

read anything else, the newspaper is almost the only source of information. It, along with other periodicals, has taken the place of books to a great extent, and now seems to be taking the place of the pulpit and the platform.

While it aids us in procuring knowledge about a multitude of subjects, its *special* mission seems to be the diffusion of information respecting current events. How far it is successful in the work it undertakes, and where it fails, is not easy to determine. There is the greatest diversity in its character, necessarily<sup>1</sup>—producing a corresponding diversity in its effects on the minds of readers. If it supplies the public with correct information on current events and subjects of general interest; if it stimulates research and mental acumen; if it broadens men's minds and induces in them a liberal spirit towards opinions differing from their own; so far it surely accomplishes its mission. But on the other hand, when it is insincere, or low in its moral and intellectual tone; when it serves the interests of a clique or party regardless of other interests; when it panders to corrupt taste, or rouses evil agencies which might otherwise have slumbered, then it certainly fails in its high work as a public educator.

As such, it certainly encourages breadth of knowledge, but it often does so at the expense of depth. From its very nature it can present little more than bare facts, stripped of everything except their most immediate conditions and consequences. If, going further than this, it attempts to generalize and make inductions, since its observations are of necessity limited and hasty, its conclusions are often fallacious; and thus its oracular utterances of one day must often be modified on the next. If its readers would discriminate and compare the facts it presents, and find in them principles and laws, they must acquire the antecedent and necessary training from some other source.

In this connection we observe that the newspaper seems to have a decided affinity for educational systems of a particular cast. Take a few well known examples. The American system tends to the diffusion of knowledge among all classes, and is therefore liable

to sacrifice quality to quantity; the German system, aiming especially at thoroughness, has a reverse tendency; while the English holds a mean course between the other two. Now in America (i. e., Canada and the United States,) there is a newspaper for every five or six thousand people,—a rate about five times as great as that in Germany, and three times as great as that in Britain.

In general, the newspaper exerts a unifying influence. It lifts individuals out of the narrow worlds they make for themselves, and unites them in the common interests of mankind. It is educating us to fully accept the doctrine of "universal brotherhood." But its real influence in moulding the mind and morals of the individual, and in shaping the character and destiny of the race, can never be exactly estimated. The part it plays in the grand drama of history can never be written. We know that it is and will be powerful, but we do not know *how* powerful.

SIGMA.

### *Frustration.*

I dreamed near dawn a lofty and lovely dream  
Whose vaporous grandeurs, wrought by  
sleep's dim hands,

In majesty of memory always gleam  
Out from my past, like towers from lonely  
lands!

I dreamed that Science, after wand-rings leet  
Or difficult climbings with slow labored  
breath,

Had planted her divinely insolent feet  
On the weird boundaries between life and  
death!

Throned among wild acclivities, brave and  
strong,

She loomed with maiden stature terribly  
bright.

Below her surged a marveling human throng;  
Beyond her was eternity's wall of night!

The great mass roared like some wide turbu-  
lent sea.....

And now from their vague midst a voice  
rang bold:

"O, speak! our suppliant world beseech's thee!  
Divulge what mysteries those deep eyes be-  
hold!"