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Observations.

BY MARC MARIUS.

Will you tell me, Master Shallow, how to choose a man?
Falstaff, Henry IV.

The charges made by a certain lawyer of this city, and a promoter of the Ashbridge's Bay scheme, Col Alexander, against Mr. T. A. Gregg, editor of the *News*, and Mr. Caiger, the chief of the advertising department of that paper, during the past week has been the talk of the town. Mr. Darby, the manager of the *News*, immediately suspended the two gentlemen named, and the matter is now before the courts and it is not proper for me to make any comments. But the whole affair brings up a question that is seldom touched upon, the morality of the Canadian press.

On this subject I think I may speak with authority. I have grown gray in the service and the methods and ways of the newspaper fraternity are not unknown to me.

It is not to be wondered at that so many people think the press immoral, for a goodly section of the community is not above reproach, and we generally judge others according to our own measure. There is not a boodler in this country, but firmly believes every other man a boodler. There is not a thief behind the prison bars at the present moment but thinks that every man out of prison is a greater thief uncaught; there is not a criminal caught or uncaught but considers his morals equal to those of the rest of the community; and, to end all, there is not a man in this Province able to read but thinks he knows more about editing a paper than those who have spent their lives in the business, and as they grow older are free to confess that they know very little, and that the ideal journalist should live several centuries at the least, in order to know anything.

The press of this country has been so immoral politically, that there is little wonder that the people have reached the conclusion that this immoral taint has spread into other departments. When newspapers prostitute their politics, and political parties start papers and hire journalistic bravos to bulldoze the public into immolating itself for the cause of a few low-browed politicians; when these papers villify the characters of men whose political and private lives are known to everybody to be above reproach; and are always ready with the whitewash brush to whiten the characters of politicians whose acts of public and

private immorality have become bywords, is it much to be wondered at that the public pin their faith in the saying of the Psalmist, "All men are liars" and conclude that the newspaper men are past masters in the art?

I am not going to justify the vile political twaddle of the party press, but to excuse it. Politics is a disease and this blind fight for the party through the highways and purlieus, through sunshine and shadow, through meadows and filthy ditches, is one of the strangest features of the century. Men whose private lives are above reproach, descend into the depths of political purgatory for their party, without the slightest compunction and do deeds for party purposes that they would scorn to do for personal purposes. This blind faith in a party leads men into strange company, and makes men do strange acts. Is it to be wondered at that the newspapers should do some queer things for the sake of politics?

But as many men's lives are pure outside of politics, so in the lives of the newspaper men the taint seldom reaches beyond political scribbling. The tendency is in the opposite direction, and the people are showing by the support they give the independent press that their newspapers and political ideas are much higher than the politicians suppose. But it cannot be denied that the public, to some extent, are under the impression that newspapers can be bought. It is only an inference deducted from their political conduct, but the inference is wrong. I cannot account for human nature, and in human nature it is the unexpected that generally happens, but I say this, that I know of no other class of society where the standard of morality is higher than among the newspaper men of this city. I have known newspaper men again and again to refuse a small present, such as a necktie, a hat, a handkerchief or a book, for fear, by accepting it, they should violate their newspaper conscience. I know men on the press of this city that feel qualms of conscience in taking a pass for the theatre, a show or on a railroad, for fear that by so doing they are impairing their honest usefulness to the paper to which they happen to be attached. I know newspaper men in this city who would shed their last drop of blood for the honor of their paper. I have known newspaper men with information in their possession worth thousands of dollars to others outside of their journal, the suppression of which might mean thousands of dollars to interested parties, but I have never known a trust to be betrayed. I have known but one newspaper man in my life

who accepted a bribe and he was an amateur, whose misdeed soon found him out, and he returned to the ranks to which he properly belonged.

No soldiers has this world yet produced more faithful to their leader than the reporters and writers of the press to their respective papers. They are volunteers. The pay is not princely, and the incentive to write is not dollars and cents. There are other lines of business where their talents and untiring industry would bring them far greater reward. These men serve their country and humanity, and he is a cynic indeed who will deny that on the whole their work has done much to ameliorate the condition of the poor, brighten the homes of the people, lighten the public burdens, and assist the onward march of civilization. The poet, the philosopher, the student, and the statesman, the orator, and the scientist are taking advantage of this mighty engine of progress, the press, to better the condition of the world. The brightest minds and the noblest intellects in the world speak their burning messages to the masses through the columns of the newspapers. It would be indeed strange if a wolf did not enter such a fold. But he is soon found out, and his fall is greater far than that of Lucifer from the battlements of heaven.

And what do this noble army of workers ever get in return for their labors? Few of them indeed receive stars and garters, many of them receive only the brief passing notice that this rushing century deigns to give to its great sons, and the great majority fight the good fight and go down into the oblivion of unknown graves, like the brave men that they are, content in the consciousness that they have not lived in vain if they have only gathered a small stone for that great edifice which civilization is building out of the centuries. And still many smile and shake their heads and wink and say that the press is corrupt. All the gold that is given is treated as dross, and to the good acts evil motives are imputed. But it will be a sorry day for the nation when its journalists are suborned, when the watch-dogs of the public are muzzled with golden muzzles. A righteous providence will bring forth something else to plead the cause of the people.

As the orator gave way to the writer of books, the bookmaker to the pamphleteer, and the pamphleteer to the newspaper man, so may the press give place to something better. After us, what? Certainly not the deluge.