

## JOURNALISM AND THE EDUCATED YOUNG MAN.

When I say journalism I mean English journalism, of which I possess just that modicum of knowledge which, besides being a dangerous thing, is a much better equipment for writing convincing essays than either blank ignorance or exhaustless information; and when I say the educated young man I mean any educated young man, for education is quite an international virtue. There used to be a time when the connection between these two was very slight indeed—was confined in fact to a few Grub Street hacks, whose historian is Thackeray and whose nationality was largely Celtic; but that was long enough ago to be historic, and it is not a particularly gratifying phase of history for the University man, as such, to reflect upon. In those days the ordinary provincial editor, himself in all probability a one-time reporter-comp., risen to high estate by a diligent study of Lindley Murray, Crabbe's Synonyms, and (for vituperative purposes) the Letters of Junius, would as soon have thought of engaging on his staff an epic poet or a Doctor of Divinity as a B.A. of any school whatever. And outside of London this state of things prevailed, with a few notable exceptions, until very recently. What the subscribers to the Slocum Independent wanted, or were supposed to want, was not literary finish, or taste, or culture—that, coming from one who dwelt among them, and was flesh and blood like themselves, were an insult, an absurd presumption—but verbatim reports of their own utterances at vestry-meetings, benefit society dinners and fat stock shows with the h's inserted of course and the verbs put in agreement with their subjects, but it does not require an Arts degree to do that. It presupposes only a knowledge of shorthand and a certain skill in *Oratio Obliqua*, and upon this foundation there arose a craft of reporters whose highest ideals were rapid transcription and an experience of the technicalities of the County Court or the ramifications of local politics. In the meanwhile, however, the London journals began to do more and more of the work once left wholly in the hands of the reviews—at first by putting out that work to the aforementioned Grub Street penny-a-liners, but soon by attaching men of University training and conspicuous ability to their permanent staff. At the present time, although the split infinitive still ramps joyously through the daily press, and journalism is still a language distinct and peculiar to itself, a cultured man can nevertheless read through the entire contents of at least half the morning papers of London without any severe shock to his aesthetic system, and even with an occasional flash of that pleasure which fine writing alone can give.

If this condition were confined to London, to a dozen papers whose literary, editorial and reporting staffs could be exhausted in a couple of hundred names, it would still be academically gratifying to the hall-marked graduate, but fortunately it goes much further. An instinctive following of the lead of the metropolis would alone account very largely for the radical change in the style of the provincial news-sheet; but other reasons also contribute. The public taste for verbatim speeches, which twenty years ago filled half the space of every paper with column on column of solid eloquence, unbroken by paragraph, comment or cross-head, and readable only by the process of running one's finger down the column, has practically disappeared. In its stead has come a demand for the work of the "special" writer—the man who can reproduce in some degree the characteristics of local life and make them interesting and fresh, who can draw thumb-nail sketches of the events and personalities which interest the readers of his paper. He may be as superficial as you like, but he must be witty, as critical and sarcastic, but he must write

well. Such a man will often accompany the stenographer to an important trial, or follow a local bill through the Houses of Parliament; his "descriptive," if good, will invariably be read before, usually instead of the verbatim report, and the paper possessing it will have the advantage over its rival even though the latter's report be half a column fuller and notoriously more accurate. The "interview" mania, too, though it might not seem so at first sight, is distinctly in favor of the educated man, who in nine cases out of ten will secure the confidence of any celebrity worth "getting" to a much greater degree than his merely Pitmanite brother. I know several men whose idea of interviewing is to rush up to their man note-book in hand and jot down the first five hundred words or so that fall from his lips. In fact there is a story current here of a new hand who was asked to write a character study of an aged and peculiarly inaccessible hermit in the neighborhood, and who, finding his prey sitting in the doorway of his cave-dwelling, sat down on a neighboring stone, pulled out his stylographic pen, and began "I am from the Hastings So-and-so, and I've come to interview you. Where were you born?"

The provincial editor who is abreast of the times and realizes this demand for clever writing is only too glad to get hold of a University man for his paper. He will not probably pay him what he is worth, until either experience shall have added the qualities of a reliable journalist to his natural advantages or a growing reputation for "smartness" shall give him an indisputable value; but he will allow him from the very first every opportunity (short of running the paper into libel suits) to exercise his talent, and he will give him the pick of the assignments—the most picturesque and interesting meetings, the best plays (if there be no dramatic critic), the reviewing, and the special articles, and thus make life passably easy for him. But if the University man can take a good shorthand note and has just a scrap of that specialized common sense which is called "the journalistic instinct," his position is at once assured. There are hundreds of thousands of verbatim reporters in the country—they can be had for fifteen shillings a week and provide their own bicycles—but not a tenth part of them are journalists.

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#### AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A BOARDING HOUSE CLOCK. (Concluded).

It was a source of great pain to me when my old friend did not return the next year, and I shuddered to think who would succeed him. I found that he was a member of the first or second year, and I longed for another like him. One day his successor came and for a time my heart was glad. He had a set of books exactly like his predecessor and even editions of the *English poets*, which I noticed neither of them read. The first night he sat down to study and again my heart was glad. *The air seemed charged with Quaternions and Elliptic Functions* as before. Surely this man too had struck the happy mean! But alas the air seemed always charged with Quaternions and Elliptic Functions; his studies and his note books as well! I had another plug of a different kind! Day and night he seemed ever engaged in abstract and senseless reasonings; certainly of two plugs the former sometimes actually laughed, especially when he read Aristophanes, but this one never had aught at which to laugh.

At last he went away and I was glad, and his successor came the same day. Alas! how sad I was when I saw that he had the same books as the first Plug! but I was soon undeceived. He had all the qualities of my