

THE OUTLOOK FOR WEEKLY PAPERS.

THE position and prospects of the weekly paper are brought into bold relief just now by the fact that The New York Herald has discontinued its weekly edition, at the same time remarking: "The Herald discontinues its weekly edition because the legitimate field of weekly news is filled to the satisfaction of the local readers by county and town papers." Current tendencies certainly point to a day when the weekly editions of city dailies will be discontinued. Several forces work in this direction: subscriptions have been gradually put down to unprofitable rates through competition with local papers, and the competition with other city weekly editions is also very keen. Consequently, dependence is now placed on advertisements for a profit, and in years gone by this used to be a paying department in the office. But advertisements for the weekly editions show a tendency to dwindle. They are necessarily restricted, because they must not be allowed to encroach on the news space—the principal feature in the success of the city weekly being the enormous mass of reading matter. With few advertisements, high prices had to be charged, and these it is not so easy to obtain now. The latest move in the city weekly field is significant. One of the big Canadian dailies is offering, as an inducement to firms advertising in the daily, a free insertion in the weekly edition. This will probably prove a valuable lever in fostering city advertising, and should the same policy be followed by other papers, the weekly edition would soon cease to be anything but a source of loss. The local weeklies would then be monopolists in their own field, a state of things with which they would not be disposed to quarrel.

There is not much evidence that the weekly editions of city dailies generally are increasing their circulations, so that the weekly field ought to improve from this time forward. The policy, therefore, of starting a daily paper is one that ought to be carefully considered, unless the prospect of making it pay is bright. There have been cases where fear of opposition coming in has brought a daily into existence, and there have also been instances where daily ventures, that looked like premature enterprises, have done well. But, in the main, the cautious policy is the best. Unless the town is large and the prospect of a generous advertising patronage is excellent, the starting of a daily is a mistake. There are certain large, thriving places, like Perth, Cornwall, St. John's, Que., etc., where the daily mania has been staved off, and the owners of the prosperous weeklies there do not feel sorry for resisting the tendency. There is a temptation to a publisher to begin a daily edition on account of the increased political and other influence it will bring; but this is a very empty triumph after all, and a good-paying weekly is a far greater source of satisfaction to its owner all round. It would be easier and more profitable if publishers worked the weekly as long as possible.

This question of the frequency of publication has been under discussion in the United States, and the publishers of The Frankfort (Kansas) Twice-a-Week have been giving their reasons for favoring a semi-weekly edition. They contend that they make more money by issuing twice a week. The additional expense was not found to be as large as would at first seem. A smaller paper was issued, making it easier to handle, while the extra cost for paper, though more, was not double by any means. There was no increase of worry. As to the increase of revenue derived from doubling the number of issues in a year, the pub-

lishers aver that, after trying the experiment for nearly a year, they are convinced that it does. The readers naturally prefer a semi-weekly issue to a single paper per week, and fresher local news is claimed to be one of its leading attractions. The publishers make the bold prediction that "inside of five years the twice-a-week country paper will be the rule and the weekly paper the exception." That argument may be sound in the United States, but there is no similar tendency in Canada. The Ottawa papers maintain semi-weeklies, but the number of such papers in this country is limited. Against 25 semi-weeklies in the Dominion there are 596 weeklies. That tells the tale.

But the Ottawa case is peculiar. PRINTER AND PUBLISHER asked Mr. P. D. Ross, of The Journal, for his opinion, and he replied: "All the Ottawa English dailies publish semi-weekly editions. That they do so rather than publish weeklies is due practically to one reason. They believe that they can hold their local field better against the Montreal and Toronto weeklies.

"The Montreal Star publishes an excellent twelve-page weekly. The Toronto Mail publishes a good weekly on terms which, when country publishers foolishly combine with it, place the Toronto paper in country homes at from 25 to 50 cents a year. To compete against The Star's twelve pages or The Mail's low price, the Ottawa publishers have either to spend a good deal of money in the hope of holding their own over a wide field, or to publish twice a week and remain certain of a narrower field at fair prices. They prefer to publish twice a week.

"Each issue of the Ottawa semi-weeklies is four pages, so no more white paper is used than in an eight-page weekly. The ads being twice inserted, the publishers get a better price, and can, therefore, be content with fewer ads and trench little more on the reading space than in a weekly. The frequency of issue gives additional value to the local country news. There is twice the trouble of mailing, but only half the trouble of keeping matter standing, or of overhauling it so as not to be too big behind the times.

"The Citizen tried a change to a weekly last year, lost seriously and returned to the semi-weekly plan."

A COMPETITION.

There is enterprise added to public spirit in a prize competition just announced by The St. Thomas Journal. A meeting of members of the Elgin Historical and Scientific Institute had expressed an opinion favorable to a complete history of the county. The Journal has therefore decided on a prize history competition which will secure manuscripts from every school section in the county and get together the very kind of material required for a complete story representative of every part of Elgin. Leading men have been appointed as judges. Prizes will be given for the best sketch of each school section. This means 106 silver and seven gold medals, so that a very comprehensive work must result. Elgin County will gain much from The Journal's history competition, and its constituency of readers should feel proportionately grateful.

"You wish a position as proofreader?" "Yes, sir." "Do you understand the requirements?" "Perfectly, sir. Whenever you make any mistakes in the paper, just blame 'em on me, and I'll never say a word."