

to have as good a time without being "fired" as the surroundings will permit.

The breach which yawns between reporter and employer is therefore wide. No community of interest is established between them, and if the reporter pens a thoughtlessly injurious paragraph which escapes the lynx eye of the city editor and goes in, who can wonder? A Montreal editor, who knows from experience that the reporter is a civilized being and has his social side, is accustomed to share a little quiet hospitality with his co-workers, and they and he feel the better for it. But this is a rare case. The reporter recognizes under these circumstances that there is a bond between editor and himself. But the proprietor of the paper is on a different footing—he is the man who deals out benefits grudgingly and punishes with alacrity. They continue on speaking terms, because the situation demands it occasionally, but their relations are business, not personal. There is antagonism at the root and it is never of the reporter's first seeking.

This, it will be said, is an extreme case. Perhaps the conditions are a little "accentuated" to bring the picture home to all. But, in the main, the facts are as stated. I would like to say a good word for the publisher, but material is scarce. Some

are humane men, but they forget that the reporter is part of humanity; some are just, but they put the reporter outside the pale of justice.

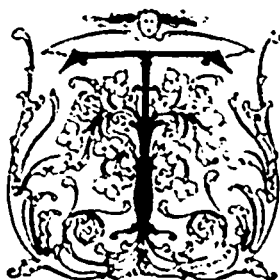
Now, all this ought to be changed. A newspaper is usually what its staff of reporters make it. No good paper is ever made without good reporters. Any fool can write an editorial. Some of them grow prosperous at it. But special training, distinctive qualities, untiring industry, and a soul devoted to the work, are required to make an accurate, all-alive, judicious reporter. The publisher may be clever and enterprising, but if he cannot get the right tools to work with he might as well bury his brains and turn lawyer. I know one case in Canada where a reporter's staff contains several men who could—if an inscrutable Providence were suddenly at a stroke to kill all the editors—bring out the paper in good order next day. These men are as highly paid as editors. They deserve to be.

Take my word for it, Monsieur le Propriétaire, cultivate your reporters. Get them to regard your interests as theirs. Increase their self-respect by showing them respect. Invite them to your house—provided you give them money enough to buy a clean collar. You will hear from me again, unless PRINTER AND PUBLISHER ejects me with a week's notice.



LAW COSTS AND FAKE ACTIONS.

BY W. C. NICHOL, HAMILTON.



HE thing aimed at in the amendments to the existing libel law, which the Canadian Press Association has been trying to force upon the Legislature, is primarily to put a stop to "take" actions, that is, to actions brought without adequate cause by unscrupulous solicitors, with the idea of squeezing a few hundred

dollars in costs out of newspaper publishers. The Legislature, and with good reason, has refused to amend the law to suit the wishes of the association, and has been roundly abused for its attitude. It has been said over and over again that the legislators legislated only in the interests of the lawyers and had no regard whatever for the well-being and freedom of the press, and the public has been called upon to shed sympathetic tears for the newspapers and view with scorn the action of the hard-hearted legislators in allowing the press of the province to continue to be left at the mercy of the rapacious lawyers.

The fact is, however, that the Legislature is all right and the newspaper is all wrong, in this particular instance at any rate. Legislation which would free the newspaper from the responsibility of its utterances or statements, no matter how innocently made, or whether its own or clipped, would not be in the interests of the public, seeing that it would throw wide open the doors of falsehood and give the newspapers a license of utterance that they should not enjoy. It is advisable that the greatest care should be exercised in the making of newspapers, and it is reasonable to suppose that if proper restraints are not placed about newspaper publishers and editors, it will not be long before they will sadly degenerate. To relieve a newspaper

of its responsibility for publishing items clipped from other papers is rank class legislation and therefore undesirable, and it would, moreover, make it an easy matter for unscrupulous newspaper editors to secure the first publication of some damaging article in an irresponsible sheet, knowing that they could then copy it into their own columns in perfect safety. If the objection is made that newspaper editors as a class would not descend to such practices, my only answer is that in my own experience there are newspaper editors and proprietors in Ontario whom I know to be capable and I say it with all regret

of almost any trickery or unscrupulous conduct in order to gain the point aimed at. Newspaper men are not all saints any more than the lawyers are all sinners.

The law must recognize the fact that a libel is a libel whether at first or second hands. Supposing The Toronto Globe makes a libelous statement regarding some citizen, and I copy that item in The Hamilton Herald with the result that the man's financial standing in Hamilton is injured. Why should the fact that The Globe made the statement first protect me from being held responsible for the repetition of that statement? No such protection is afforded the individual slanderer or the individual libeler. Why should it be afforded to the newspaper or the newspaper man? If The Herald causes actual damage to John Smith, why should it not be called upon to compensate its victim? It may have done the damage innocently enough, but it has done the damage. Why should it escape the consequences? Or what honest newspaper would desire to escape the consequences? If you and I are engaged in the innocent pastime of throwing stones across the road, and we innocently and incidentally manage to heave a rock through neighbor Brown's plate glass window, we may assure Brown that the