

The Daily Astorian. ASTORIA, OREGON: FRIDAY, JUNE 13, 1897. METROPOLITAN PROVINCIALISM.

If provincialism may be defined as a mixture of ignorance and conceit, then it is to be found nowhere more plentifully than in the newspaper offices of the east, and especially those of New York. It is not surprising that this should be so. Big cities are not distinguished for the cosmopolitan spirit of their populations. The indifference of the Parisian to the rest of the world, and his amazing want of knowledge about those unfortunate members of the race who have not had the happiness to live in the French capital, have become fossilized jokes in English literature. The Londoner is not much better. The cockney cares as little, and knows as little, concerning the remainder of the earth as a Piate. The New Yorker is not quite so restricted in his knowledge and sympathies, but the process of contraction goes on with the growth of the town. In every city, of course, there is a remnant of enlightened men who keep informed of the world's onward course, and whose interest in their race is broader than the legal limits of the municipality. Their familiarity with the globe and its affairs, gained by travel or reading, or both, enables them to preserve a correct sense of proportion. They understand why objects seen at a distance are smaller than those near at hand. But the average New Yorker—the cockney of the American London—knows nothing of the laws of perspective. If a cobbler on the Jersey side of the North river looks like a pebble, he decides off hand that it is a pebble. The largeness of things near deceives him into believing that all things far away are really small. We get diverting proof of this distortion of vision in the sort of news which is telegraphed from the metropolis. Along with the provincial's absorption in the immediate goes an unthinking assumption that what is interesting to him is, of necessity, interesting to everybody else. So we constantly get dispatches giving us in minute detail accounts of face-slappings between young dandies, club rows over the light mention of a lady's name, perhaps, changes in the editorship of this or that newspaper that are being talked of, who has lost or won a pocketful of money on a horserace, bits of scandal, and what not—matter of a kind that outside of New York, is no more readable than similar happenings in other cities, about which there is seldom anything telegraphed.

This naive belief of the New Yorker in the importance of everything that occurs in New York is eloquent of the bigness of the city and the narrowness of its life. The town is so large that the people who live in it have their eyes and minds so occupied by what goes on around them, that they have neither sight nor thought left for other things. They are like animalcule, which, swimming in their drop of water, take it for the ocean, and themselves for whales. The newspapers of a community are the reflectors of its activities and intellect. Judged by its press, New York is the most provincial city in the Union. It has some good newspapers, of course—a few that surpass any in the country. There is a population of two millions and a half within ten miles of the city hall, that can be reached in about twice as many minutes. It would be strange indeed if among this great, swarming mass of humanity there were not a minority of people of intelligence and taste sufficient in number to support some journals of breadth, character and literary excellence. But the papers which have the colossal sales—they tell the story of New York's littleness, coarseness and vanity. Two—the World and Journal—are typical. The one, when under Huriburt's

editorship, was an honor to the country's press. In style it was pure and elevated, and its cleverness delighted every reader who was able to appreciate good writing. It had, we believe, a circulation of about 7,000. It was taken, when dying, by a busy, bustling man, who understood what the public wanted. He transfused vulgar blood into it; filled it with chat and gossip and scandal—with the surface news of the common day, in fact. Good taste and serious writing gave place to no taste, flippancy, brag and quantity. To-day the World has a circulation running beyond 200,000. The Journal, from the first day of its existence, has been a success—a bewildering success. It sprang at once into an enormous popularity. Yet what its merits are cannot be seen from afar. The World at least gives news and plenty of it, such as it is; but the Journal does not. It simply chatters, and often chatters, editorially too, in unmeaning doggerel about nothing in particular. It is not humorous, it is not bright. Its sustained insanity is not only a marvel in journalism, but a revelation as to the capacity of the human intellect to work cheerfully, noisily and steadily without producing thought. But the Journal twaddles chiefly on one theme—New York. This is the secret of its otherwise inexplicable success. New York is always ready to read about itself and to pay for the privilege.

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