

THE
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
BULLETIN

VOLUME 15 NUMBER 12

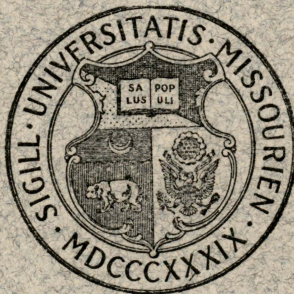
JOURNALISM SERIES 7

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

BY

ROBERT S. MANN

Assistant in Journalism, University of Missouri



UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

COLUMBIA, MISSOURI

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The following Missouri editors were kind enough to aid in the preparation of this bulletin by giving their opinions on some of the matters discussed: William Southern, Jr., Jackson Examiner; Charles E. Baker, Stanberry Owl-Headlight; R. M. White, Mexico Ledger; John A. Larison, Chariton Courier; J. Kelly Pool, Centralia Courier; C. J. Walden, Boonville Advertiser; Omar D. Gray, Sturgeon Leader; W. R. Painter, Carrollton Democrat; Ovid Bell, Fulton Gazette; W. J. Sewall, Carthage Evening Press. Grateful acknowledgment is here made of their assistance.

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

I. Choosing and Using Material

The editorial attitude of newspapers frequently is a tacit acknowledgment that comparatively few persons habitually seek out a paper's expressions of opinion and read them through. This attitude is reflected in the introduction into the editorial column of various devices of the display advertiser—in the setting of editorials in extra-wide columns, in the use of larger type or even italics and bold-face type, in the leading of editorials and in the placing of them on the back page. With the cry going up that the editorial page is losing its power, there is a constant effort on the part of newspapers to gain more readers for their opinions.

It is undoubtedly true that only part of a newspaper's readers take time to digest its editorial page. But the same is true of the other pages. Many readers consider carefully only parts of their newspaper and glance hastily, if at all, at the rest.

The fact that the editorial page does not reach as far as it might, however, does not imply that its influence is inconsiderable. The many persons who read editorials regularly and the many more who read them occasionally make up a respectable audience if not a large one in comparison with the total of newspaper readers.

One should also remember that much depends upon the quality of the editorials themselves. Merit in this department of journalism will be recognized as well as in any other line, as witness the Springfield (Mass.) Republican, which has been built chiefly on a basis of editorial excellence. Dana's "man who is original, strong and bold enough to make his opinions a matter of consequence to the public" has an even greater opportunity today than ever before, for the vastly increased circulation of the modern newspaper over its predecessor gives him a larger possible audience and a more democratic audience.

WHY PRINT EDITORIALS?

The desire to comment on the events and conditions about us seems to be instinctive in humanity. We go outdoors and say, "How cold it is!" We read of a railroad wreck, and we say, "How terrible!" We see the effects of inefficient city government, and we say, "How shameful!" We are not trying to tell any news. We are merely commenting—or editorializing, to use the journalistic term.

This same instinct is found in newspaper men, and consequently in newspapers. There is a wide latitude, however, in the extent to which the instinct is indulged by various journals. Some papers—as, for instance, some of the "one-man" papers in the smaller towns—merely reflect the ordinary contents of the editor's mind. It is as if the editor were putting into his editorial column the same casual things that he would say to his acquaintances. Others go to the opposite extreme and consider the publishing of editorials as a stern and serious duty to the public, in which case the editorial tone of the paper is very much different from that of a paper in the first class.

The question of whether or not to print any editorials at all arises oftener than one would suppose. This is, of course, settled in advance for the newspaper which conceives of a duty of public service for itself. If, however, one considers—as many newspaper men do consider—that the selling of news and advertising space is no more than a commercial transaction, the same as the selling of potatoes, then it is hard to see why the editor should go out of his way to persuade the reader to any particular course of action.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that the better newspapers of the country, large and small—the papers that have won general recognition in their localities—are almost invariably newspapers that devote some attention to their editorial columns. Of ten Missouri editors who recently expressed opinions on this subject, only two said that they did not consider the editorial column an essential part of a newspaper, and one of the two qualified his statement by insisting on "interpretative" reporting. He said:

I doubt if my editorials influence my readers. However, I know they are read, because they make people angry sometimes. * * *

After an experience of thirteen years, I must say that I do not consider an editorial column an essential part of a country newspaper. I run one for several reasons—among them the satisfaction of saying what I think—but I believe my newspaper would stand as well and exert as much influence without the editorial column as with it. Editorial columns add to the respectability of a newspaper; and, when the editorials are well written, give the paper character among newspaper men; but I doubt if the editorial column is of any real service. Intelligent, conscientious reporting, I think, is the best way in which a newspaper may exert influence on the community in which it is published. When I say intelligent and conscientious, I mean also interpretative.

On the other hand, here are extracts from other statements:

I certainly consider the editorial column an essential part of every newspaper worthy of the name. A newspaper without an editorial column and without an editorial policy is like a ship adrift without a rudder, or sail, or chart, or compass, making for no port, and having no definite excuse for sailing the journalistic sea.

The editorial column is essential to the newspaper that wants to be felt in the community in which it is published. * * * It is always best to take a decided stand and even if you are mistaken the public will respect you if they know you are honest in your opinion.

I am a strong believer in an editorial column. It gives character and stability to a paper which is not supplied in any other way.

The editorial column is essential to the real paper. Without it your paper becomes a mere medium of business. Without it the paper becomes a thing. The editorial is the heart, the soul, the character of every paper.

EXPRESSING A PAPER'S PERSONALITY

Ordinarily any newspaper page on which there is an editorial is called an editorial page. The editorial page, however, has possibilities far beyond this. It is the one page on which the paper's individuality has full sway. Personality indeed may be

expressed on the news pages—in the kind of news “played up,” in the style of heads and in the general make-up of the pages—but still the news of any particular day must be treated in much the same way by all the newspapers of a locality. It is on the editorial page that one finds the expression of a newspaper’s self—its “ego.” On its editorial page, a newspaper—not the editor, but the newspaper itself—is free to discuss anything under the sun, from any possible point of view; free to chat with its exchanges; free to tell funny stories; free to print volunteered “editorials” from subscribers; free to print any of the numerous features which lie outside the domain of news. The editorial page is one on which the articles are interpretative, one where the rule against drawing conclusions does not apply, one where fiction and poetry may find a place.

The writer of news must be absolutely impartial, must draw no conclusions, must stay strictly within the facts. The writer for the editorial page not only may, but usually does, favor one side; part of his business is to draw conclusions; he looks beyond the facts.

MATERIAL FOR THE EDITORIAL PAGE

In its capacity as carrier of the paper’s personality, the editorial page has a wide range. The editorials themselves of course come first. These need not be expressed in words, as some of the strongest editorials are in the form of illustrations. The cartoon is not news but comment. There is a growing tendency to put the pictorial editorial on the same page with the written editorials.

Next comes the editorial paragraph, distinguished by being only one paragraph long and by being printed without a headline. In most cases, however, the distinction is deeper than this, the paragraph generally being intended to amuse. When well written, editorial paragraphs are a valuable addition to any editorial page, and many a country editor has achieved more wide-spread popularity from his editorial paragraphs than from all the rest of his paper. For one thing, the exchange editors of the metropolitan dailies find that the paragraphs of certain



Figure 1—The cartoon as an editorial. The two drawings on the left illustrate difference in editorial attitude toward the same event.

exchanges are dependable sources of material, and quote from them frequently. Many Missourians, for instance, who couldn't find Richmond, Mo., on a map, have become well acquainted through the city papers with the "Brass Bullets" of the Richmond Missourian.

Clipped editorials are used by many papers, credit being given, of course. Some dailies make these a once-a-week feature; others have daily departments of "Current Comment"; still others reprint only occasional editorials which indorse their own opinions. The fact that so many persons read out-of-town papers, however, makes it probable that reprinted editorials will be stale to a certain part of one's readers. This is no argument for abandoning the use of clipped editorials; the conclusion is merely that no one paper should be allowed to monopolize the "Current Comment" column, nor should the "Current Comment" column be allowed to overshadow the original editorials. As one newspaper man expressed it, "Clip from other papers, to be sure. But make your own editorials so strong and so sincere that the reader turns first to them."

Properly handled, clipped editorials become an interesting feature. Practically every reader at times suspects the motives or judgment behind his paper's policy. This policy can often be effectively "backed up" by the presentation of editorials from other papers. Moreover, the use of clipped editorials gives a wider range of outlook, and to some extent is like increasing one's staff of editorial writers. Needless to say, great care should be taken in clipping editorials; the job is not one for the office boy.

Letters from readers often find space on the editorial page. This is quite natural, considering that the majority of these letters are editorial in nature. While many of the communications that every newspaper receives are trivial, still the variety of viewpoints makes them readable, and there is always the chance that one of the letters may yield a new idea or raise a new issue. Except when discussing important questions, however, these volunteer contributors should not be allowed to "drag out" their articles to any great length. Use the blue

pencil if necessary; but it is better if one can impress upon his readers that any communications must be short. The more editing an article gets, the more likely it is to be lifeless.

One outgrowth of these letters from readers is the "Answers-to-Questions" column. Many of the letters contain requests for information, and some newspapers make "Answers" departments regular features of their editorial pages.

Notes from exchanges may be either serious or humorous. In the first case they are usually in the nature of news—brief paragraphs concerning happenings in near-by localities. These are used mostly by the smaller papers that have no other out-of-town news service. In the second case the exchange editor passes over the straightforward news stories and searches for the unusual, the bizarre, or the humorous—something amusing in itself, or about which he can make a witty comment.

Besides these exchange notes, practically all the larger papers make some attempt at humorous columns. A good humorous column is an effective bit of leaven for the editorial page. Humor draws the attention of many who otherwise would pass over the page with barely a glance.

"Feature stuff" is the vague term which covers much other matter that goes on the editorial page. On The Kansas City Star, for example, this is made up of stories of historical personages, excerpts from good literature and similar matter. On The New St. Louis Star it includes Dorothy Dix articles and the like. And on other papers the "feature stuff" ranges all the way between these two.

The foregoing are only a few of the numerous kinds of matter that find place on editorial pages in various parts of the country. Few papers use all the items mentioned, and on the other hand many papers have still other departments, such as poetry, forty-years-ago-today columns and the like.

GIVING THE EDITORIAL PAGE DISTINCTION

It is in the make-up of the editorial page that one sees the most prominent difference between the city and the small-town paper. No two city papers make up their editorial pages alike,

THE KANSAS CITY TIMES, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1914

The Kansas City Times (The Morning Edition)

Published every morning except on Sundays and public holidays. Office: 1110 North Main Street, Kansas City, Mo.

Subscription rates: Single copy, 5 cents; Monthly, \$1.50; Quarterly, \$4.50; Annually, \$15.00.

NEW KING OF ALBANY TAKING A "SPORTING CHANCE"

Albany, Feb. 18.—The new king of Albany, taking a "sporting chance" in the... Albany, Feb. 18.—The new king of Albany, taking a "sporting chance" in the... Albany, Feb. 18.—The new king of Albany, taking a "sporting chance" in the...

Stating Frank Steps From the Cold Storage Variety

Stating Frank Steps From the Cold Storage Variety... Stating Frank Steps From the Cold Storage Variety... Stating Frank Steps From the Cold Storage Variety...

APPOINTING THE FARMER POP

APPOINTING THE FARMER POP... APPOINTING THE FARMER POP... APPOINTING THE FARMER POP...

THE FARMER POP

THE FARMER POP... THE FARMER POP... THE FARMER POP...

THE FARMER POP

THE FARMER POP... THE FARMER POP... THE FARMER POP...

THE FARMER POP

THE FARMER POP... THE FARMER POP... THE FARMER POP...

Answers

Answers... Answers... Answers...

The Elchevise Evil

The Elchevise Evil... The Elchevise Evil... The Elchevise Evil...

MISSOURI NOTES

MISSOURI NOTES... MISSOURI NOTES... MISSOURI NOTES...

MISSOURI NOTES

MISSOURI NOTES... MISSOURI NOTES... MISSOURI NOTES...

MISSOURI NOTES

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MISSOURI NOTES... MISSOURI NOTES... MISSOURI NOTES...

Answers

Answers... Answers... Answers...

The Elchevise Evil

The Elchevise Evil... The Elchevise Evil... The Elchevise Evil...

MISSOURI NOTES

MISSOURI NOTES... MISSOURI NOTES... MISSOURI NOTES...

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MISSOURI NOTES... MISSOURI NOTES... MISSOURI NOTES...

MISSOURI NOTES

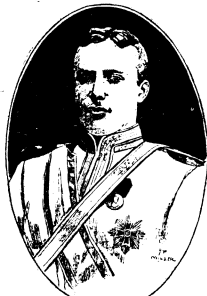
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ELBURN PLAYER PIANO \$435 and the great HARWOOD at only \$475 \$10 a month

The Elburn and the Harwood are great... The Elburn and the Harwood are great... The Elburn and the Harwood are great...

J.W. JENKINS 1018 Walnut Street, Kansas City, Mo.

Figure 2—Editorial-page features of The Kansas City Times.

but almost every city paper has a distinctive character for its editorial page. On the other hand, the country paper frequently gives its editorial page no distinguishing characteristics except the flag and one or two editorials.

To be sure, the limited space of the country paper and the limited time of the editor make it impossible to simulate the metropolitan editorial page, just as it is impossible to simulate the metropolitan front page. However, just as it is possible for a small-town paper to produce an attractive front page—of a different style, of course, from that of the city paper—so it is possible to produce an attractive editorial page of a type all its own.

The grouping of various features that may be scattered through the paper and the addition of one or two new ones may be sufficient to furnish the material for the page, but a painstaking make-up is necessary if the matter is to be displayed to the best advantage.

To tell the truth, it is easier to talk about a good make-up than to say what it is. There is an art in making a newspaper page present a neat, unified appearance that attracts the eye. Much depends upon the taste of the make-up editor, but he can cultivate this taste and get new ideas by studying other papers. The few rules that are in general application in newspaper offices may be smashed regardless, provided only that the result is sufficient justification. Within certain limits, an attractive newspaper is its own excuse.

The fundamental point of editorial make-up lies in the width of the columns. Many papers make no distinction between the news pages and the editorial page in this regard. (See Figs. 2, 9.) The Hearst papers (Fig. 3) usually reserve a two-column space down each side of the editorial page, and fill the middle three columns with cartoons or "feature stuff." The editorials proper are run double-column down the left side, but the right-hand space may be divided into the two original columns upon occasion.

A large number of papers compromise between these two ideas by covering half the page with wide columns and the other

THE ST. LOUIS REPUBLIC

Published every morning except on Sundays, public holidays and days of mourning. Office: Corner Market and Olive Streets.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1914

Table with 2 columns: Item and Price. Includes items like Flour, Sugar, Coffee, Tea, etc.

WHY SHOULD UNDERSTOOD IT.

The first thing to be understood is that the Republic is a free government. It is a government of the people, by the people and for the people.

THE MORNING MAIL

The Morning Mail is a daily publication that provides news and information to the public. It is a valuable source of news for many people.

THE ST. LOUIS REPUBLIC, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1914.

Have the people, meanwhile, with their eyes fixed on the future, they have not forgotten the past. They have not forgotten the lessons of the past.

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Figure 4—Three wide columns and three narrow ones make up this editorial page. Notice the two sizes of editorial heads.

half with ordinary narrow columns. The St. Louis Republic, for instance (Fig. 4), uses, instead of seven 13-em columns, a make-up of three 17½-em columns and three 13-em columns, which is typical of numerous other papers.

The wide column has one advantage in that it makes editorials look shorter to the casual reader than they would if they were set in a regular 13-em column. For another thing, the newspaper that wants to use large or black-face type in its editorials will look better if it uses a wide column. However, the question as to whether the wide or the narrow column produces the best effect is one of taste, and one which the editor must decide for himself.

With most city papers, the rule is that no advertisements, or, at most, only one or two small ones, are allowed on the editorial page. With a country paper consisting of four or, at the most, eight pages, this is usually undesirable, especially if the front page has been freed from advertising first. To bar advertisements from the editorial page is to crowd the other pages with them unduly, and at the same time to enlarge the space reserved for editorial matter to an excessive proportion of the total space given to reading matter.

But even if this were not the case, there are other reasons why the small-town paper would do well to begin its editorial make-up with one or two columns, more or less, of advertisements, preferably on the right-hand side of the page. If neatly set, without too much heavy black type, the ads will improve the appearance of the page remarkably. Ordinarily, the editorial page, with its leaded articles and its lack of black display heads, is much lighter in appearance than the other pages. Six or seven columns of this light matter presents a monotonous appearance, and rather appalls the casual reader by its apparent extent. City papers break up the page with illustrations, but the paper without a photo-engraving plant can relieve its page with advertisements. The effect is of course a more or less mechanical one produced on the eye, and the reader ordinarily does not know why a page pleases or displeases him.

One feature of the editorial page is usually fixed—the flag, which is almost universally placed in the upper left-hand corner

THE FULTON GAZETTE

Published every Friday by FULTON GAZETTE PUBLISHING CO. 207 BELL BLDG on Main St.

Entered as second class, March 22, 1879, under post office No. 1274, at Fulton, Mo., under special authority of act of October 3, 1917, authorized on July 10, 1918.

Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in act of October 3, 1917, authorized on July 10, 1918.

Address of contributors to be given with name and address of person to whom they should be sent. All communications should be addressed to the editor.

GO TO CHURCH

Next Sunday is "everybody go to church day" in Fulton. Every Sunday night to a semi-orchestra for every person on Fulton. 7:30 o'clock shall they labor and do all that the seventh day is for the Sabbath of the Lord's Day...

DEBATE

If the Chicago and Alton railroad should run the main line through Fulton, and locate its freight depot here, and if it could give the business quantities of empty coal cars to be used in Howard county in other quantities, it would be a great benefit to the Fulton community...

THE CORE CASE

The evidence in the January suit against Senator Gove, of Oklahoma, indicates that a fine politician named "Frank" up a "deal" in "oil" the senator himself would not impair on President Wilson...

A BAD ROAD BILL

Congress could not make a much greater mistake than to enact the Roadbill bill appropriating \$20,000,000 to be distributed to the states for use on roads. This is made with the difference to the stipulation for able politicians who are anxious to get the bill...

THESE 85.55 ON HONORED

"These folks complain about the rate of taxes in Missouri, but our taxes are not to be compared with those of Illinois," said Deputy Sheriff James L. Cole at the court house...

Further for Nels

We will have no track at Carrog, Mo., until about March 1, at least of high grade facilities for sale to railroad companies...

New Provisions May Defer

The information on which several Governor Wood's bill for the amendment to the constitution for the purpose of providing for the election of a United States senator, according to a dispatch from Washington...

Folk May Run for Senate

It is a probability that former Governor Wood's bill for the amendment to the constitution for the purpose of providing for the election of a United States senator, according to a dispatch from Washington...

Back River Bottom Area

There is a report that the Missouri River bottom area is being reclaimed. It is said that the government is planning to build a dam across the river at Fulton...

Stops a Business Man's Advice

A business man's advice to stop a certain project has been given. It is said that the project is not worth the money that it would cost to carry out...

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Stops a Business Man's Advice

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Stops a Business Man's Advice

A business man's advice to stop a certain project has been given. It is said that the project is not worth the money that it would cost to carry out...



Is a protection and guarantee against alum which is found in the low priced baking powders.

To be on the safe side when buying baking powder, examine the label and take only a brand shown to be made from Cream of Tartar.

MONEY TO LOAN

We have money to loan on first class real estate security, with good terms and reasonable rate of interest. If you want a loan call and see us.

Hamilton & Crenshaw

REAL ESTATE, LOANS AND INSURANCE

FULTON, MISSOURI

Every Day Someone

finds out that coffee drinking is the unsuspected cause of various aches and pains. Steady nerves and a clear brain are often impossible to the regular coffee drinker.

Our work is to tell the facts about coffee--then

It's Up to You

to decide from your own condition and feelings whether to stick to coffee, with such handicaps as biliousness, headache, nervousness, indigestion, heart trouble and sleeplessness--or make

A Fair Test

Quit coffee absolutely for 10 days, and use the pure food drink--Postum.

Then you can compare your condition with that of the coffee drinker.

If you find, as thousands of others have, that the coffee troubles are disappearing, you'll know

"There's a Reason"

for

POSTUM

--sold by Grocers everywhere.

Figure 5--Editorial page of a small-town paper. The advertisements do not prevent a neat appearance.

of the page. However, at least one paper runs its flag in the lower right-hand corner of a page—not the editorial page, for the paper has no editorial page.

In the left-hand columns the make-up man usually places the editorials and the paragraphs. Between these and the ads come such of the features above mentioned as the paper cares to run, the placing, of course, being done with an eye to the final appearance of the page. If the page is not yet filled, news or even want ads may be used. If news stories are used, it is better to use the shorter ones, which have comparatively small heads. A black display head may overshadow everything else on the page.

Speaking of heads, it is almost needless to say that every newspaper should have a fixed style for its editorial heads as well as for its news heads. Ordinarily a one-line black-face head, either caps or caps and lower case, is sufficient. The Richmond *Missourian* (Fig. 8), however, uses a distinctive arrangement of three lines.

An idea that has been adopted by some of the larger city papers, including The St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* (Fig. 6) and The St. Louis *Republic* (Fig. 4), is the use of more than one style of editorial head. All editorials are not of the same importance, any more than are all news stories of the same importance; so in both cases the more important articles are given the larger heads.

Aside from the matter of heads, there are various points of style that an editor should settle in determining the make-up of his editorial page. Such, for instance, are the questions of whether the editorial paragraphs—if any are used—should be before, after or scattered among the editorials proper; whether the editorials should be placed in the order of their length or not; whether the editorials and paragraphs should be made to fill a certain space every day; whether special departments should be given single or double-column heads. All these and other points must be considered by the editor who would give his editorial page distinction.

II. Writing the Editorial

"What shall I write about?" asks the beginner in editorial writing.

"How shall I begin?" is the next question.

"How much shall I write?"

"How shall I close?"

And when he has answered these questions, he has mastered the biggest part of editorial writing.

One general law may be laid down as applying to all the questions: Remember the other fellow. In this case the other fellow is that composite individual known as the newspaper-reading public. The writer who goes out of his way to consider how his production will look to his readers is more likely to strike a responsive chord than is the man who sits in his office and writes only what pleases himself.

"WHAT SHALL I WRITE ABOUT?"

"First catch your subject," is good advice in editorial writing. And in this process the "nose for news" is as valuable as in reporting.

Generally speaking, the editorial writer can find a subject in anything that people talk about, or that people will talk about if it is called to their attention. There must be the element of interest in the subject chosen; otherwise the newspaper can shout itself hoarse with no effect except the weakening of its editorial column. No matter how a paper may persist in commenting on "Efforts to Increase the Use of Toothpowder among the Alaskan Indians" or other equally interesting subjects, it hardly will be able to force its readers to think along those lines; in most cases the readers will merely skip the editorial column.

Timeliness is a big element in making an attractive editorial page, just as it is important in the news pages. An editorial on

George Washington is appropriate February 22, but not at Easter. An editorial based on a current happening loses value by waiting, as much as does a news story. Here again the test of public interest may be applied. A timely editorial may influence a whole community; but hold that editorial back a few days and its opportunity is lost.

There are two main sources of subjects—reading and observation. The former is the easier to use, for by going through any good newspaper one can find numerous news stories on which editorial comment might well be based. If a story contains that which causes you to remark about it to the man sitting next you, then it is, generally speaking, suitable for editorial discussion. The art of editorial direction is shown in choosing among these possible subjects.

One pitfall may be pointed out while dealing with this source of subjects. That is the tendency in inexperienced writers to take news stories at more than their face value. Almost anyone can break into print with an outlandish idea of some sort, but the wary editorial writer considers the origin of such stories instead of hastening seriously to controvert or praise the thought exploited.

The other source of ideas is personal observation—the keeping open of eyes and ears. Many newspaper campaigns start through the observation by editors of the conditions about them. By observation is meant also discussions with friends. Some writers habitually spend much more time chatting with their acquaintances than in the actual preparation of their articles, and feel the time well spent because of the new ideas and the new points of view discovered.

Some editorials are not strictly editorial in nature. These are the “news editorials,” which contain little or no comment. The history of something like the Mexican trouble, for instance, which is written a little each day, may be summed up in a careful editorial for the benefit of the many persons who have failed to read the whole story or to connect the parts properly. This is as truly interpretative as the editorial made up wholly of opinion.

After all, the main thing in selecting a subject is to select one about which there is something worth while to be said. And in judging what is worth while, don't forget to take the standpoint of the ordinary reader. The tendency for an editor to exploit his personal fads through his editorials is to be avoided. No newspaper in the world can cram unwelcome beliefs down the throats of its readers. While the newspaper moulds public opinion, at the same time the paper is moulded by public opinion. The two must go together; and while the paper may try to be always a step in advance, its usefulness ends when it gets too far ahead.

“HOW SHALL I BEGIN?”

Next to selecting a subject, the most difficult thing about editorial writing is to make a good beginning. As in news writing, one must interest the reader from the start or not at all.

Use a strong headline, for whether this is written first or last, still it is the beginning for the reader. The “wooden” headline has been driven from the news columns of most papers, but editorials are still allowed to go forth under such heads as “The Tariff,” or “Changed Conditions,” or “Our Duty.” The editorial writer could well take a leaf out of the book of the copy reader, and learn to make his heads attractive. The editorial head need not tell the whole story, as does the news head, but it should give some idea of the nature of the article following it, and at the same time should be attractive in itself. It is not necessary to be undignified to get life into heads. Is not “Finding the Arctic Atlantis” preferable to “A North Pole Expedition”? And is not “Harnessing the Mississippi” much better than “The Keokuk Dam”? “When Rogues Fall Out” attracts more readers than “The Impeachment”; “Protecting Our Wild Life” than “Game Laws”; “Riley and the Children” than “James Whitcomb Riley.”

The best headline in the world cannot make a good editorial of a bad one, but a good editorial may fail of its full opportunities if an unattractive head drives away readers. Writing

the head should be the subject of as much thought as writing the article itself.

The same principles apply to the beginning of the editorial proper. If a reader has been attracted by a good headline, it is folly to drive him away with a dull opening, or to weary him with a mass of words whose chief function is to obscure the thought. If you can write a lively, interesting lead, do so; but if at any time you are really puzzled how to begin, cast aside all rhetorical ornaments and jump squarely into your subject. The main purpose of the editorial is to tell something, and even a bald statement is preferable to a poorly ornamented one.

A device frequently used in all kinds of writing is the introduction of specific instances in beginning discussions on general topics. For instance, an editorial on judicial reform might begin with a specific instance of injustice done by the present plan; or an editorial urging the establishment of an orphan asylum might start with a recital of the plight of some child. When not overworked, this plan makes an effective beginning, for the specific always makes a stronger appeal than the general.

One technical warning might be added. That is to avoid the practice of making the first sentence of an editorial dependent on the headline. For instance, don't write this:

LET'S HAVE A NEW JAIL

This is something that we have been needing for a long time. Now that, etc.

Make the editorial independent of the headline, as in this:

LET'S HAVE A NEW JAIL

Smith County needs a new jail. For a long time the present building has been inadequate, etc.

“HOW MUCH SHALL I WRITE?”

The time-honored advice as to editorial length is: “Never write an editorial longer than your pencil.” This is usually fol-

lowed by the counsel that the shorter your pencil becomes the better your editorials will be.

Like most other old saws, this one is not to be applied literally. A better theory may be had from Lincoln. He said, or at least is credited with having said, that a man's legs should be long enough to reach to the ground; and similarly an editorial should be long enough to tell its story. Many editorials are bettered by compression, but others require space to do their subjects justice.

An interesting comparison as to length of editorials is shown in Figure 7. Both of the papers shown are well edited, but their directors apparently have diametrically opposite views on this subject.

Other things being equal, the shorter editorial is likely to be the more widely read. On the other hand, the short editorial is likely to be bald and severe in treatment, and its writer is constantly tempted to sacrifice qualifying words and phrases which really ought to be used if a false impression is not to be made.

Whether one believes in short or long editorials, however, he can agree that every editorial ought to be concise.

“HOW SHALL I CLOSE?”

“This editorial is too long. The last half is mere repetition of what has gone before,” said an editor to a young member of his staff. “It would be more effective if you would kill the last part.”

“I know it,” replied the other. “I couldn't make a good ending, so I kept on writing.”

The case is not so unusual as one might imagine. The problem of when and how to stop is almost as difficult as the problem of how to begin.

The way to stop is to stop, and the time to stop is as soon as one has written what he set out to write. Whenever one begins to wonder what to say next, it is a sign that he has reached a good stopping place. While minor details may be brought in and discussed after this point, the chances are that the editorial will be more hurt than helped. The advertising

writer has learned, and the editorial writer might well learn, that one idea is enough to take up at a time if a strong, definite impression is to be made.

So much for when to stop! The question of how to stop depends upon the subject matter and the purpose of the editorial. The news editorial tells its story and simply ends. The editorial that aims to produce action frequently closes with a summing up of the arguments and a reiteration of the conclusion reached, hammering home the main idea. The editorial that aims to cause thought instead of action may well end with a mere suggestion of the conclusion—possibly with a question based on such arguments that it cannot be ignored.

Some newspapers affect a “whipcracker” ending, in which the point of the editorial is left for a short, snappy sentence at the very close. This is undoubtedly effective.

AS TO EDITORIAL STYLE

Style marks the difference between the way one man puts words together to express a thought and the way another man puts words together to express the same thought. It is the individuality of a person's writings. Although it can be trained, it cannot be imitative. Every writer must develop his own style.

Style is an elusive thing, difficult to define and difficult to recognize. It is hard to pick out of any article the points that make up the writer's style; we can only judge it by the general impression the article leaves.

As in clothes the best style is not the most conspicuous style, but the style that best fits its wearer and best expresses his personality, so in writing the best style is not the style that calls attention to itself, but the style that is least apparent—that concentrates attention on the subject matter rather than on the manner of expression. The following quotation from an article by Gordon H. Cilley illustrates this point:

A good many years ago—how many, deponent sayeth not—it was my good fortune to be an humble employee on the staff of one Joseph Pearson Caldwell, editor and master of the Charlotte, N. C., Observer.

That man was a journalist. I do not know of any better word to describe him; for a journalist, as I understand it, is more than a reporter, and more than editor, and more than a short story writer, and more than an executive of a newspaper. He was a master of the art. His news columns told straightforwardly and simply what was going on in the world about him, and his editorials illuminated the news—not learnedly, nor profoundly, nor dramatically, nor in any sense academically, but always directly and decisively.

His style was the envy and despair of his brother editors all over the South, and yet it was simple.

"Just as easy and common as meeting you on the street and talking to you out o' hand about whatever it was that interested you," as one of his admirers said.

I used to try to write editorials "after the Old Man's way," but when I had convinced myself that it could not be done without a knowledge of the secret, I plucked up courage and asked him how he did it.

"How do I write?" he said. "Why, I don't know that I ever think about writing. If I have anything to say, it worries me until I get it off the end of my pencil. I never had any style, you know, like some of them."

And there it was. He simply imparted the information he had in him to impart—and quit.

He is gone now—gone this many a day, and I have watched and waited to see his like, but I don't believe I ever shall. He was one of those few men to whom it is given to realize that simplicity is the beginning and the end of all the arts; and that the more we clutter up with words what we have to say, the farther we get away from literature.

But while style is intangible, it is none the less real. And although it is an expression of individuality, it can be developed to some extent by training. Such things as accuracy, originality and freedom of expression can be cultivated by the editorial writer. It is presumed, of course, that he already has a thorough—not merely a fair—understanding of the principles of grammar.

Accuracy in this case is understood as including not only accuracy in statement of fact and accuracy in reasoning, but also accuracy in adaptation of tone to content. The first two are universally taken for granted; the third is occasionally neglected. Nothing jars so much as the wrong tone taken in discussion whether in spoken or written words. Humorous references to religion or joking remarks about death, for instance,

are hardly ever in good taste; while at least one Missouri newspaper has made itself ridiculous by treating seriously a proposal made in jest.

Originality is as much in demand in editorial writing as in any other branch of newspaper work. The man who would write brilliant editorials must have imagination—the ability to see things differently—combined with a certain audacity of expression. He should not make his editorials too self-evident—should not allow the reader to see the conclusion from the beginning. Perhaps as a steady diet straightforwardness is to be preferred to audacity, but a mixture of the two will appeal to more palates than will either by itself.

As for freedom of expression, that can best be obtained through the medium of a large vocabulary. The more possible ways one has of expressing himself, the more likely he is to find the one which exactly fits what he has to say. The man with a large vocabulary at his command does not have to stop and ponder in the midst of an article, for want of a word.

Most of us have large numbers of words going to waste—words which we use in reading or listening, but which we pass over in writing or speaking. There is a certain feeling that to use any but the most common words is priggish; and this feeling causes many of us deliberately to exclude from our active vocabularies numerous words with which we are well acquainted.

There are any number of schemes for increasing one's vocabulary, such as going to the dictionary instead of guessing whenever one meets a word with which he is not familiar, or such as making it a point to use a certain number of new words each day. The main thing is to make an effort at some plan or other.

This brings us back again to the question of accuracy of expression, for only the writer with a wide range of words can accurately adapt his style to any subject and to any class of readers. The following editorial from *The Kansas City Star* deals with the adaptation of words to purpose:

"SPIT ON YOUR HANDS"

"Epictus," writing to the "Public Mind," deplores the fact that persons who should be authorities on the correct use of English occasionally descend to such low levels in speaking or writing "that any street Arab might joyfully greet them as brother and equal." Among the horrible examples which he urbanely cites are sentences from editorials in *The Star*.

Far be it from this newspaper to set up as an authority on the correct use of English. Its editorial expressions are not intended to be literary essays. Through them *The Star* is trying to do its share toward getting things done toward making Kansas City—and the United States—a better place to live in.

It has a notion that this sort of appeal is better made in the homely language of every-day speech than in the polished—and dead—language of literary accuracy.

It has noticed that the men who spoke effectively to the people were the men who spoke the people's language. Lincoln, with his homely stories, was a more effective speaker than the polished Edward Everett. Ingersoll had crowded houses because he threw aside polished phrases and got down to where people really lived.

"Epictus" cites for criticism *The Star's* quotation from Goethe, who said to a man discouraged over the magnitude of his job: "All you have to do is to spit on your hands." What Goethe really said was "Blow on your hands." But what he meant in the English idiom was "spit."

Presumably what "Epictus" would have said would be: "You will be able to meet the exigencies of the situation provided you undertake the task with sufficient determination."

As for *The Star*, it hopes always to be close enough to the speech of the people so that it may spit on its hands and pitch in to do the job ahead.

READING, WRITING AND REVISION

Three things the editorial writer who seeks to improve should do constantly—read, write and revise.

He should read, both for style and for general knowledge. Continual association with good editorials and other good literature is bound to raise his standards and improve his own writing; and on the other hand every bit of knowledge, on whatever subject, is likely to prove useful to him at some time. Certainly he cannot interpret the news to his readers unless he is well

informed himself. The editorial writer who is not a close reader of newspapers is an anomaly.

And having read intelligently, the editorial writer will welcome every opportunity to write. In writing as in other things it is practice that makes perfect. The man who writes daily acquires a habit of expressing himself well, and can thenceforth concentrate on the thought instead of the form of what he may be writing. Knowing that his sentences are grammatical and well-constructed, he can engross himself in his subject and think his way along clearly.

And, finally, having read and having written, the editorial writer will revise—revise again and again until he has achieved the best he is capable of. Painstaking revision will show him the weak places in his logic, the errors of his grammar, the mistakes in punctuation. And the encouraging feature is that every time he revises he is bettering not only the article at hand but also everything that he may write in the future.

WRITING THE EDITORIAL PARAGRAPH

Writing the editorial paragraph is an art in itself. Well written, the paragraph becomes a valuable addition to any editorial page; poorly written, it is worse than nothing.

The paragraph represents the extreme in compression. Not a phrase, not a word, can be wasted. Unity must be carried to the farthest point. The paragraph takes up one idea, says one thing in connection with that idea—and stops. There is no introduction, and no conclusion.

One point there is which the paragraph writer should bear in mind—that the best paragraph is the one which exercises the reader's imagination. The writer who makes his joke too evident spoils it. A paragraph should be like Jack Horner's pie—so that the reader can pull out the plum and say, "What a smart boy am I!"

Of course, not every paragraph is intended to be humorous. Some are extremely effective editorials. But even a serious paragraph frequently is strengthened by having something left to the imagination.

III. Editorial Problems

Editors who will sell their editorial opinions fortunately are rare. A man's own self-respect will hardly allow him to indulge in anything so palpably dishonest. Comparatively few, however, are the problems of editorial direction in regard to which opinion is so nearly unanimous. Many of the questions which the editor has to decide are questions on which there is an honest difference of opinion.

For instance, most newspaper men agree that a paper should not favor its subscribers or its advertisers in the matter of suppressing news, but when the question of suppressing news at all is raised, there is a divergence of ideas. Some will omit almost any story that is likely to injure an individual or a community; others claim to "print the news regardless." Each one thinks he has the correct principle.

But if it is difficult to settle specific cases, still one can lay down certain general principles on which the conscientious editor must base his decisions.

First of all, of course, comes the principle of common honesty—honesty to one's self and to all those with whom one has dealings—advertisers, subscribers and all others. And second comes the recognition of a real duty to the public.

This duty to the public is more than an obligation to furnish news in return for paid subscriptions. If the public has enough rights in a railroad to regulate the rates charged by its owners; if the public has enough rights in a telephone company to insist on regulating the charges made; if the public has enough rights in a street car company to demand good service; then the public certainly has a right to require service from that other public utility, the newspaper. The railroad was built by individuals; so were the telephone plant and the street car system; but the importance of these to the public has made it necessary to assert the rights of the public in them. Now, the newspaper is just as much a public necessity as the railroad, the telephone

or the street car; and the conscientious editor should not allow the difficulty of defining a newspaper's public duty to deter him from doing his utmost to fulfill that duty.

Another argument for the public service ideal lies in the tremendous power of the press. Power and responsibility should go always hand in hand, if disaster is not to result. The newspaper has many times the power of any individual good citizen; should it not then take upon itself many times the responsibility of the good citizen? If it is the duty of the individual citizen constantly to strive for the betterment of his community, how much more should it be the duty of the newspaper?

Granting, then, the existence of this duty to the public, one can easily see the difference this must make in an editor's attitude as expressed in editorials, in news and in advertisements. He can hardly go far wrong on any proposition if he will ask himself the question, "What action in this matter will be for the largest public good?"

With this as a basis, then, the individual editor can settle his own specific problems better than anyone else can settle them for him. As showing some of the attitudes taken by various Missouri editors in regard to some of these problems, however, the following quotations may be interesting. Two typical questions are discussed—the participation of the small-town paper in partisan politics and the favoring of individuals in regard to printing news.

The small-town newspaper is almost of necessity compelled to advocate the principles of some political division. Its character is as that of a man, and a man in his home town must be a Democrat or a Republican or a Bull Mooser if he is active in affairs; and every newspaper must be active in affairs. A small-town newspaper must also be independent, placing right before party and with courage to stand for the right regardless of political affiliation or patronage.

* * *

A small-town newspaper is human; it has a soul. Being human, it is sure to favor those who favor it. Theoretically, a paper should be absolutely without fear or favor in publishing the news of its community. Practically, it cannot be. I never hesitate to publish an item about a patron or non-patron if the publication of that item will accomplish some good purpose. The publication then becomes

THE EVENING POST, NEW YORK, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1914

The Evening Post

New York, Friday, February 6, 1914.
Published daily except on Sundays and public holidays.
Subscription price, \$10.00 per annum in advance.

Published for the Proprietor by the Evening Post Printing Company, 125 Nassau Street, New York.
Copyright, 1914, by the Evening Post Printing Company.

Printed in the United States of America.
The paper is made from virgin pulp, and is entirely free from acid.

Entered as second-class matter, February 26, 1879, under post office number 364, at New York, New York, under special rate of postage provided for in Section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized on July 16, 1911, and extended July 3, 1912, July 3, 1913, and July 3, 1914.

Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized on July 16, 1911, and extended July 3, 1912, July 3, 1913, and July 3, 1914.

Postmaster: This publication is published weekly except on Sundays and public holidays.
Second-class postage paid at New York, New York, and at additional mailing offices.

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Figure 10—Seven columns of reading matter, relieved only by white space. The effect is in tone with the conservative attitude of the paper.



Walrus Boot Wiper LEWIS & CONGER

a duty. If to publish the item means only that you are carrying out an arbitrary news rule, the chance is that the rule ought to be broken.

A newspaper should favor neither subscribers nor advertisers regarding publication of news. Current happenings should be printed unless there is a strong chance that the publication of fact would do more community damage than good.

A newspaper should never be independent in politics unless the editor is independent in politics. If the editor has no political convictions, his paper should have no convictions; if the editor has political convictions, his paper should have political convictions. In other words, the editorial policy of the paper should be dictated by the conscience of the editor, and should honestly reflect his beliefs and convictions. The fact of the paper being printed in a small town does not change the absolute necessity for the editor to be fair and honest with his subscribers.

* * * A newspaper should be independent. I do not mean that it should not be allied with a political party; rather, that it should have fixed political principles. * * * I do not think any newspaper should bind itself to a political party, regardless of whether the party is right or wrong. A paper that did that would be no better than the heelers of a ward boss. * * *

A newspaper has no right to suppress news because the interests of a subscriber or an advertiser might be jeopardized. On the other hand, it has no right to make a sewer of itself. It ought not needlessly make the burden of any person heavier, or add unnecessarily to the sum of human woe. As I see it, only the interests of the public ought to be considered in judging news—if the public ought to know it, print it; if no useful purpose can be served, suppress it. *Who* ought not to be a determining factor.

Now let me add this: A newspaper ought to be honest in a business way with itself and with every customer. It ought to have fixed rates for advertising and stick to them. It ought to have a definite policy as to the character of advertising that goes into its pages, and it ought not to deviate from its policy. Its advertising rates ought to be sufficient to make the newspaper profitable. The newspaper that is prosperous can be independent; the newspaper that is not prosperous must be servile. Independence, intelligence, character and good business management are necessary if a newspaper is to be a vehicle of service. And if service is not the impelling thought behind a newspaper, then the newspaper has no excuse for existence, and the man who engages in newspaper work ought to be doing something else.

If a newspaper discusses political questions at all, it can hardly avoid political affiliations. If an editor believes in Republican doctrines in the main and preaches his beliefs, his newspaper is inevitably classed as Republican. If he is Democratic or Progressive or Socialistic in his beliefs, his paper reflects his views and is classed accordingly. If by independence is meant a paper which discusses political questions and yet is without political affiliations, I think it has rarely, if ever, existed and would not be worth much if it did exist. * * * I believe in the newspaper which has views on political questions and is not afraid to express them—one that is not hide-bound, either in its partisan zeal or in its erratic efforts to be independent. The best newspapers are those which give the news, political or otherwise, fully and fairly without bias, and which discuss public questions in their editorial columns from the honest viewpoint of the editor or owner. Such papers cannot well avoid being allied with some political party. In smaller towns where there is but one paper, the non-partisan publication which avoids the discussion of partisan political questions is frequently desirable.

A newspaper should give the news. It cannot do this if it has special favorites for whom it suppresses legitimate news upon request. The moment a paper becomes known as one which withholds the publication of news at the behest of advertisers, subscribers or other influential persons, its standing is certain to be greatly impaired. This does not mean, however, that confidences should not be rigidly respected or that there should be lack of consideration in printing the news. Nor does it mean that there should be no line drawn marking legitimate news and that which has no place in the columns of a newspaper.

There is no exact code of editorial ethics. Even if we grant that an editor's decisions should be influenced only by his duty of honesty and sincerity to himself and his duty of service to the public, no two editors will interpret those duties alike in every case. But the conscientious editor who is guided by his own interpretation of those duties at least has the satisfaction that comes from doing his best to live up to his opportunities.

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