

## MAKING A WEEKLY PAY.

PAPER READ BEFORE THE MONTANA PRESS ASSOCIATION BY  
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THE subject of this paper has never, in the minds of intending publishers, been a question of doubt to any great extent, for there are few members of the profession who possess an itching to blossom out as editors and proprietors who do not think they know just how to make a weekly newspaper pay. If they did not thus think, it is unlikely they would invest in the business and proceed to set up "Volume 1, Number 1." And the very existence of so many weekly newspapers in the country is indicative of the widespread knowledge of how to make them pay. It would, therefore, seem a work of supererogation for me to expatiate upon this subject for the benefit of my brethren of the press.

When the average weekly, however, has first seen the smiles or frowns of an approving or reproving public, the extent to which the smiles are accompanied by cash is the only means of solving the question of how to pay the "devil" and settle for the paper and ink unless one relies at the start on an accommodating bank account.

This, I take it, has been a matter of some perplexity to the publisher of a new paper, when theory has been reduced to reality, not only at the start, in some cases, but frequently at other periods during the publication's existence; and these are times when the question of "How to make a weekly newspaper pay" comes home with its full force and concomitant anxiety. At such times the editor has frequently the sympathy and advice of a few of his subscribers, who know just how a newspaper should be run, and this is magnanimously given, free of charge. But the more earnestly the advice is offered, no matter how conflicting the opinions from various readers, it is usually followed, if not acted upon, with that ever interesting request: "Stop my paper." For it is a fact that in most communities there are born journalists who have mistaken their profession, and yet from the plow or the cattle ranch feel the ability of their judgment as to how the local paper should be run.

But the discussion of the question of how to make a weekly newspaper pay, which has been assigned to me by our honorable president, has undoubtedly been given with the idea that I am a master of the art, for it would seem to be somewhat of a sardonic joke to ask me to tell how to make a weekly pay if it were not supposed that after 12 years conduct of one I had succeeded. It is a subject, however, that is ever open to consideration by the publisher of the best paying sheet as it is to the publisher of the poorest. The absorbing instincts of the average money getter are usually similar to some degree in everyone, no matter what his vocation in life, and the question with the successful publisher as with the enterprising manufacturer is always: How to make the business pay better. The subject, therefore, is of interest to all of us, and yet I feel unable to construct such a code of action as will apply alike to every publisher of a weekly newspaper.

In the first place, advantage of location is essential to success. With a fair-sized community of average intelligence and enterprise, the local paper should be a paying institution. It

matters not a great deal whether the metropolitan papers of the state find there a general circulation, for the scope and utility of the local journal remain unaffected, and it should be none the less of value to a community possessed of interest in its own affairs. But the paper should be local in the broadest sense of the term. Home news should be its leading feature, and no sensationalism be allowed to appear to gratify some and create antagonism in others. Harmony in community affairs is as essential to be maintained in news dissemination as honesty of purpose and expression is requisite to the retention of public confidence. If the editor lacks honesty and yet be ever so brilliant, his paper will fail in maintaining public esteem, and in the lack of esteem is the very germ of dissolution. With honesty and fair ability of expression, with interest in his work and of average perspicacity, there is little doubt that the product of his pen will receive the appreciation of the people and their permanent patronage.

It should also be an inviolable rule in the office of every weekly newspaper to get the paper out on time. Punctuality and steadfastness beget confidence also. Many people decline to pay in advance for a newspaper because they "do not know how long it will last." The publisher is accordingly handicapped in some measure by the lack of confidence from the very start, and it is therefore all the more reason why he should have his work performed with absolute rule and regularity, having first determined upon a suitable size of paper commensurate with the ability of the town to support, and then maintain as high a standard of matter and publish as much of news as his prescribed limits allow. He should keep in touch with the best element, keep his paper clean, and at all times of such tone and morality as to find a place for it at the hearthstone of the home.

The question of politics also enters largely into the consideration of successful conduct of a local paper. In all communities there are, of course, party differences, and the size of population should in some cases decide the political policy or complexion of the paper. Many people in an average country town ostracise the local journal because of its political attitude when differing from their political views, and this loss is a serious drawback to success. Too many editors make of their paper a reflex of their personal political animosities, and this result is inevitable. A local paper, like those of state circulation, is run for financial profit, and political satisfaction does not pay bills, unless paid for at so much a line. And very often this is a case of "robbing Peter to pay Paul." The frequent result is the same; the support of one is obtained at the expense of another's loss. A country paper, of partisan character, I take it, should, therefore, be conducted in such a manner as to avoid acrimonious feeling and personal animosities, and the simple discussion of political principles of either party can be had in a way as to give no offence such as will have the effect of cutting off any part of support, all of which is essential to a paper's prosperity. Nor should a partisan paper be biased in its news report of the doings or sayings of its political opponents. Absolute fairness in this respect will have the effect of securing and saving to the paper many subscribers who might otherwise withhold their patronage because of political prejudice. It should above all things keep in mind the fact that it is primarily and specifically a newspaper.

The advertising department of a weekly newspaper is one which should be given more attention than the average pub-