

## THE WEEKLY SUBSCRIPTION RATE IN CANADA

OPINIONS OF EXPERIENCED PUBLISHERS.

I WAS too busy last month to take a hand in your 50c. symposium. If it is continued in your next, I should like to say that the discussion is quite apt to commence at the wrong end of the subject. The weekly paper is an infinitely older institution than the daily. In fact, the latter is the growth of the last half of the present century, and the counting house daily—among which class must be reckoned the sweat-shop sheet that puffs and pads and pants and offers itself 313 times for 100 cents—was only heard of within the last decade.

In what way does the \$1 daily come into touch or meet the wants of the homes of Canada? Is it because it gives more pounds of paper, or more columns of padded out and frothy matter for which the staid rural people have no relish? It certainly cannot be on the ground of seniority, for it is, as said, the very last feature of newspaperdom to come into existence—and the most presumptuous.

We must look elsewhere, then, for a ground of contention, and find that the subject is really too wide to discuss in a symposium. If they—the \$1 dailies—are depending on their advertising, and hope to increase that by increasing their circulation, reducing the subscription to a merely nominal point, why do they not go further and give their papers away? If they are able to trace a profit of 10c. on each subscription at \$1 per year, and deem it only a matter of multiplication, does it follow that the country weekly must stand or fall on a comparison with the new upstart? Do those who hold this view ever think beyond the first superficial comparison as to size, frequency of issue, etc.? Are they unable to weigh the difference between a machine-made daily—mechanical from the lay-out of the work by the managing editor to the last act that produces the finished sheet in the cellar—and the very different article known as the country weekly?

But why compare at all? The \$1 daily is a natural product of that phase of American life which only condescends to live, and dies of paresis. It is a mushroom growth, and must so be regarded, and must stand by itself, and live by the patronage of the same high-pressure class which gave it birth.

It puts its news all in the headings, and has to in order to get it read; for the people that read it are too swift to reach the bottom of a column of real matter; they have only time to "glance at the headings," then their restless minds are off to something else—mining stock, horse races, or something equally unsettling to the mentalities.

The country weekly is another consideration altogether. It is for a limited local field; is the product of the needs, the news and the house life of that field; is brought forth with painstaking, conscientious toil and care; goes into the homes to be read by the youngest and oldest, and is then remailed, in the great majority of cases, to absent friends. It brings its publisher on an average only a modest living at \$1 per year with its natural advertising patronage. And, if reduced to 10c. per year, it would have very little larger circulation than it has at \$1.

This is the conclusion of the whole matter, and I make the statement on the strength of the fact—well known to most

country publishers—that their fields are covered; that nearly all who can be expected to become subscribers at any price are already on their lists.

Why, then, reduce to 50c.? Convince me that I can get two or three times as many subscribers at 50c. as I have at \$1, and I would probably reduce. But it cannot be done. The list would not be increased 25 per cent.—very likely not 10 per cent. Because the field is substantially covered, and what more can be done?

The \$1 daily is an institution by itself. The country weekly is another. They are as different as their fields are different. They cannot be compared. The rule-of-three does not apply.

Of course, there may be exceptional cases or fields, but I have been discussing the average weekly field on general principles. It has been shown by another writer that Mr. Dennis should not have mentioned The Montreal Star, as it is not a \$1 daily, except in a very limited direction. Perhaps the weeklies he names should be regarded as exceptional.

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