

WHAT'S THE NEWS?

Rev. Dr. Talmage Pays His Respects to Newspaperdom.

A Good Newspaper is an Immense and Everlasting Blessing—The World's Redemption May Yet Be Brought About by the Printing Press.

Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage in his most recent sermon traces the history of the newspaper and claims the clean journal is one of the chief blessings of the present century.

What is a preacher to do when he finds two texts equally good and suggestive? In that perplexity I take both. Wheels full of eyes? What but the wheels of a newspaper printing press? Other wheels are blind.

The course of procedure is about this: A literary man has an agricultural or scientific or political or religious idea which he wants to ventilate.

He has no money of his own—literary men seldom have. But he talks of his ideas among confidential friends until they become inflamed with the idea, and forthwith they buy type and press, and rent composing room, and gather a corps of editors, and with a prospectus that proposes to cure everything, the first copy is flung on the attention of an admiring world.

After awhile one of the plain stockholders finds that no great revolution has been effected by the daily or weekly publication; that neither sun nor moon stands still; that the world goes on lying and cheating and stealing just as it did before the first issue.

The world will have to learn that a newspaper is as much of an institution as the Bank of England or Yale College, and is not an extraneous thing.

Another step forward for newspaperdom will be when in our colleges and universities we open opportunities for preparing candidates for the editorial chair.

First of all, newspapers make knowledge democratic and for the multitude. The public library is a hay-mow so high up that few can reach it, while the newspaper throws down the forage to our feet.

Public libraries are the reservoirs where the great floods are stored high up and away off. The newspaper is the tunnel that brings them down to the pitchers of all the people.

Great libraries make a few men and women very wise. Newspapers lift whole nations into the sunlight. Better have 50,000,000 people moderately intelligent than 100,000 Solons.

A false impression is abroad that newspaper knowledge is ephemeral because periodicals are thrown aside, and not one out of 10,000 people files them for future reference.

Such knowledge, so far from being ephemeral, goes into the very structure of the world's heart and brain, and decides the destiny of churches and nations.

Knowledge on the shelves is of little worth. It is knowledge afoot, knowledge harnessed, knowledge in revolution, knowledge winged, knowledge projected, knowledge thunder-bolted.

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filthy printing press; or, seeing a journal, through bribery, wheel round from one political side to the other in one night, we speak of the corrupt printing press, and many talk about the lampoonery, and the empiricism, and the sans-culotism of the printing press.

But I discourse now on a subject you have never heard—the immeasurable and everlasting blessing of a good newspaper. Thank God for that wheel full of eyes. Thank God that we do not have—like the Athenians—to go about to gather up and relate the tidings of the day, since the omnivorous newspaper does both for us.

The grandest temporal blessing that God has given to the nineteenth century is the newspaper. We would have better appreciation of this blessing if we knew the money, the brain, the losses, the exasperations, the anxieties, the wear and tear of heartstrings involved in the production of a good newspaper.

Under the impression that almost anybody can make a newspaper, scores of inexperienced capitalists every year enter the lists, and, consequently, during the last few years, a newspaper has died almost every day. The disease is epidemic.

The larger papers swallow the smaller ones, the whale taking down 50 minnows at one swallow. With more than 7,000 dailies and weeklies in the United States and Canada, there are but 95 a half century old. Newspapers do not average more than five years' existence.

The most of them die of cholera infantum. It is high time that the people found out that the most successful way to sink money and keep it sunk is to start a newspaper.

There comes a time when almost every one is smitten with the newspaper mania and starts one, or have stock in one he must or die. The course of procedure is about this: A literary man has an agricultural or scientific or political or religious idea which he wants to ventilate.

He has no money of his own—literary men seldom have. But he talks of his ideas among confidential friends until they become inflamed with the idea, and forthwith they buy type and press, and rent composing room, and gather a corps of editors, and with a prospectus that proposes to cure everything, the first copy is flung on the attention of an admiring world.

After awhile one of the plain stockholders finds that no great revolution has been effected by the daily or weekly publication; that neither sun nor moon stands still; that the world goes on lying and cheating and stealing just as it did before the first issue.

The world will have to learn that a newspaper is as much of an institution as the Bank of England or Yale College, and is not an extraneous thing. If you have the aforesaid agricultural, or scientific, or religious, or political idea to ventilate, you had better charge upon the world through the columns already established.

It is folly for anyone who cannot succeed at anything else to try newspaperdom. If you cannot climb the hill back of your house it is folly to try the sides of the Matterhorn.

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Again, a good newspaper is a useful mirror of life as it is. It is sometimes complained that newspapers report the evil when they ought only to report the good. They must report the evil as well as the good, or how shall we know what is to be reformed, what guarded against, what fought down?

A newspaper that pictures only the honesty and virtue of society is a misrepresentation. That family is best prepared for the duties of life which, knowing the evil, is taught to select the good. Keep children under the impression that all is fair and right in the world, and when they go out into it they will be as poorly prepared to struggle with it as a child who is thrown into the middle of the Atlantic and told to learn how to swim.

Our only complaint is when sin is made attractive and morality dull, when vice is painted with great headings and good deeds are put in obscure corners, iniquity set up in great primer and righteousness in nonpareil. Sin is loathsome, make it loathsome. Virtue is beautiful, make it beautiful.

It would work a vast improvement if all our papers, religious, political, literary, should for the most part drop their impersonality. This would do better justice to newspaper writers. Many of the strongest and best writers of the country live and die unknown, and are denied their just fame.

The vast public never learns who they are. Most of them are on comparatively small incomes, and after awhile their hand forgets its cunning, and they are without resources, left to die. Why not, at least, have his initial attached to his most important work? It always gave additional force to an article when you occasionally saw added to some significant article in the old New York Courier and Enquirer J. W. W., or in the Tribune H. G., or in the Herald J. G. B., or in the Times H. J. R., or in the Evening Post W. G. B., or in the Evening Express E. B.

While this arrangement would be a fair and just thing for newspaper writers, it would be a defense for the public. It is sometimes true that things damaging to private character are said. Who is responsible? It is the "we" of the editorial or reportorial columns. Every man in every profession or occupation ought to be responsible for what he does.

No honorable man will ever write that which he would be afraid to sign. But thousands of persons have suffered from the impersonality of newspapers. What can one private citizen wronged in his reputation do in a contest with misrepresentation multiplied into twenty or fifty thousand copies? An injustice done in print is illimitably worse than an injustice done in private life.

During loss of temper a man may say that for which he will be sorry in ten minutes; but a newspaper injustice has first to be written, set up in type, then the proof taken off, and read and corrected, and then for six or ten hours the presses are busy running off the issue. Plenty of time to correct. Plenty of time to cool off. Plenty of time to repent.

But all that is hidden in the impersonality of a newspaper. It will be a long step forward when all is changed, and newspaper writers get credit for the good and are held responsible for the evil.

Another step forward for newspaperdom will be when in our colleges and universities we open opportunities for preparing candidates for the editorial chair. We have in such institutions medical departments, law departments, why not editorial departments? Do the legal and healing professions demand more culture and careful training than the editorial or reportorial professions? I know men may tumble by what seems accident into a newspaper office as they may tumble into other occupations, but it would be an incalculable advantage if those proposing a newspaper life had an institution to which they might go to learn the qualifications, the responsibilities, the trials, the temptations, the dangers, the magnificent opportunities, of newspaper life.

Let there be a lectureship in which there shall appear the leading editors of the United States, telling the story of their struggles, their victories, their mistakes, how they worked and what they found out to be the best way of working. There will be strong men who will climb up without such aid into editorial power and efficiency. So do men climb up to success in other branches by sheer grit. But if we want learned institutions to make lawyers and artists and doctors and ministers, we much more need learned institutions to make editors, who occupy a position of influence a hundredfold greater.

I do not put the truth too strongly when I say the most potent influence for good on earth is a good editor, and the most potent influence for evil is a bad one. The best way to reinforce and improve the newspaper is to endow editorial professorates. When will Princeton, or Harvard, or Yale, or Rochester lead the way?

When I see the printing-press standing with the electric telegraph on the one side gathering up material, and the lightning express train on the other side waiting for the tons of folded sheets of newspapers, I pronounce it the mightiest force in our civilization. So I commend you to pray for all those who manage the newspapers of the land, for all type-setters, for all reporters, for all editors, for all publishers, that, sitting or standing in positions of such great influence, they may give all that influence for God and the betterment of the human race.

An aged woman making her living by knitting, unbound the yarn from the ball until she found in the center of the ball there was an old piece of newspaper. She opened it and read an advertisement that she had become heiress to a large property, and that fragment of a newspaper lifted her from pauperism to affluence. And I do not know but as the thread of time rolls and unwinds a little further, through the silent yet speaking newspaper may be found the vast inheritance of the world's redemption.

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun  
Does His successive journeys run:  
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore  
Till sun shall rise and set no more.

out in the rain

A good drenching in a cold rain is often the beginning of consumption. Yet no one claims that the germs of this disease exist in the rainwater. Then how was this brought about? The exposure was followed by a cold; the vitality was lowered; the cough continued for some weeks; the throat and lungs became congested; and thus all the conditions were favorable for the consumption germs.

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