

The American Press

Self-Surrender

By DON C. SEITZ

Predigested food is bad for the teeth. What the American press needs is a course in Fletcherism. Don C. Seitz tells why in this article, the last for the time being of his compliments to the American press. Next week Mr. Seitz writes of "The Patent Fraud"

SOME one has observed with considerable, if not perfect, pertinency that fortresses are not taken—their garrisons surrender. The individuality and independence of the press have not been taken from it—they have been given away.

I have already alluded to the blighting effect of syndicalism upon the talent employed in creating the feature and editorial departments. It is now in order to explain the degeneration of the news-gathering instinct.

One can understand how, in days of poverty, the press might have combined to cheapen the news hunt, as the "World," the "Times," the "Tribune," the "Herald," the "Mail," the "Journal of Commerce," and the "Sun" did in forming the original Associated Press, which sold the results of its energies to other journals throughout the land, and which now serves upward of one thousand. Some such general source is necessary to carry the freight, so to speak, of journalism. But to this has been added numerous other co-operative sources, some arising through the efforts of the A. P. to maintain a monopoly among its members, but others self-created by newspapers themselves in further diminishment of individuality.

Richer than they ever dreamed of being, newspapers spend money on these space-fillers that might be better employed in individual effort. Instead, this has almost ceased, save as the paper itself syndicates the products of its bureaus, adding to the warmed-over flavor of its customers' columns. These aim to sew up events in their own interest rather than to lead by energetic effort. Amundsen's futile flight toward the Pole is an illustration in point. Out of this system comes usually the "made" story instead of news.

It would be hard to discover a "beat" of any consequence in the files of a New York newspaper since the self-censoring began during the World War. Acres of opinion and surmise you will find, representing colossal cost in cable tolls and the maintenance of bureaus

abroad, but no outstanding scoops or important facts. It would be possible to retire on the tolls paid for speculation concerning the settlement of the foreign debts due America, or of what Lloyd George or the German Crown Prince were likely to do next. The possibility that George Harvey might cease to represent this anxious Republic in London meant a small fortune in cables. He finally made good by quitting—so did the other George. William of Doorn also furnished a fertile field for high-priced guesses. Not one word in one hundred that comes by cable is worth the seven and one-half cents it costs. The ends of the earth have been brought too near to be interesting. Meanwhile the editors look across the sea, and note little or nothing next door.

That the Great War was responsible for this there is no doubt. Under the censorship, self-influenced as it was, it became easy to be lazy, and afterwards, the papers becoming fat, *lèse* energy continued. Looking backward, it must be confessed that there never was a more shameful surrender of editorial duty than the complaisant bowing to the will of Woodrow Wilson. So far as the Great War was concerned, it was fought in the dark. The exploits of the Y. W. C. A. and the doughnut friers of the Salvation Army got more room in the American newspapers than the heroes who fought, bled, and died. The excuse that military and naval movements had to be withheld from the enemy is to laugh. There was a good deal more merit in cabling the German press the full story of our gigantic doings than in pussyfooting millions of men across the sea. Germans were unconvinced, until the battle-lines met, that the U. S. A. could do anything. We were a joke to the profound Teutonic mind, and insisted on being so regarded.

Worse than this, the practice led to laches on the part of the press. The papers were content to be fed by George Creel with silly stuff from a Government press agency. Their readers were kept as ignorant as the enemy was presumed to be, with great harm to newspaper repute and loss of public confidence in

what was printed. This loss of confidence has not been restored.

THIS brings us down to the point where the garrison has filed out of the fortress. Some years before the war, in going about a good deal to college and social study affairs, I was surprised to discover a growing distrust in the press. Coming as I did from an establishment which even its owner did not try to control, I was amazed to find a deep belief that newspapers were in the hands of advertisers; that their opinions were thus modified or corrupted. This, of course, laid the blame at the door of the business office, where I knew it did not belong. It was also unjust to the advertisers, who during my long business connection with the "World" had never made the slightest attempt to control its columns in a venal way, and from whom I had received but two requests to temper news stories, and then in the interest of softening tragedies.

It seemed incredible that there should be such a belief, and I sought, through the machinery of the American Newspaper Publishers' Association, to find its source. With the able assistance of its manager, Mr. Lincoln B. Palmer, we located and published a list of fourteen hundred men and women who made their living as press agents. "Publicity agents" had become a later and, perhaps, higher-toned appellation. Both birds are of the same feather.

Each newspaper in the membership, which covered, however, only about four hundred of the leading dailies of the country, received copies of this list, and a strong movement began to clean the columns of the insidious matter that had been pouring in, making life easy for the editors, but sapping that of the papers. By the time we were pushed into the war the breed was pretty well extinct, save for the perennials of the theater and circus.

The adoption by the Government of a "publicity" bureau policy, instead of permitting reporters to hunt for news with the devil of competition chasing the hindmost, led to a revival of the whole noxious brood. They came back like

locusts, and have devoured the crops. Large establishments are maintained. Few corporations are without a publicity agent. I venture the guess that the Pulitzer School of Journalism turns out far more of these parasites than it does reporters. They are much better paid than the latter and only have to prepare pie.

Indeed, "publicity" has been elevated to the rank of a profession. All sorts of interests, great and small, employ its agents to reach the crowd through the meek and lowly press. Every sort of cause from prohibition to prize-fighting has its exemplars, all glib at copy-producing and toting colossal scrap-books about as totems of achievement. No charity can make way without an expensive operator, and good works afford unending occupation for the "publiteers," to coin a word. First among them stands Ivy L. Lee, once a "World" reporter, but now the Angel Gabriel for many mighty matters, ranging from the virtues of the Standard Oil Company and the Rockefeller Foundation to the heresies of the Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick, as well as trumpeting for Billy Sunday. Mr. Lee gravely tells us that he serves Dr. Fosdick without pay because he admires the sweetness of his soul.

IN addition to my other troubles, I have at times kept bees. The bee typifies industry and co-operation. Yet the hive has an insidious enemy in a moth which finds its way within and, laying eggs between the frames of honeycomb, breeds a slimy worm which devours comb and honey. The cocoons shut out air, and the bees smother and starve. The "publicity agent" is the bee moth of journalism.

Per se I find no fault with him. The blame lies with the editors who have so easily accepted him. I confess I have not yet recovered from a year-old shock at listening to a defense of the moth before a parlor full of intellectuals by the editor of an able afternoon newspaper, who spent an hour arguing that Mr. Lee and his kind were of great benefit to his profession, which only needed discretion to sort out the good from the insidious. Alas! for him there is no middle ground. Sugar hides the pill, it does not conquer the effects.

Besides the debasing public results of being hand-fed, there is a consequent decadence of knowledge in the newspaper office. Writers do not have to be informed about SOCONY or Harry Emerson Fosdick. Everything about them comes in on a plate, so neatly done that it can be handled without chopsticks. It is a far cry from Tody Hamilton to Ivy

Lee, but the bridge is now complete. The newspapers are sold, but do not get the price.

It is already argued by the press agent that he is a useful adjunct to the newspaper; that he saves it the trouble of much digging and many rebuffs. Heads of corporations are not easily accessible, and the press agent speaks for them, saving bother and expense. That is just the trouble. The newspaper gets what the corporations want it to get, and nothing more. The result is a corruption of the press, whether it thinks so or not.

Free advertising is, of course, at the bottom of the business, but the opportunity for insidious information to insert itself in the popular mind is very great, and is freely availed of. This could not happen with intelligent, diligent reporters digging after facts. They would discover the false lead and render it of no value. To mislead a good reporter is about the most serious mistake a public man or corporation head can indulge in. Through the publicity system the reporter is eliminated and things are "put over" readily. No one is being educated to understand what the stuff means. So it gets by. Some of the publicity shops even put out "boiler plate" pages, and these are actually used by many papers, saving, as they do, much composition, with resulting loss of status with the reader. The American Press Association is used freely for this purpose.

WHAT is the remedy? Frankly, I do not know. It is hard to discard lethargy and to abolish convenience. The public has come to accept the newspaper for what it is worth, not for what it should be. The signed article, the columnist, the syndicate, the press associations, and the publicity agent are the bee moths in possession of the hive. There are more drones than workers, in consequence. People who wish light and truth are turning to individualistic efforts in the periodical field. Here men are struggling to be heard. The odds are hard to overcome, but there are many eager listeners. Perhaps in time there will be more, and that the newspaper will be shamed back to its own.

By this I mean the restoration of individual enterprise and unrelenting competition in the pursuit of news—the coming back of bold action to the editorial rooms. My old friend J. Edgar Chamberlin, now of the Boston "Transcript," when young became managing editor of the Chicago "Times," then owned by Wilbur Fisk Storey. He succeeded Horatio W. Seymour, whose headline "Jerked to Jesus" over the hanging of a Negro murderer who had

gone piously to the gallows jarred even Chicago. It was then considered enterprising to steal the messages of the Presidents and Cabinet officers. The "Times" was offered a proof of the report of the Secretary of the Treasury for \$1,000—no editor would give five cents for it now—and, Chamberlin being new, called Storey up on the telephone. That disconcerting nuisance was new also, and there was no general system. Storey had a private wire. The call brought him out of bed.

"Do you think it worth it?" he asked.

"I do," replied Chamberlin.

"Then what did you call me up for?" was the tart reply.

That was journalism. Storey made his paper magnificent in the West. Yet it died with him, though not at the same time. It fell into hands less resolute, and the result was palsy and dissolution.

I am not arguing that old things were better than the new. Yet many old things remain the standard. Who has improved upon Shakespeare? Who has matched Cervantes or outdone Milton? The Iliad, unwritten for a thousand years and handed down by word of mouth, remains the matchless epic of the ages.

Action and reaction make up existence. The weakest part of the theory of evolution is that we do not keep on evolving until we wear wings of gold. The good becomes bad and the bad good in unceasing cycles.

I cannot believe that Horace Greeley, James Gordon Bennett, Henry J. Raymond, Charles A. Dana, Joseph Pulitzer, Henry Watterson, Joseph Medill, Murat Halstead, Henry Villard, and Samuel Bowles were wrong, and that William R. Hearst and Scripps-Howard are right, even in the face of what is called success, or that a thousand acres of forest trees should die each day for the mere purpose of amusing a public and carrying home the announcements of department stores and the chronicles of movie pantomimists. The press was, and must ever be, the Palladium of Our Liberties.

Men do not always remain mediocre. We laugh at the uplift, but it comes—sometimes after almost too long a delay—but it comes. The flaming torch cannot be extinguished. When the crippled Cervantes, in his prison cell, laughed knight-errantry away, he made room for the public service for the newspapers. It cannot forever remain in the thrall of mere money-making. Some stout soul will come, as Horace Greeley and Joseph Pulitzer did, to patch up the cracks in the pedestal and once more place Pallas Athena upright on her pins.

The Answer of Antioch

Does Education Educate?

By GEORGE MARVIN



Arthur E. Morgan

THE product of Antioch College is the exact opposite of shredded wheat in that it is emphatically "touched by human hands" during the six years of its manufacturing process. The Faculty of Antioch College is composed of forty-five guides, counselors, friends, teachers—missionaries. Every one of them is a "dean of men" or a "dean of women," or, rather, all of them together are deans of humankind. *Educo*, the Latin root of the English verb, means to lead out or to lead from: ignorance to knowledge, inertia to action, apathy to thought, darkness to light. Antioch leads you out by the hand.

Not so very long ago a corporate-spirited citizen by the name of Patterson, of the Dayton Cash Register Company, offered to finance the College if it would move itself from rural Antioch to urban Dayton, re-establish itself there on the Cash Register grounds, and rechristen itself the National Cash Register College. Similarly tempted, Trinity, in North Carolina, sold its birthright for a forty-million-dollar mess of potage, cheerfully scrapping a name honored by the most venerable academic and spiritual associations to enshrine the reputation of a cigarette millionaire. Those two names—Trinity and Duke—the one lost and the other chosen, without further elaboration symbolize the opposite trends of education in the United States.

But at Antioch in those days there

was a clear-spirited man by the name of Morgan, Arthur E. Morgan, the newly elected President of the College, who refused to sell the name and the soul of Antioch. He needed the money badly; he and his trustees have always needed money, and do now need it. But Morgan's college stays poor at Yellow Springs under the name Horace Mann gave it when he conceived and founded in Ohio an institution, not to brand or to fabricate, but to *educate* men and women.

There are two Antiochs: Horace Mann's and Arthur Morgan's. The one goes back to 1853, the year of its original foundation in the same vintage period that bore Washington University at St. Louis and the University of Missouri at Columbia; the other is only five years old, reborn in 1921. Morgan's Antioch inherits much of Mann's: the red-brick buildings aged with ivy and the suns and rains of seventy-three years, the peace of tree-populated groves and glades, co-education, and the granite shaft, leaf-checked with sunlight in summer and in winter lace-shadowed by the black branches of the campus that the founder cleared, inscribed with his own parting words: "Be afraid to die until you have done some service to humanity."

The influence of Horace Mann abides in Yellow Springs with his old College, but it would be more exact to say of a peculiar and different institution that

only the headquarters of Antioch are now in Yellow Springs. The much over-worked phrase, "far-flung," may be literally applied in just description of the bailiwick of a college that is only apparently small, its immediate jurisdiction overlapping the neighboring industrial centers of Dayton and Springfield, and its administrative control extending as far away as Cleveland, Detroit, Philadelphia, and New York. The headquarters are small enough to view. The clustered town seems to have been picked up bodily out of the Connecticut Valley and solidly replanted on the Springfield Pike and the Pennsylvania Railroad in the southwestern corner of Ohio. "De population, boss?" says the Swahili spearman who carries your grip and typewriter from the street-corner stop of the Springfield and Xenia trolley; "De population, includin' de whites, is 'bout twelve hundred. Yasseh, 'bout dat many." Two hundred acres on the edge of this village belong to Antioch—two hundred quiet acres dipping down to a glen where the unfailing springs, yellow with oxide of iron, give the place its name and, in the years before Horace Mann immigrated from Massachusetts, made the locality a health resort for old Southern families. Old Massachusetts and the Old Dominion have left their outward and visible signs on the college buildings. They would fit into "the Yard" at Cambridge or into the architectural unity of Washington and Lee at Lexington. Their bricks are all hand-made.

Something of the personalities of those who made this place has gone abidingly into it, something as humanly hand-made as the bricks. It is the reverse of an "educational plant." There is nothing here in common with the huge shell of Rice Institute, for example, in Texas, a magnificent heap of up-to-date equipment made to order out of unlimited endowment, without a vestige of personality, unpossessed, unhumanized. Antioch is a family rather than a factory. This influence is as substantial an ingredient of the College as anything material about it. You meet a personality, associate with it, leave it as though some living being said, "Good-by." The Antioch idea pervades its two hundred acres informingly, arrestingly. Something like it breathes through the tall pines of Reed College, in Oregon; echoes of it come across the lakeside campus of Wisconsin.