experimental work, were Henry A. Strong and Brackett H. Clark. They were neighbors occupying adjoining houses in Lake Avenue. Mr. Strong was a whip manufacturer. He had business prescience and may have foreseen the time when there would be no demand for whips. He made the affairs of the Eastman Kodak Company his business and his connection with it became well known. Mr. Clark's part in the founding of the city's greatest single industry should be better known. He was a native of Salem. He brought to the new city of Rochester the longer tested business methods of New England and its more pronounced moral convictions. An optimist by nature, he saw the silver lining when others saw only a uniformly black cloud. When one of the long series of experiments in the production of a film which would take the place of heavy, fragile glass, failed to produce desired results, he would say: "Never mind, George Eastman will get it yet." When a formula went wrong in the compounding or in the working of it and a cartload or so of goods were scrapped, he invested more than enough money to cover the loss. At a certain hour in the day he left his woodmill at Lyell avenue and West street and after stopping perhaps on the way, at the scene of the film

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experiments on an upper floor of the block on State street, he appeared at his paint store where the Security Trust Company building stands. His methodical habits assured us that we were likely to find him there at a fixed time. That was one of the reasons why we went there to interview him. It was the least though. No paper craves to print knocks affecting the business of its city. Mr. Clark always gave us sunshine to print.

It used to be a subject of comment in the editorial rooms that there were some public officers whom it was useless to interview regarding public affairs. Some preferred to have nothing printed about matters pertaining to their office. Some had no objection on that score but had no conception of news values. I have tried to explain to myself why it is that of all the public men I interviewed during my newspaper life, the personality of one overshadows that of all others. What I say about him is probably the explanation. It was Governor Reuben E. Fenton. I was in the company of the late Lewis P. Ross at the time of my first meeting with the governor. Mr. Ross was also a native of the southern tier. He was personally acquainted with Governor Fenton and introduced me. I received straight out statements bearing on the subject of the interview. There were no evidences of diplomacy. There were no frills and no evasions. One felt that he was talking with a statesman who was no time server—who had no thought as to how his statements would look in print or how they might affect the political fortunes of himself or his party. He impressed one as having lived over from the more courtly days of the elder statesmen before interviewing became a fine art to be skillfully practiced by interviewer and interviewed.

The distinction between officials who can tell a newspaper story and those who cannot, is illustrated by men who have represented this congressional district. It does not follow that the representative who fails to possess the journalistic nose has less of the qualities which should go with the office. General legislation pending or passed at Washington is not readily made local news. When John Van Voorhis came home for a week end we lay in wait for him. He had the news per-

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spective which enabled him to clothe congressional news with a local dress. The annual river and harbor bill containing the appropriation for the dredging of the river mouth, made a readable story when spiced with his undersurface wit and garnished with his picturesque phrases. John M. Davy could also give us the material for an interesting story. The thread of his stories was quite frequently a heart string. Social mutations which have since occurred may have lessened the prevalence of altruism but at the time of which I write, the average newspaper reader wanted something of what the profession calls "human interest" in every issue.

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Not to be Reported.

I am asked why I didn't adopt journalism as a profession. When I became a lawyer the folks in the neighborhood of the old home asked why I failed to enter the ministry. Following my manumission, I left the farm to procure an education, and they supposed that I was studying for the ministry. The answer to both queries is that I started out to be a lawyer. I intended to be a lawyer from the time when I came upon an old scrap book in the farm house attic and discovering that its underpinning was a volume of Blackstone, steamed off the scraps and read the book. Journalism was a means to my end. It proved a priceless means. It furnished a priceless experience. The period of its practice constitutes one of the most interesting periods of my life. Notwithstanding its manifold allurements I do not recall that I ever seriously thought of abandoning the other goal I had started out to reach. I am bound to admit though that at times when things have gone awry, I would not have seriously objected if the title hereof could have read: "Recollections of Forty Years of Rochester Journalism."

I go back to my alma mater at commencement time and mix a little with the members of the graduating class. I cannot get their point of view. I am young yet but they belong to another generation. They chant the praises of their stars on the football team or the basket ball team. One has to quiz them hard to discover the purpose for which they have been educating themselves. After quizzing them one does not always discover the purpose. Many of them are going to engage in some temporary occupation until they find out what their life work better be. In my college day every man was in college in order to prepare himself for a predetermined vocation. His courses of study were selected with that end in view. Nowadays an alarmingly large proportion of the graduating classes of the colleges of these United States, go groping about after commencement seeking an occupation. They balance the scroll of their parchment on their extended

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palms as a divining rod which shall tell them what to do, as a water wand which perchance may tip in the direction of some hidden well from which they may draw the water of their life.

Occasionally, a good friend is not satisfied at being told why I did not stick to journalism. He wants to know what I would have done if I had stuck to it. The query is put, I suppose, on the theory that so many of us have said so many times how we would run a newspaper. Quite likely, when we start our first paper we will try to do what we said we would do. When we start our second paper, if we have money enough left to start a second, it is an even chance that we will not try to do any of the things we said we would do. There is no other business the proprietor of which has so many friends ready to run his business for him, so many people at his elbow ready, willing and anxious to tell him how it should be run. The inexperienced man usually finds that the type foundry, the printing press builder, the paper warehouse and the pay roll have absorbed his money between them in an inconceivably short space of time. He has the experience then.

The business of publishing a daily paper is not one which just about breaks even for a series of years. Ordinarily, it is either making money fast or losing money fast. Its course is a reminder of one of the southronisms which the Herald once sorted out from a handful contained in a sermon by Sam Jones. Having once been started on its printed round it has kept going round, ascribed to various peripatetic evangelists: "There is only one road to Heaven and you all are on it, but a mighty few of you are going towards it and a powerful lot of you are going the other way."

The experienced man arranges his commitments something after this fashion: How can subscribers, buyers and advertisers best be secured. The answer involves a decision as to the class of subscribers and readers to which his journal shall cater. Like subscribers and readers, like advertisers. If he decides that his chances of success are best by publishing a paper for people who like impurity, he publishes a

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yellow sheet. He reasons that people who like impurity do not habitually use pure english in their every day speech. Therefore his editors and reporters are encouraged to fill the columns with impure english. Inasmuch as this is not to be reported. I venture, perhaps with some hesitancy, to advance the opinion that it is not necessary to print colloquial english in order to interest people who speak colloquial english. The simple, straight from the shoulder style of Chaucer can be made to meet the needs of the uneducated reader. The man who is sufficiently lettered to read slangy slang can surely be interested in short anglo-saxon words incorporated in short, clearly stated sentences. If his native tongue is an alien tongue, there is all the more reason why the english which is set before him should not be colloquial english.

The successful publication of a daily news journal is more difficult anywhere in these United States than anywhere in England, than anywhere in France or Italy or Germany. Anywhere in England a newspaper is published only for John Bull. Anywhere in France it is published only for Jacques Bonhomme. Anywhere in the United States it is published for the saxon, for the latin, for the teuton and the slav. The racial characteristics of each must be considered. The age long, inbred point of view of each must not be outraged.

It is often proposed to fit a race of newswriters for the difficult and delicate task by means of the school of journalism. Surely, if the man who is about to adopt journalism as a vocation, has not received a general education, he should have all the technical education he can get. The school of journalism may greatly assist the man whose education is deficient. It may help the college man to put his acquired knowledge more speedily into the practice of journalism. It cannot take the man who is not a journalist born and who has not had a liberal education and make a journalist of him. It cannot make a journalist of every college man. If all newspaper men received their education by means of the school course in journalism and all were put through the same mill, the press could easily assume a monotonous level. Every fire report would begin with the same "lead," reading: "A fire of unknown origin gutted * * * ."

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Am I scolding at the end of the trail? Scolding, someone says, about things as to which I have no authority to scold. But this part of the scold is not to be reported. In any event will I scold, without authority, at any shadow of a claim that the english of Shakespeare or the english of the King James version is not good enough for news imprint. The alien threading his way into the mysteries of our printed language. for his own good, needs no more slang than is found in either. My conscience, however, shall be at peace; at peace because the intent hereof, anything hereinbefore contained to the contrary notwithstanding, is, that the aforesaid recollections and comments do not fit any person into whose hands these presents shall come. If there be writings, scattered through, which do not leave a sweet taste in the mouth of a reader who shall be so kind as to read, I do now excise all such passages and leave them on the lips.

So Long Mary

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