

ON LAUNCHING A NEW PAPER

WE believe the *Daily Courant* was the first daily paper published in England. It was a single sheet, printed on one side, and it appeared in 1702. That was not much more than two centuries ago — a mere fraction of time in our history. But in that time what a necessity of life the daily paper has become! What should we do without it? as Mr. Squeers said of Nature. What would the city men do without those fluttering rags which convert our morning trains into an army with banners? What would the betting men do? Or where would be the interest in races, boxing, and the football leagues? What should we do if we had to wait to hear about our battles till generals had finished polishing their dispatches, or till the men came home 'demobbed' and gave us their variegated tales? We should know even less of foreign parts than we know at present. We should, perhaps, think less of Parliament. The whole course of life and trade and politics and intercourse and conversation would be changed. We should miss the milk almost as much. And yet up to Queen Anne's reign our fathers got along somehow, and we are told that nearly up to Charles I no news was ever printed at all, and then only once a week. People must have lived on gossip more scanty than our own, and unvarnished.

It is needless to discuss the influence of the press. That would be to encroach upon the standing theme of many a sumptuous banquet where the mighty speaker rolls out his laborious platitudes, keeping a condescending eye fixed upon the reporters. The personal experience of any leader-writer is sufficient. How often at lunch or in a train does the leader-writer, still weary with slamming down his

morning's leader upon the copy paper in the office, listen to his random sentences quoted whole as the private and original opinion of person or persons unknown but sitting at his side! How often does he hear his leaders solemnly received as gospel, or as solemnly contradicted! Is it shame or pride which then fills his heart? At all events he recognizes the power of the press better than the eloquent platitudinarian of the banquet, and he needs no further proof.

As to the qualifications of a journalist, it is well known that 'Contempt of Shame and Indifference to Truth are absolutely necessary,' and Dr. Johnson, who thus defined the necessity, had every reason to know. For, though he acted as Parliamentary reporter for about three years to Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine* (we think it was), he boasted that he was only once in the House of Commons, and the speeches, including one of the elder Pitt's very finest, were entirely his own composition. Other writers of equal fame have engaged from time to time in the same precarious trade, though perhaps with less risk to character, since most of them wrote 'middles' rather than news, and were less exposed to contempt of shame and indifference to truth. We are thinking, of course, of such models in 'middle' writing as Defoe, Steele, Addison, Smollett, Goldsmith, perhaps 'Junius' (though he was rather a leader-writer), Coleridge, Lamb, Dickens, Thackeray, and, in our own times, Andrew Lang. Yet in spite of such names in literature of the best, a stigma was early attached to journalism as being literature's enemy. So it was that steady-going old Crabbe wrote of newspapers:

A daily swarm that banish every muse,
Come flying forth and mortals call them
news;
For these, unread the noblest volume lie,
For these, in sheets unsoiled the muses die.

But enough of mere writers. In Fleet Street there is a favorite saying that 'any fool can write' (various adjectives may be applied to the word fool), 'but it wants a heaven-born genius to be an editor.' To contemplate the editor of a great daily does indeed fill the present writer with the kind of awe which he feels in the contemplation of this incalculably varied earth, or the starry firmament on high. An editor's sympathy must be as boundless as the sea, his thought as deep. His brain itself must be a microcosm, a little universe, and yet embracing the Universal Whole. Somewhere there must be room in that gigantic mind for the schemes of statesmen, the course of wars, the revelations of science, the glories of literature, the winners of glove fights, the fashions of hats, the rivalries of beauty competitions, the doings of royalty. He must control his writers, who may think themselves men of genius (God help him!). He must apportion space and time. He must throttle the sub-editors, and harass the correspondents. He must obviate the perils of truth. He must crush contributors. He must elude interrupters. He must write the broadside. He must set the leaders. He must curse the printers. He must interview politicians. He is like the conductor of an immense orchestra, listening to the music, and at the same time keeping his eye fixed on each performer from the big drum to the piccolo. No wonder he fills us with an amazement near to stupefaction.

And it is strange how completely the whole paper depends upon the editor alone. Of course we have seen plenty of instances lately in which some mere manager, or a wealthy proprietor, or even a dominating shareholder has shoved the editor out of place and stuck himself there instead. It has often proved a deadly

experiment, and at the best it sets the paper all askew, like a ship with a heavy list. A paper takes the tone from the editor, just as a public school from the headmaster, or a regiment from the colonel. The influence of an editor may pervade a paper for many years after he has departed. Captain Sterling, as editor of the *Times*, began a leader with the words, 'We thundered forth the other day an article,' and after that it was not only Captain Sterling who was long called 'The Thunderer,' but the *Times* as well. Dickens, as the first editor of the *Daily News*, began its first leader with the words, 'We seek, as far as in us lies, to elevate the character of the public press in England.' And has not that laudable intention been industriously maintained? Or, again, James Grant, in his *History of the Press*, tells us that the *Morning Herald*, if it could not, strictly speaking, be called Liberal, was certainly not committed deeply to Toryism. He is writing of the *Herald* about a century ago, and might not exactly the same be said of the *Herald* which appeared this week?

But in our marvel at the editor let us not forget his innumerable subordinates — the secluded leader-writers, the elusive 'own' correspondents and 'special' correspondents, the tormented assistant editor, the maddened sub-editors, the listening foreign editor, the bombarded literary editor, the men who 'handle' the 'flimsy,' the outside reporters, the boys, formerly called devils, the printers, the folders, the distributors, the paper-makers, the timber-cutters, who send logs down stream to the pulping mills, the men and women who roll the produce of the forest thin and hang it up to dry till the newspaper is complete except for the writing, which is added afterwards. When we welcome a new paper, as we welcome the

Daily Herald this week, we must remember all this host of various people who have to finish their regular bits of work day by day, and have to be paid. Though we filled this weekly number with the subject, we could not exhaust the difficulties in which a new daily is entangled. Through all these intricate complexities of men and matter it has to force its way, and deeply should we sympathize with hopes too like despair as the staff struggles through that jungle.

Overwhelming in any case, the labor is hardly to be endured unless illuminated by hope. Such hope we mean as must now throw its gleam upon the *Herald*. For, indeed, the contest is glorious and the hope great. The new paper's prevailing idea, it tells us, is the need of a complete break with the old system, the need of approaching the task of reconstruction with the frank assumption that we are about really to create a new social order. 'The British Labor Movement,' it says, 'is the only great political movement of Europe that has not a daily newspaper of its own; and if the workers are to obtain self-government in their daily lives, they must have their own press, directed by those who favor Labor's aims.' Such aims are well assured of opposition. 'It is not in human nature that those who benefit from the conditions we would abolish should be impartial judges of the proposed change.' Far from being impartial judges, it is certain that they will seek to counteract the proposed change with violent hostility. But an obvious enemy's opposition may be exhilarating. Depression comes with the indifference of friends. When such an endeavor starts, there will always be candid friends to carp, and other friends to commend and freeze its virtue. There are those to whom the admixture of a lie always gives pleas-

ure, and who have no difficulty in finding it elsewhere. There are those who like to relax their minds early in the morning over pictures of the day's brides, spring hats, or pigs as army mascots. And there are multitudes in all classes who identify seriousness of purpose with 'intellectual snobbery.' Against all these every honest and serious paper has to contend, and the opponents are perhaps strongest among the workers whose noses are kept closest to the daily grindstone, and whose life is too benumbed for rebellion or even for protest.

None the less, how splendid with promise is the opportunity for such a paper now! Seventy years ago Carlyle exclaimed, 'With thankfulness we perceive the old World of Mammon everywhere cracking.' Much more obvious are the cracks and chasms now. Political revolution is often quick and easy; social revolution moves slowly or with a desperate force. But if the result of the accumulated years which ended in the worst of wars is to show no social change that may truly be called a revolution, then indeed all but the idle, the swindlers, the profiteers, the place-hunters, and the so-called owners of land may well despair of mankind. At such a turning point of the world's history it is very heaven to stand upon the side of change and hope, whether one be young or old. All who share the labors and the purposes of such a movement as the *Daily Herald's* stand on that side, and, as we said, their contest truly is glorious and their hope great.

The Nation

AN HOUR WITH LUDWIG FULDA

BY H. DE ZIEGLER

STRUCK by the fact that at Berlin, France is considered to be the author of all the woes of Germany, I went to