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PRESENT-DAY NEWSPAPERS

The men and women who are engaged in the profession of writing may properly be divided into several classes. There are two principal classes—newspaper writers and “journalists.” Each has for the other the most supreme contempt—the newspaper writers because the journalists occupy what might be called an illegitimate field, and the journalists because the newspaper writers do more effective work. It is not surprising to find, as a consequence, frequent articles from the pens of journalists deprecating the work of newspaper writers and newspapers, but the extreme to which Mr. Horace White, journalist, goes in the current number of the North American Review would scarcely have been expected, even in the hopeless case of a journalist. Basing his opinion on the proposition of supply and demand, Mr. White relieves himself as follows:

“If the supply of good editorial writers has fallen off, it must be because the demand has fallen off; and this, I believe, is the truth. I mean the kind of demand that calls into being an effective and regular supply. No self-respecting youth will prepare himself for future connection with a yellow journal; and, in general, the number who will prepare for newspaper work will be governed by the aspect in which journalism daily presents itself to their eyes. What are the most prominent features of journalism today? They are pictures, headlines, color scheme, job type, sport, gossip. Is it any wonder that the bright young men, those who feel ‘growing pains’ for high achievement and growing hope for distinction therein, are repelled from a profession which presents itself to them in such harlequin garb? But that is not all. In order that there may be a steady supply of good editorial writers, there must be both a congenial field for them to work in and a sufficient fund to pay them. But the money formerly destined for the editorial writer now goes to the cartoonist, the artist reporter and the color schemer. Does any one ask why good editorial writers are so scarce nowadays? May they not be employed as waiters at hotels and restaurants, finding the occupation there more congenial and the pay more regular?”

What hopeless rot!

The papers of the United States are better edited today than ever before in the history of the nation, and will continue to advance along this line with every decade. They have grown more complete year in and year out, and their great and lasting good increases steadily. Why should not pictures, headlines, color scheme, job type, sport and gossip be the most important features of the present-day newspaper? For the reason that some rattle-brained journalist might not agree with the general plan of the modern newspaper? Newspapers, like all other public utilities, are adopted to the requirements of the people. The editors pass upon the character of the happenings of the day and give prominence to the most important. They print pictures so that their readers may be brought into contact with scenes that would otherwise be but fanciful dreams. They resort to the use of color that their pages may be more attractive and that there may be more reading on the part of the people. They devote much space to sport and gossip because the people evince more interest in such matters than formerly. Their patrons eagerly read their well-written, concise accounts of the progress of the world and with quite as much regularity pass up the tiresome, journalistic-school discourses appearing in the out-of-date magazines.

Tens of thousands of people assemble to see every big baseball or football game that is played in the United States; tens of thousands gather to watch the horses. Would any one with a thimbleful of brains undertake to say that such occurrences are not matters of public moment? Can it truthfully be said that newspapers are filling a forbidden field by printing the pictures of our national celebrities,

whether they be athletes, financial giants, intellectual geniuses or prominent men politically?

The young man of intelligence has more opportunities as a newspaper writer nowadays than ever before were presented to the aspiring youth of the country. Salaries are better than ever before. It is true artists receive, as a rule, more compensation than writers, but this is due solely to the fact that they are fewer numerically. Their copy can not be edited. How many editors in the United States receive more salary than the famous Homer Davenport, the acknowledged peer of all cartoonists? Perhaps 1000.

Naturally one who entertains such widely erroneous views of newspaper work would, were he to fail at his chosen profession, turn to hash houses for employment, and find there surroundings much more congenial than would come of association with intellectual activity in modern newspaper offices. That Mr. White continues a journalist indicates only that he has chosen between two callings, perhaps after having failed as a menial in some obscure restaurant or hotel.

HIGH COST OF DIAMONDS.

One of the notable effects of the work in South Africa of the late Cecil Rhodes has been the practical doubling of the price of diamonds in the past 20 years.

The diamond mines of Kimberly, in South Africa, were first worked in 1871. The mines were at first owned and worked by a number of different companies. In 1883 the production of diamonds in the Kimberly district amounted to 2,413,953 carats, yielding £1 2s 8d per carat. It was about this time that Cecil Rhodes conceived the idea of consolidating the various diamond mines in the Kimberly district. In 1888 the amalgamation was practically completed, and since that year the De Beer Consolidated Mines has controlled the diamond output of the world.

The most striking result of the amalgamation has been the practical doubling of the price of diamonds. The output of diamonds has shown practically no increase during the last 20 years. The output in 1883 was 2,413,953 carats, while the production in 1903 was only 2,400,000 carats. By restricting the production the De Beers syndicate has succeeded in greatly increasing the price of diamonds. The average price per carat received by the company last year was £2 4s, against £1 2s in 1883.

Over 700 persons were killed by lightning in the United States in 1903, and between 700 and 800 are probably killed each year. East of the 100th meridian thunderstorms occur all over the country, but west of it, except in the Rocky mountains, the frequency of storms diminishes until on the Pacific coast there are practically none. The greatest number of storms appears in Florida, in the middle Mississippi valley and the middle Missouri valley. The greatest number of deaths in any single state (1896-1900) was 186 in Pennsylvania. Ohio came next with 135, Indiana, Illinois and New York having 124 each.

The wine merchants of Zurich have decided to form a museum and library “du vin” in which every phase of wine culture will be represented. One special feature will be books and prints, and another will consist of the utensils, ancient and modern, used in the manufacture of wine. Indeed, the museum is to be at once historical, artistic and scientific.

In 1811 the sale of horse meat for consumption was forbidden in Paris by a special ordinance. During the siege by the German army, a taste for such meat was developed. In 1900 the number of horses eaten by Parisians was 20,000; in 1901 it was 25,000, and the following year nearly 30,000.

The democrats of Baker City are, according to the Herald, determined to bring about the nomination of Mr. Cleveland for the presidency. Seems to us the people of Baker City would first settle the Letson Balliet matter before tackling the presidential nomination.

Berlin uses for the most part filtered river water. To bring water from the Hartz mountains would cost, for the aqueduct, \$20,000,000.

Every fire station in Berlin has now been equipped with an oxygen apparatus to revive persons overcome by smoke or heat.

Women may hereafter be employed as station agents on Russian railways, by order of the minister of railways.

In the city of Washington there are 13,000 Browns, and 15,000 Smiths, 14,000 Johnsons, and 1,000 Joneses.

The Russian government has now decided to equip the Trans-Siberian railway with a double track.

We trust there will be no bad after effects from the livestock conventions in Portland.

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