

THE ABUSES OF THE COUNTRY WEEKLY.

W. C. Whitman, Ortonville, Minn. Herald-Star.



WOULD not attempt, within the scope of a paper of this character, to enumerate all, or even a small portion, of the abuses practised on a country newspaper, but a consideration of the subject would not be even partially satisfactory without a brief reference to the riding proclivities of the politicians, not so much the men seeking office for themselves, but the party managers, the men entrusted with the advocacy of great party principles and theories as well as the personal success representing those principles and theories. These are the fellows who are absolutely without conscience or common decency in their dealing with the country press. During the last campaign enough boiler-plate matter was dumped at my office door to have filled my eight-column quarto newspaper for ten years. This stuff was sent me without my knowledge or consent, and without any other license, so far as I know, except the well-known fact that I was in sympathy with those sound principles and theories which this very sound and substantial plate matter taught, or would have taught, had it ever got beyond the confines of its packing boxes. I am not familiar with the cost of this kind of ready-made editorial pabulum, but I am quite sure that an occasional real flesh and blood article, dealing with local conditions and bearing the impress of earnest convictions and honest motives, would be worth more than countless tons of this hired Hessian plate matter. But so long as the country publishers, to relieve that tired feeling, will accept and use this production, it is very certain it will continue to be forthcoming with each recurring political campaign. No other business man, however partisan, would be expected to devote his time and the franchises and opportunities of his business to party success without something attaching in the way of emoluments or perquisites.

But your political manager, by your kind assistance, gets more for his money by dealing with the plate man, the ready-print man and the stump speaker than by dealing direct with the newspaper man. I have long considered the stump speaker as an interloper and a trespasser in the legitimate field of journalism. He comes into your town at an expense of \$50 or \$75 and speaks to fifty or seventy-five persons. He is laughed at, jeered and guyed, and goes away without accomplishing anything. The foolish newspaper, without any oil in its lamp, puts the speech into presentable shape, lays it before from one thousand to three thousand people, who read it and digest it at their leisure, free from the excitements and influences of a noisy mob, and are thus able to appreciate the argument, which is generally the product of the editor, rather than the speaker. I have no remedial suggestion to offer for this phase of newspaper abuse other than the assassination of the speaker. The successful campaign manager of the future—and there is no suggestion of boodle in this—will reach the people through the medium of the press, but by means of a straightforward, legitimate advertising contract, rather than by an illegitimate, dishonest system of dead-beating his way into the press. The public will accuse the publisher who uses two or three columns of campaign plate matter of being a boddler much quicker than the publisher who prints a thoughtful editorial half a column in length. And the public, while possibly wrong in its conclusions, is right in its

premises, for we always tell the public that our space is valuable and is only at its disposal for a consideration. This is a large subject and much could be said in its consideration, but my reference is perhaps sufficiently extended already to set some of the brothers to thinking.

One other abuse that I have in mind is so glaring and persistent that I feel impelled to mention it at least briefly. I refer to the patent-medicine man and his co-worker in iniquity, the baking-powder fiend. These fellows have such a small conception of the value of advertising space that a proposition from some of them can hardly be considered in any other light than an insult, in any well-regulated, self-respecting newspaper office. Recently I received from Scott & Bowne, proprietors of Scott's Emulsion, the munificent offer of \$7 for a five-inch advertisement one year, to occupy the very choicest position in the paper and change weekly. Very thoughtfully, the firm enclosed a stamped envelope, which I used to inform them that my price for their advertisement was \$25, less the usual agent's commission. I think this must have paralyzed them, and I trust that it did, for I have heard nothing further from them, though I noticed several of my exchanges have commenced on their work, evidently at the ridiculous price named to me, although I may have been singled out as a soft snap. This is but a single instance of many that have come under my notice recently, but it fully illustrates how lightly some of us regard our business, and accounts in a measure at least for the estimate put upon our space by others.

But briefly, to conclude, I am thoroughly convinced that while we are, and always have been, afflicted by many abuses, we are largely to blame for their continuance, and that they will continue to plague us until we rise up in our might and put our calling upon a higher business plane. It lies largely with ourselves to cure and eradicate many of the abuses herein referred to, and many others that are so self-evident that I have not even referred to them, and that our field of usefulness to the public and of consequent profit to ourselves will be increased many fold thereby.

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