

ILLUSTRATED JOURNALISM AND THE WAR

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I HAVE been asked to write some notes on illustrated journalism, contrasting the beautiful pictures which are provided for the public during the present war by a multitude of illustrated newspapers—daily and weekly—with those of a bygone era.

It was with the arrival of the *Illustrated London News* in 1842 that we first had the abundant provision of war pictures for the multitude. The war of that year was between this country and Afghanistan, and the first war picture that appeared in the *Illustrated London News* was issued in the fifth number of that journal. It was a singularly crude illustration of "Our troops receiving their Colours." That same issue, however, contained some much more vigorous pictures of the British forces in the Khyber Pass. The Crimean War of 1854 and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 were both vigorously pictured in the *Illustrated London News*, although I am afraid the pictures would count for very little in our day. These sketches of the camp of the 21st Fusiliers on the Heights of Sebastopol, the conveyance of commissariat wagons along the road, and a hundred other such sketches look very crude and indeed most comic by the light of modern warfare and its illustrations. In one picture entitled "Gordons attack with a Lancaster gun," the gun is a mere toy. Yet the artists of that day—most of them were officer-correspondents who sent sketches from the Army—had the advantage of abundance of horses, camels, and mules to illustrate; they had finely equipped soldiers in handsome regimentals, and all the materials for impressive pictures. But even in 1854 we were in the infancy of illustrated journalism, and the wood-cut sketches are

very coarse and "flat" compared with the pictures that are provided to-day even in our halfpenny and penny journals.

There is progress indeed when we turn to the *Illustrated London News* of 1870. From both army fronts in the conflict there was a much better number of spirited pictures, although the artist's name was rarely attached to them. Artists were allowed at headquarters, with the result that we have the Emperor Napoleon III. and his Staff constantly in view, and the Prussian King and his officers equally in evidence. To-day many artists have been to the seat of war, but they are not permitted to sketch such intimate pictures at the heart of things.

By 1870 wood-engraving had improved greatly, and many of the pictures are finely conceived and finely reproduced. There was naturally no press censorship, as this country was not in the war, and so it was that the artists were encouraged by either side to give magnificent bird's-eye views of the scene of conflict.

The long journey we have come since those days may be exemplified by a glimpse of an illustration of a captive balloon sent up during the siege of Paris. Everything indeed in those old newspapers seems very old-fashioned to us now, and it is not until we come to the Boer War of 1900—the year in which *The Sphere* first came into existence—that we have really striking pictures of incidents in the conflict.

The Russian-Japanese War of 1904 first brought the photographer upon the scene to compete with the artist, at least with any competence. Some of the work of the photographer in that conflict was really noteworthy, particularly that achieved by an American photographer, Mr. Hare, and by Mr. Bulla of Petrograd.

With the great conflict of our own day illustrated journalism has certainly reached its high-water mark. Photographers have been officially recognised for the first time. Canada has had its full share in its presentation of the work of its heroes in the war. The Canadian official pictures indeed have at the time of writing been the high-water mark of newspaper photography in war time. Side by side with this I think it must be acknowledged that the special work of Signor Fortunino Matania in *The Sphere* has eclipsed that of any previous artist in picturesque conception of incidents that have abounded throughout the conflict.

Something is lacking to-day, it is true, for the artist's inspiration in the monotony of equipment as compared with the picturesque costumes of the war of 1870. Something also has been lost pictorially through the power of magnificent munitions. Now battles are fought in which the combatants rarely come in proximity to one another. But, when all is said, war still has, with all its obvious gruesomeness and its many unmitigated horrors, its picturesque and poetic side, and this has never been illustrated with so much truth and vigour as during the present conflict.



Canadian troops entering a tiny wooden church erected near the line, Christmas, 1917.