

at home and abroad, found, focussed, and pictured by the newspaper telescope and camera, trimmed, labelled, and mounted, column after column, page after page lie fresh before him. Even the more important ones have been analyzed and opinions expressed upon them. The reader has naught to do but read and absorb.

Unfortunately, too often, he does simply absorb, and in this fact lies the journalist's opportunity and his danger. He can supply a paper where the comment is sane and moderate, and where the news is given position and space according to its real value, or he can supply the yellow sheet, where editorials, scare-heads and sensational trash are all intended to startle.

The evolution of journalism would make an interesting study. From the mere registrar of public opinion, a sort of weather vane, as it were, the press has become its creator and moulder. Public opinion, in fact, has become newspaper opinion. The seed is sown in the editorials, and the harvest gathered up in the news columns, in letters to the editor, in reports of public meetings, in votes and plebiscites. Where the editor gets his seeds, his ideas, though of first importance to himself, is from the public point of view, a matter of lesser consequence. He may originate them. He may borrow them. He is often accused of stealing them. The thing of importance is that he scatters them abroad and that his readers gather them up.

Thus has the press become the modern demagogue—using the word in its original and better sense—the leader of the people; and to it has fallen the task that was performed of old by the tribunes of the plebs. Its duty is to safeguard the rights of the citizens or to dragoon the citizens into safeguarding their own rights. And in these days of trusts and corporations, days, too, of public ownership and public control when the great industries come more closely home to the ordinary man, and when government touches the citizen's life at more points than ever before, additional watchfulness is needed. Someone must play the watchdog and bark when things go wrong. Publicity serves to prevent countless ills, if not to cure them, and through its position as the agent of publicity, the press has become the custodian of public morals, the pioneer of reform, the spur and critic of governments. It is even of late arrogating to itself the duties of an attorney-general and chief of detectives. At times it comes dangerously near to acting as judge and jury. At others, it demeans itself into a common executioner and turns its columns into a public pillory. And through it all there hangs about it something of the "sacro-sanct" character of the old tribune. Its privileges are many, and the restraints upon it comparatively few.

In Canada, the press has a peculiar duty of its own to perform. We are a nation in the making, and have as yet, no firm fixed national ideals, no national type, only an ill-defined national sentiment. Split from the very foundations of our nationhood into a people of two races, two languages, two religions, and divided into an east and a west, each with interests that might easily be made antagonistic, we have thrown upon our shores every year a new population equal to four per cent. of the permanent residents of the country. It is