

LIFE IN NEWSPAPER OFFICE HAS A STRONG ATTRACTION

It was Edmund Burke, the greatest of English orators, who remarked in the course of an address in the House of Commons that there were three estates in parliament, but in the reporters' gallery yonder there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than they all.

That statement made years ago when the public press was not nearly so powerful as it is today has demonstrated its truth with the passing of years. No organ affects so universally the moulding of public opinion, and newspapers have made and unmade public men. One cannot contemplate the influence which the London Times, for example, exercised in years past, when it gained the reputation of being "the Thunderer," or during the war when Lord Northcliffe wielded tremendous power in state circles without realizing the powerful effect that the printed page has upon the minds of men. Upon those who follow the profession of journalism has fallen the task of either elevating or debasing the thought of those to whom they cater, and, generally speaking, they have measured up to their tremendous responsibilities.

As in all professions there have been scamps and rogues and self-seeking demagogues, narrow and bigoted, who sought one special end for self-gratification and in so doing misled their readers. On the whole, however, the press has been the universal agent for raising the standards of the people, for tempering their rash impulses, for presenting the two sides of the controversies of the times, for leading the way along the paths of progress and for providing the means of stimulating and instructive enjoyment. The services of the press during the past five years when the columns of the newspapers were devoted to the great consuming task of winning the war cannot be reckoned in gold and the tributes of the greatest statesmen of the day indicate the lofty place which the Fourth Estate holds in determining the fate of empires.

Yet it is surprising to note how little the general public understands the workings of the great daily newspapers. Each night the carrier boys leave the sheets at their doors, and they are eagerly devoured and scanned for the latest happenings, but there is not one man in ten who realizes the time and expense which have been expended to make the paper attractive and interesting. It is really funny to hear some of the remarks that are made by the un-knowing about the methods used in newspaperdom to compile the news, the chief impression being that the great difficulty in issuing a sheet is to secure enough news to fill its columns and that, as a consequence, the

editors are like raving maniacs during office hours as they plead for stories.

On the contrary there is scarcely any business that is more distinctly organized into departments and which runs more harmoniously than the average newspaper office if the functions have been carefully delineated. Each employee has a definite work to do and as long as that special task is accomplished everything runs smoothly. As the backbone of the newspaper there are the reporters, for it is manifestly the primary function of a newspaper to bring before the readers all the latest local events. It is their duty to set down the happenings without bias and without prejudice, and upon the editorial staff devolves the duty of forming opinions upon this or that subject.

The duties of a reporter are interesting from the time the first item is set down early in the morning until the forms are locked up in the afternoon. The news gatherer is the twenty-four-hour-a-day man on the newspaper, for he must be ready at any time to respond to a call from his chief to go forth with all speed to report some happening which will be of interest to the readers of the paper. He must be available to cover a wreck at one o'clock in the morning, a murder at three, a fire at five, an explosion at seven, an accident at nine, an interview at eleven, and so forth without end. Whether the occurrence be in the early hours of the morning or late at night the reporter must be on hand to garner in the first news for his paper, and the scribe is loyal to his own paper above everything else.

There is probably no calling in which a man is better able to view all aspects of life than that of the professional news-gatherer. It is he who comes in touch first hand with those who through the court rooms day by day and plead for mercy for their crimes and misdemeanors; it is he who investigates the complaints of trickery on the part of some selfish citizens; it is he who sees the sorrow when the word is brought of the death of a dear one; it is he who follows the police in their searches in the lowest places of humanity, and in their rotten depths sees how far humanity can fall; it is he who is assigned to interview the most high in public life; it is he who knows how to control himself when some egotist rebuffs him harshly, and finally it is he whose primary business it is to maintain a cheery demeanour and be as popular as possible with everyone.

Like poets, reporters are born, not made. There is an expression in journalistic circles that professional news-gatherers must have been born with a nose for news. He must be

able to deduce small occurrences and ferret them out until he reaches the big story. Sometimes this will lead him into all sorts of peculiar situations but he must meet them with characteristic fearlessness, persuasiveness and persistence for the appetite of the public for something new is never appeased.

Nevertheless, it is not to be supposed that a reporter has no definite work to do, although the general opinion is that a reporter simply walks around the streets with his hands in his pockets and a cheery smile, dropping in here and there, and trying always to stick the proverbial nose for news into everybody's business. On the contrary, each reporter on the staff has definite places which he must visit day after day. For instance there is the police reporter, who attends the police court, the superior courts and kindred places in search of news day after day. Another keeps his eye on the morgues and hospitals. Another will go only to hotels and public institutions. There will also be reporters to "cover" the labor halls, prominent gentlemen, educational institutions, the waterfront and so forth. Incidentally, of course, the reporter is expected to keep his ears open and his mouth shut to learn of anything of general interest which is not likely to be found on the regular beats.

Moreover, there is usually one man on each staff whose special duty it is to be ready to answer calls for big stories. He is the free-lance and is generally the best qualified reporter, raised from the cub stage to the point where he has a finely developed sense of news value. It is he who interviews without end those who have any knowledge of a wreck, of a big business deal, of special meetings, or any of those stories which have the prominent and coveted positions on the front page. Big scoops, that is, exclusive stories of happenings which have been missed by competitors, are the joys of a reporter's existence. It is this unquenchable thirst for scoops that gives the zest to a journalist's life; it is this that carries him through all sorts of adventures in quest of a story which will make his rivals green with envy, and raise him in the estimation of the big chief, the city editor.

No two days in a reporter's life are the same for as the world moves around new happenings occur and no one can tell what is in store at the beginning of the new day. Each morning the reporters start out on their rounds and it is the universal rule that the short trips be made unless something big happens to delay the scribe. At frequent intervals the reporters return to the news room with

their stories and the typewriters click continually as the glist is turned out. The unceasing noise is interrupted occasionally by the ring of the telephone as some friend tips off the reporter to a happening. These little acts of thoughtfulness are appreciated more than anything else by the scribes, who are in constant terror of a scoop being secured by their live competitors. When the news has been typed it is "stuck on the hook," that is, it is placed on the desk of the copy reader who checks it over, punctuates it, orders it to be rewritten in some cases and generally puts it in shape for the paper. It is "headed" and after it has been completed in the hands of the news editor or city editor it is sent on to the managing editor along with the sheets of telegraphic news which has been coming in over the wires. It is the duty of the managing editor to look over the copy as it is sent through to see that it is attractively written with catchy headlines and he has the general supervision of the make-up of the paper.

From the managing editor's office the copy is sent on to the composing room where it is set up in type for the paper. In the Whig office there are five men who work at Linotype machines for this purpose and they handle all the copy that goes into the paper. The machines are almost human in the work they accomplish, and there is no comparison between this method of machine-setting and the old way of picking the type out of cases. The operators sit at a keyboard and as the characters which are pressed bronze matrices slip down from a magazine above and are aligned to the desired width. Each magazine which holds the matrices, has two faces of type—light and black—but there are different sized letters available for the magazines. There is the six-point type in two faces; there is the eight-point type such as that which is now being read and there are also ten and fourteen point characters which are bigger still. Some machines are capable of holding as many as four magazines at the one time and replacements of other magazines can be made. The Whig machines are capable of turning out copy in any character from six point to twenty-four point simply by turning a crank to bring the different magazines into action.

Examples 6 point light
Of 6 point black
Characters 8 point light
Available 8 point black
From 10 point light
Linotype 10 point black

Machines 12 point light
For 12 point black
Setting ... 14 point light
The 14 point black
WHIG.....24 point black

After the matrices have fallen into line they are lifted and carried along until they are directly in front of the lead pot wherein there is always molten lead, of which the type-line is made. Here they are automatically spaced to the desired width and a lead impression of the matrix characters is made. This impression, which can be either one or two columns wide and less than an inch in height, is pressed to the width of one line and drops into a receiver. Meanwhile the next line has been set by the operator and the matrices that were used have been lifted by a long arm and replaced in the magazine. Each matrix has a different lock combination and falls into the right position when a corresponding combination is found on an endless wheel which carries the matrices forward to their places.

When a column of type has been set by the operator it is carried over to a galley where it reposes until a proof or impression is taken of it. These proofs are carried in most offices by the printers' devils, who are learning their trade, to the proof-readers. In the Whig office the proofs are delivered in compressed air tubes and the devils are relieved of what might be onerous duties. However, other errands are found for them, and it is recalled that some time ago one of the Whig's devils, who was being initiated into the mysteries of the composing room, was sent by the foreman to the city editor, thence to the managing editor and then to the society address who forwarded him to the police station for a bucketful of electricity. Shortly after the deluded lad returned to the foreman with the information that the police sergeant was very sorry that he could not fill his pail as the last of their electricity has been used a few minutes before his arrival.

The proofs are corrected by the readers and it is rare that an experienced proofreader permits an error to creep into the paper. The proofs are returned to the composing room, where a new line has to be set by the linotype operators whenever an inaccuracy occurs. The corrected type is then sent to the make-up man who has the duty of arranging the stories in the page forms. Each page has

generally definite news to be placed upon it. For instance, there are the local news pages, the sporting page, the page for the theatres and military news, the district page wherein is placed the news sent in by country correspondents, and finally the front page, for telegraphic and other important news.

Making up a newspaper is an art in itself and requires considerable skill. As the type is all laterally inverted practice is needed before it can be read with the same facility as ordinary reading matter. The advertisements are placed in the paper before any news goes in and consequently there is a constant demand that advertising copy be sent in early so that the publishers may know how much space to allow for news on the page. After the advertisements have been placed in the forms the news type is inserted and made to fit to the ends of the column by lead spaces, quotations and other fillers. After the page has been completely filled up it is locked by pressing in the type closely on every side with blocks, and it is only on rare occasions that a page falls to pieces. At such times there is a general bad temper for it means holding up the issue of the paper and they are only equalled when an advertisement comes in late or when a story is sent out just at locking-up time.

Many persons who have been kind enough to send in a story which they considered to be worthy of half a column or more have wondered why they found it "holed down" to a few lines. Generally the reason is that it either lacks news value and can be expressed as well in five lines as in twenty-five or that it is too late to be set up by the linotype men. They have only a certain capacity and if a story comes in late it means that it cannot be set up when there are half a dozen others waiting on the hooks to be gobbled by the operators. Generally speaking an editor's great task is not to find news, but rather to cut down the news he has found into small space.

With the great new press which has been installed by the British Whig, conditions will be greatly remedied. It will now be possible to insert valuable late news almost up to the last moment that the press runs, as the new mats, the making of which is described elsewhere, can be made without pulling the forms off the press for the reinsertion of news. Formerly it was necessary to stop the press, bring the forms up on an elevator to the composing room, insert the important news and then ship the forms back to the press room.

After the paper has been run off

the press the copies are forwarded to the mailing department and to the newsboys. The mailers have automatic machines which place the names and addresses upon the papers which are despatched in bundles to all parts of the world. The mailing lists are regularly revised by special clerks in the circulation department, whose duty it is to insert the names of new subscribers, withdraw others, and generally keep the lists up-to-date.

The profession of journalism has its drawbacks, but there is something romantic about it which keeps its servants plodding along day after day. There is the incessant call to put forth one's best efforts in order that one's reputation amongst the profession may be enhanced. A position "on the desk" or as special writer is the goal to which every young newspaperman aspires, and it is the possibility of climbing through the positions to the top that induces every reporter to exert himself to the utmost. The nose for news lasts as long as life itself, and the public men who get along best are generally those who have had some training in newspaper work. It is they who understand the situations at a glance and they seldom "get in wrong," because they know just what to give out to the general public. Any reporter worthy of the name never gives up a story until he gets to the bottom of it. He carries it to its logical end and only extraordinary circumstances will keep it out of the paper. No one has a better sense of honour than the newspaper reporter, and if he considers that a story, no matter how great its news value, is better out of print, his good judgment will not permit him to place it on the hook. He realizes that a newspaper is not the organ of local scandal where reputations may be raked in the muck and sullied till the judgment day. He may laugh good naturedly at the man whose only sense of news is to ask why the paper does not give this fellow a rub or take a shot at that fellow, or develop into a scandal-mongering sheet, but the reporter's duty is merely to set down facts and not editorial opinions. The reporter seeks only the truth, and the harder it is for him to get the more steadily he works. It is a profession of which one seldom tires, although the incessant days of toil bring their tired moments when the one desire is to get away from it all. But once in it there is always a stifled and which continually calls one back to the noise of the news room, the printers' ink in the composing room and the paper-littered floors of the editorial sanctum. After all the Fourth Estate is greatest in more than one sense.

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