

stantial character, but also that sympathetic interest in its worthier aims that is often of more importance than dollars.

Another duty incumbent on the public is to demand the best possible service, and to be satisfied with nothing less. It is often advanced, to weaken the force of attacks on the press, that the newspapers are as good as their readers—that they cater to the taste of those by whom they are supported. As acknowledged, there is a certain measure of truth in this allegation, but it does not justify newspaper men in groping in the slime for gold, and it does warn readers that one duty they owe to themselves and to the press is to refuse countenance to any journal that is playing the traitor to decency, honor and truth. In every large city there are papers that are striving to be clean, manly and thoughtful, and independent, and over against them stand papers that are vulgar, sensational, irresponsible. It is the public that is at fault, and the public that suffers, if this last mentioned class can boast of large circulations. To demand that such papers, bought for their stories of crime and passion, for their warped views of life, for their disregard of the conventionalities of decent society, should be patriotic, unselfish and clean would be highly absurd. It would be asking the pickpocket to desecrate on the virtues of honesty. But respectable people need not send flowers to the pickpocket's cell.

The United States has developed, perhaps, the most serious and disquieting perversion of the functions of the press. The inextinguishable energy of the race, aided by marvellous mechanical facilities for the collection of news and the production of papers, has found in newspaper publishing an almost boundless field for expression. Unfortunately, the evils of intense competition have met but little restraint in the character of the populations of the larger cities. On the contrary, these evils have been intensified by opportunities of serving the appetites of a large class steeped in ignorance, and capable only of appreciating the vulgar and the exaggerated. There has, in consequence, been a grave deterioration in the moral character of the press of the Union, for the influence of the larger cities is as wide as the Republic. Sensationalism, lack of the sense of responsibility, disregard of the sanctities of private life, misrepresentation of opponents, the deification of a false and inflated patriotism—perhaps these are the chief accusations to be laid at the door of the worst representatives of the United States press. And these faults, regarded in the bulk, constitute a character not merely wanting in moral force, but positively evil and dangerous. It is little matter for surprise that thoughtful men throughout the Union are viewing with ever increasing alarm this prostitution of the press, and are anxiously debating the problem of how to bring about reform. It is the echo of this discussion that we are hearing in Canada. What is applicable to one section only of United States journalism is being applied to the whole press of the two countries. As a warning, as an example of what is to be avoided, this picture of the worst of American newspapers may be held up to view, but to use it as typifying also the Canadian press is absolutely without justification. From the gross faults of the press of the Republic Canadian journalism is almost wholly free. It is, in the first place, essentially clean. It is the exception to find a Canadian paper overstepping the bounds of journalistic propriety in treating on subjects that are generally tabooed in the family circle. Crimes of violence may receive more attention than they should, but scant courtesy is shown to the suggestive and impure.

Enterprise is kept within legitimate bounds, and seldom loses its identity in sensationalism. Not often does political discussion degenerate into personal attack and misrepresentation. The sense of responsibility seems to lie heavier on the Canadian than on the United States editor, and on this side of the border far more respect is paid to the personal rights of the individual, as distinguished from his rights as a member of the state. The faults of the Canadian press are more venial, and not such as to provoke the thoughtful citizen to anxiety. There is in our press more to respect than to deplore. If we lament that the badge of organship should yet disgrace some papers, we must also bear witness to the rapid growth of political independence. If the spur of business competition or the prejudice of partisanship leads journals into excesses of speech, we must remember that much of the bitterness of former years has disappeared. If it be true that our discussions of public questions are not yet on the highest plane, consolation is found in the fact that in no other respect has there been a greater change for the better during the last twenty years. Courtesy and consideration to opponents is shown in larger measure than ever before. Broader conceptions of national and international subjects prevail, and local affairs are no longer always treated from the view-point of selfish or partisan interest. That many of our papers are little better than purveyors of news—and poorly digested news at that—may be true, but the news is seldom of the debasing kind, and by and by the controllers of these papers will be touched by the true spirit of the press, and will become teachers as well as tradesmen. Unfortunately, the claim made on behalf of the reading columns of our papers, that they are free from moral filth, is not to be made respecting the advertising columns. The business manager makes but a halting interpretation of the duties of his office, and many an otherwise admirable newspaper is marred by the suggestiveness of its advertising pages. But here, also, improvement is to be noted, and every year gives evidence that the advertisements are being edited with increasing care. It is perhaps true that, viewing the Canadian press as a whole, the odium of superficiality—of trivial thought and flippant speech—may yet remain. The average newspaper man does not write “up” to the highest class of his readers, but “down” to those below. He fears to shoot too high, and the pressure of daily journalism makes excuses to mate his fears. This is a fault that time, and the growing demand of the reading public for stronger food, must be left to cure. To sum up, it may be emphatically denied that the tendency of the time is downward. On the contrary, the evidences of an upward tendency, of a quickening life, are all around. The political campaign of the last two months, with its illustrations of honest enterprise in the presentation of news, and of independence in the expression of views, is a striking illustration in proof. The press is growing stronger and more courageous. It is acquiring a keener sense of its duties, and is realizing, as never before, its opportunities and its responsibilities.

For what is being accomplished by the Canadian press due credit should be given to the men who have their hands on the lever of this modern engine, and who are, as a body, honest and conscientious. In their ranks is to be found as large a proportion—I had almost said a larger proportion—of men animated by a sincere desire to further the public weal as exists in the ranks of any other calling or profession. The sense of responsibility—the union of opportunity and conscience—should