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BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE PRESS.

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THE present form of our civilization has been, probably, effected by the printing-press more than by any other agent. Yet, as the press is a mere piece of mechanism, — a method simply of dissemination, — it is evidently the form of society, and not its very spirit and character, that is due to this instrument. What the press shall print and scatter must be determined by something beside the press itself. The buzz and hum of society are found here. This is the fan that blows the flame; but the very flame, and the metal molten by it, are quite other things.

The press has been at work in the English world of thought almost four centuries, and the newspaper for a little more than half that time. The newspaper, as a printed medium of news, is of English origin. The first authentic regular weekly publication was that of Nathaniel Butter, in 1662, entitled "The Certain News of this Present Week." In the word "gazette" we have traces, however, of an earlier written paper common to some of the Italian cities. Gazetta was the coin paid for the privilege of listening to the reading of these bulletins. The New York Gazette, the first paper published in that city, the Gazette of revolutionary memory in Boston, and the many other journals that have borne

this name, thus stand closely connected by etymological, if not by historic, descent with the early papers of Venice and Florence.

Butter's paper was succeeded, especially during the civil wars that made way for the Commonwealth, by numerous regular and irregular papers, chiefly employed as means of political influence and of spreading the stirring events of the hour. From that time onward the development of the newspaper has been continuous, though by no means with uniform rapidity. At the opening of the Revolution there were in the Colonies thirty-six weeklies and one semi-weekly. In 1800, there were in the United States two hundred papers, several of them dailies. The oldest of these dailies was the Pennsylvania Packet, or the General Advertiser, first issued in 1784. Nearly all the great dailies of the present have had their origin within the century. The Commercial Advertiser, the oldest of the New York dailies, began with the latest years of the previous century. The number of dailies in the United States in 1850 was two hundred and fifty-four, and in 1860 was three hundred and seventy-four; of bi- and tri-weeklies, one hundred and sixty-five; and of weeklies, three thousand one hundred and seventy-three. The number of monthlies was two hundred and eighty; and of quarterlies, thirty. The ten years just closing have witnessed a great addition to this number, and especially to those papers and periodicals whose object it is to furnish entertaining matter not of the nature of news.

To children there is falling a very large share, — indeed, every class is possessed of a surfeit — of this daily light food, this manna of our times. Every variety of grave, pretentious, and facile literature, of popular science and of popular philosophy, of story and of humor, from the best to the worst, finds a place, and a large place, in it. Quantity seems to be the one astonishing thing — the perpetual, genetic miracle of the hour. There is a great change in character as we pass from one wing of the press to the other, — from the quarterly to the daily, — and a still more significant change

in numbers and circulation. The one class swarms like butterflies; the other has the gestation and slow increase of mammals. The dailies with scarcely an exception, and the weeklies with but few exceptions, have primarily a newspaper character — give themselves to the questions and events of the hour, and, as chief among these debatable subjects, to social themes and politics. Even our religious weeklies fully present these newspaper features, and sometimes bring them decidedly into the foreground. Religion binds up its weekly budget of secular news, and adds thereto its own items. Crimes, casualties, and conversions all find their file, and are sent forth to their work. The monthlies are chiefly of a literary character. They are so by an expressed purpose on the part of the majority, and still more by the circulation and weight of influence which belong to the best of those of this class. The quarterlies are primarily of a religious, philosophical, and critical character. Fourteen of the thirty in the United States at our last census were directly connected with some form of religious faith. The quarterlies, a product of the present century, advance but slowly, and in number and circulation are wholly overshadowed by the more active, phosphorescent branches of the press. The combined periodical productions of this country can furnish twenty-five copies per annum to each person in it.

It is plain, from this rapid glance at the history of the press, that the popular element is gaining ground to an astonishing degree. The movement is an accelerated one, like the fall of a weight, and that, too, with a ratio almost fearful. Invention has at once helped this tendency, and been the product of it. The cylinder steam-press is the magnificent instrument of this growth, and in its quick revolution we see a power that can discharge instantly on the material world the gross produce of the minds of men, and load with it the waiting messengers of electricity and steam, till it quivers down, like snow-flakes, on every corner of the land. When we speak of the press, we now mean distinctively the newspaper press, so much has this branch

gained ground on every other, so busy and demonstrative is it. Indeed, the slow, heavy work of philosophy, the fine work of elegant literature, withdraw from this fatal facility of the steam-cylinder, and, for the best execution, retreat even to the hand-press. The cylinder, in its rotary, rapid, heedless, unhesitating execution, is a fitting instrument and symbol of the daily press.

Some of the results of this newspaper character and growth of the press we wish to present. It has broken in on the privacy of life. Our privacy is like that of the city, in which we do not observe those about us, because we do not care to see them, not because we are not able to see them. This daily, active, omnivorous press cannot find sufficient important matter for its fearful consumption. It must sweep the streets and search secret places for it. It must lay every man, every neighborhood, every class of interests, under contribution. Each item, good and bad, is an autumn leaf that the busy winds will not let rest, that finds no refuge but that of time. The noisy news-element enters more and more into business. It is no longer, like the rattle of an express-wagon, incidental to work, but a chief part of it. To make sonorous proclamation and flaming advertisement of what one is doing becomes a first condition of success. Every man is a crier, and a crier of his own virtues and goods. There is no privacy except in those few things which the Argus-eyed press, living for news and on news, absolutely cannot see, and in those perfectly commonplace acts, the seeing of which elicits no interest. The language of Coleridge was weak when he used it, compared with the force it now possesses:

"In the present age — emphatically the age of personality — there are more than ordinary motives of withholding all encouragement from this mania of busying ourselves with the names of others, which is still more alarming as a symptom than it is troublesome as a disease. The reader must be still less acquainted with contemporary literature than myself, — a case not likely to occur, — if he needs me to

inform him that there are men who, trading in the silliest anecdotes, in unprovoked abuse and senseless eulogy, think themselves, nevertheless, employed both worthily and honorably, if only this be done in good set terms, and from the press, and of public characters — a class which has increased so rapidly, of late, that it becomes difficult to discover what characters are to be considered private."

We cannot be at a loss to know where this itch and contagion of gossip are begotten, and whence they spread into our literature. Nor is it merely the weakness and idleness of thought we deplore, but its malicious character, as well; seizing, as it constantly does, on much matter rank with putrefaction, and whose chief mischief lies in diffusion. A sensation is a necessity with the press, and if that which is good and beautiful is not at hand, that which is loathsome must take its place. This slush and wash of news, this churning up of all that comes to hand, is a symptomatic feature of our times. A full tide is always coming in fresh from the sea, but ever licking up, casting about, and mingling the refuse and sewerage of the city. Saturated with the filth which we thought to have cast off, it runs searchingly into every basin, and, with the sudden agility of collision, leaps to our wharves, bespatters our garments and our merchandise. It is amusing and sad to see how a great daily, with flaming bulletins, will flourish for a week on a case of scandal. First, it dashes hotly into it, with exaggeration and misstatement. This provokes comment and correction, and these give opportunity for defense and enlargement; for discussing the case historically and critically, and opening side-issues with opponents. A later number closes the judicial process with a few caustic reflections.

The newsmonger is the pimp of the news-devourer; and we have no more leisure than we have privacy. The morning paper becomes as needful and as transient as the cup of coffee it accompanies. A hasty, careless reading of the daily papers — helping to urge on the race of life, and themselves making up a large part of it — affords the intellectual food

of our typical men. Any and everything is good for the hour,—crime and heroism, slander and truth,—and nothing is good beyond the hour. Yesterday's paper subserves no more purpose than yesterday's dinner. The sponge receives and expels in constant circuit the sea-water, getting thence a very little for its growth. With equal labor do men draw in and throw out an enormous bulk of news, catching occasionally at a single fact which is something more than mere drift. When this bud had just begun to chip the seed-vessel, Burton complained that "men read nothing but a play-book or a pamphlet of news." Happy fellow! in his deepest melancholy, he little dreamed into what gigantic proportions this labor of reading the "pamphlet of news" would grow. One must now glide, like a whale, with open mouth, straining from the seas before him their floating infusoria, and then feel that his food has been none of the heartiest. It is some satisfaction to the Brazilian laborer that, washing so much dirt, he may find a diamond; but this culling refuse for refuse is endless and beggarly business. We have no time to acquire what is worth knowing, we insist on knowing so much that is not worth the acquisition. One feels conscience-smitten even at the thought of railing at this everlasting racket, knowing that some already over-driven mortal must, or at least may, turn aside to hear him. This vast volume of news, beaten about from shore to shore of the nation, driven incessantly by counter-currents like a chopping sea, is to be deprecated for the trespass it makes upon the leisure of the people and the degree in which it helps still further to fever their blood. The larger part of it is utterly trivial; much of it is false in substance or spirit; no small part of it is pernicious; and the little that is valuable is in a large measure lost because of the chaff which overlies and hides it.

The press, thus alert and active, catching at everything in the least noteworthy in public or in private life, passing from hand to hand with endless comment and rejoinder each more savory morsel, serves to intensify in a high degree the passing impressions of the hour. It is as when a large com-

pany sit down to dinner. The inviting array, the clatter of dishes, the discussion of viands, the savory carving, occupy all the senses, and make one, for the time being, a gourmand in spite of himself. The air is redolent of good living, and one cannot easily be indifferent to it. In the present condition of the press, there are no non-conductors to the social electricity. It goes tingling through all nerves, till the shock is absolutely exhausted, or gives place to another. The common life is intensified, and spread everywhere. There is no escaping the current estimates of men and things. The senses of men are all awake; every impression is reported, and every report finds an audience. All this, it is plain, greatly strengthens the present as against the past or the future — makes us boasters as regards the one, and indifferent and self-confident as regards the other. The events of the hour are so many, and come back upon us from so many sides; opinion and speculation are so busy with them, attach so much interest to them; the public mind so ruminates upon them, that the individual can hardly fail to be absorbed in them to the oversight of considerations deeper than this surface-life, beyond the horizon of the day. The press, by placing all men in society, intensifies public passions or opinions, as the contact of an audience gives contagion to eloquence, or the presence of a mob conflagration to anger.

This abnormal activity of the common life necessarily tends to the loss and reduction of individuality. We would, indeed, attach no value to an individuality which is of the nature of eccentricity. It is a first purpose of society to check and overcome all extreme growth, every one-sided and extravagant tendency. We grind against each other in the social stream on purpose to acquire something of a spherical form. Yet a common life that overshadows our private life — that leads us to forget that the discipline of thought, the formation of opinions, are necessarily a separate, independent, and individual affair — is so far forth an evil. The deep, unbroken forest is comparatively barren. The

sunlight should strike through, reaching flower and shrub, should disclose open glades, as well as dark recesses, if we are to have a variety of beautiful things. The sunlight of truth must come to the mind in many private and peculiar ways, there must be various and independent conditions of intellectual life, if the personal element is to maintain its ground against the rank overgrowth of a society fed in commons, and stimulated by a fresh daily provision of news.

Take such a branch as philosophy. Nothing but this wish-wash of hasty journalism and scientific crudity finds circulation. One does not, as of old, launch his boat on a silent sea, with a long, quiet pull before him; but on one so clamorous, so restless, so filled with cross-currents, that he is in danger of being instantly upset, buried a thousand fathoms deep. One cannot even have the privilege of being let alone. His tub is on the sea, and some stupid whale is after it, whether he will or not. Some journal, dangerous by size, irresistible by weight of cargo, and safe by thickness of sides, steaming on with narrow mercantile or political bent, takes it as a task by the way to run down the new craft, neither knowing nor caring whether it be one thing or another, provided it helps out the day's work, and affords an exhibition of power. The poor philosopher must go to the market, and yet he has no more chance amid its clamor than Christian at Vanity Fair. The same is true in every unpopular branch of effort, of individual achievement. Down comes public opinion on it, in the form of eager, incessant, universal journalism, and one builds with the labor and discouragement of those who erect a light-house on rocks constantly swept by the waves.

Yet more unfavorable to moral integrity and soundness is this ceaseless clamor of the press. The adjustments and judgments of conscience, like delicate physical processes, need to go on in silence and stillness, under the undisturbed scrutiny of one eye only. Fame and rumor and popular prejudice and party exaction are not to be poured into the judicial ear. Yet how is any man, living in this Babel of

the press, where every sound is echoed and reverberated till it becomes omnipresent and portentous, to escape it? How is he to find out what he thinks himself, when every waking hour is occupied with what other men think? We know very well how the most tough and declared men become at times pulpy and pliant, when they fall into some focus of this popular influence, like Washington, and are pelted and pounded with it every moment. To be sure, a heat which liquidates most things gives a dry set to others; and, now and then, a person becomes more individual and stubborn in his moral judgments through the very opposition he suffers. Let us not think, however, that he thus escapes the evil. Character may be distorted as certainly on this side as on that, and our sentiments may fail of due proportion and tenderness from the very conflict they have suffered, and the hard-won victory they have gained. The best conditions of moral growth are nicely balanced between too much and too little. One degree of wind makes the tree sturdy, another distorts it. When we remember the evil and the mischief rife in the public mind, or ready to be kindled there, in earlier times, we see it to have been fortunate that it lacked this enginery of expression. There was need, then, of many private places, monasteries, cells, in which the growth of the individual mind could mature itself before it felt the shock of the popular sentiment.

It is with us one great struggle to form parties and break them up again. We organize to gain the advantages of organization, begin shortly to experience some of its fearful evils, and then re-organize against organization, that we may get back once more to individual responsibility and freedom. No sooner does a party become strong than a ruling sentiment, generally a selfish sentiment, seizes it. The press attached to it becomes a means not of free discussion, but of establishing and spreading its influence. The individual is lifted off his feet, and he must now swell the general cry, or sink into silence and insignificance, or break from these false and exacting relations and start again. Thus, in

politics, in which the power of the press is more declared and manifest than anywhere else, the struggle of every good citizen for a just influence, the possession of a sober, independent opinion, and the means of efficiently expressing it, is perpetual, and only now and then partially successful. For the most part, the thinking, independent men are jostled out of the crowd, and made idle spectators of the good and evil about them. They are content, as the price of peace, to become, in the political game, mere pawns, filling the spaces in which the shrewd ones put them. In this desperate struggle for fair responsibility and power, the mass of our sober citizens have succumbed, and are driven about, — the float-wood of the political world, — made to do what they do not wish to do, and impotent in striving to do what they really desire.

Yet these are not half so sad a spectacle as those numerical majorities that by sheer inertia and perpetual blindness make up the body of a political party, and become the hard-faced hammer with which its cruel blows are given — the dead, physical force which cunning and knavery lay hold of to do their work. In other directions and other discussions the pressure is less fearful, and there is more chance for an honest, independent life; we are suffered more frequently, as Emerson expresses it, "to tarry at home in our own thoughts." But there is no realm that is not invaded, and sometimes in an overwhelming way, by public sentiment. Literature and religion have their stampedes, in which the freedom of private opinion is a violet beneath the hoof of a horse — good enough, to be sure, but sadly out of place. Of one of these literary raids, violent and bitter in its spirit, we find a recent example in the Byron controversy.

So powerful is the press that it has become, as it inevitably must, a constant means of reaching private ends. Men use it in an unscrupulous way. It falls off from the truth, is retained by parties, sects, persons, and does the work of an advocate in a tricky, professional fashion. There always must be earnest advocacy, the pushing of private opinions,

the enforcement of particular views by the press. Thus much, in the blind way in which we go forward, is finally in the interest of truth. When, however, the press is so immediately and ostentatiously influential as at present, commercial ends and private ambitions, that have no reference whatever to truth, will seek to control it, and we have not only to guard against the error which creeps into thought, but yet more against the disguised, garbled way in which statements, arguments, and criticisms appear, distorted as they so commonly are by some party or personal purpose that lies entirely to one side of the merits of the case.

Thus the ends which a periodical is pursuing, the persons to whom it is looking for patronage, the rivals that it meets in the market, will not allow it to publish matter valuable in itself, but partially at war with its commercial prosperity. Very inferior productions that lie in the lines of thought to which monthlies and quarterlies are devoted, find easy, too easy, access to the public; while superior productions out of those lines fail to reach the light. One in the advocacy of new views has not merely to confront argument, but a variety of interests holding him back from a fair hearing, and subtly counterworking him in a variety of secret ways. This tendency is peculiarly unfortunate in its effects on criticism. Candor and penetration are here especially demanded. This is the judicial branch of literature — the point at which we should make our nearest approach to absolute justice. Yet so many are the under-currents of interest, of party and personal relations, that influence critics; and so great is the incompetence incident to the universal and wholesale criticism of every production by every paper, that there are comparatively few able and honest reviews. We are told a score of times the value of a book, and mistold so often that a knowledge of the work is indeed necessary to a just estimate of the critiques, though it can well enough dispense with them. Criticism which can claim the authority of candor and completeness is rarely attained by us. If the

party and coterie bent of our journals could be reduced, and a more limited field of review entered on by each of them, this branch of service would be rendered in a method more thorough, fair, and satisfactory.

The immediate impression made by the daily and weekly press is a strong incentive to personal vanity, and to catch the eye of this vast reading public becomes a distinct ambition, like that of the orator to bind the attention of an audience. If we add to the allurements of oratory and brilliant journalism the effects of our popular government, we have the strongest tendency to a bewildering and factitious estimate of the advantages of position, of making large claims on the public attention, of keeping one's person and opinions, in the current phrase, before the public. There is thus nourished a sense of power and importance which has no sufficient basis. The apparent influence of the press, we venture to say, is much greater than its real influence. It gives utterance and volume to the popular sentiment, more than it creates it. The voluble auctioneer of the crowd, it shouts and bandies and bids and strikes off the goods, yet all in obedience to desires which have quite another origin. The press would be, in reality, far more influential, if it were apparently less so; if it were not so immediately the product of popular sentiment — its simple sounding-board; and if it labored for more remote and intangible ends. The last dash of the tide is on the noisy shore; but its strength is born far out in the silent sea. The press is often made supercilious by this new sense of invincible power, and stoops to patronize or scorn, as the fit is on it, the old, the philosophical, and religious agents of influence. Those, now as hitherto, have the truest hold on the world who approach nearest the commanding seats of thought, and the moral sources of action.

We present these incident evils of the press, not because we are disposed to overlook its incomparable benefits, but rather because we wish to abate a little that conceit and headstrong assertion which belong to a generation in its pre-

dominant tendency. Whether it be a bevy of teasing school-girls, a crowd of badgering boys, a democratic convention, or an association of scientific savants, mere numbers are liable to carry over confidence into impudence and scorn. This flush, full life, which is the plethora of numerical strength, often requires to be moderated by cold, outside criticism, exploding some of its bubbles, that it may see how very little there is in them. The disadvantages attendant on this reign of the press have, indeed, their compensations, and we would not forget the fact. If composition is made less thoughtful and patient, it becomes more incisive and brilliant; if it possesses less strength, grandeur, and coherence, it is more lively, flexible, and serviceable. If the fruits of thought decay quickly, they ripen rapidly, and help out the day with a grateful repast. If here and there a unique and modest laborer is overlooked, many others have astonishing rewards heaped upon them; and an intense stimulus to inventive and literary activity pervades all classes. In this direction is found the grand recompense for all the incident evils of the press — its prodigality, frivolity, publicity, idle gossip, and pestiferous scandal. It furnishes the half-loaf to the masses so long without bread. If it does not give the best, it gives something, and that to all, and there is an absoluteness in this all never before dreamed of. As the press is our peculiar instrument, dissemination, diffusion are our great social features. Quantity, universality of adaptation, and complete distribution are the salient, literary characteristics of our time. Those branches of inquiry and literature prosper which grow out of multitudinous activity and life, and those languish which seek privacy and individual strength. Natural science, which thrives on the various enlarged observations of many inquirers, and their rapid interchange of results, now knows no limits to its growth. Social theories, which pertain to the masses, and require for their quick development argument and answer, assertion and counter-assertion, principles and exceptions, coming in from all sides, pass almost immediately

from conception to promulgation, from promulgation with amendments and re-amendments to adoption. The entire community, with its rapid interchange of sentiments, is a single legislative body on these topics, recommitting them, from time to time, to their first friends and advocates for further digestion. Fiction, which is the literary food of the many, is productive as never before. From that which is inexpressibly bad to that which is exceedingly good, it grows in indigenous strength, flourishes as on its native soil. Mathematics, metaphysics, theology, on the other hand, which prosper in the solitude of the meditative mind; forms of poetry and art which mark the strong individuality of their authors, either absolutely lose ground, or fail to keep pace with the general progress.

That the popular mind, when it first enters the field of sentiment and knowledge, should grade down the current literature and science to its own taste, is inevitable, and, in view of all results, not to be regretted. Yet this fact is not in contradiction of the fact, that it is the more necessary sturdily to resist this tendency, and to maintain individual tastes and pursuits as against this all-controlling voice of the majority. Something of this struggle has been seen in the lecture-system for the past half-dozen years. Appealing directly to the people for support, there has been a constant pressure to increase the taking, popular element in it, till, even in such a city as Boston, more than half of the popular lectures of the season owe their success to humor and drollery. Some communities have opened a reactionary effort by the establishment of continuous courses of scientific lectures; yet even in these the experimental, pyrotechnic features must prevail. The degeneracy of the drama is chiefly due to this appeal to the masses for support. If, therefore, we are neither to lose the many, nor to be ourselves lost in the many, we must retain the press, and resist its domination. We must be content to be ignorant of what the papers say, that we may be the more thoroughly cognizant of what wise men think. We must reserve our chief strength

for that solitary life of the soul, into which each for himself, without human companionship, enters. The child brought up in solitude learns to study and acquire in silence; placed in the public school, he is distracted by many voices and the hum of other lips. He only thrives again, when, by abstraction, he creates a second solitude, and advances with others uncontrolled by them.

The American press prides itself too much, we believe, on its newspaper features. Great enterprise and large resources are shown in the gathering of information; but, at the same time, a value is attached to news, as mere news, which does not belong to it. A classification of news, a resolution of it into quickly accessible and serviceable items that have a drift and purpose, is a duty which an editor ought not to evade. If the press is to be truly influential, it must not owe its success to its reporters primarily. The political, intellectual, moral aim of a paper should give it a controlling character, which will not suffer it to be the dispenser of unsorted, unverified news. Journalism of this indiscriminate nature has an influence in making social movements rapid, in pushing forward events to a speedy issue, but comparatively little in arresting, guiding, restraining public sentiment.

It is, indeed, due in a great measure to the daily press that reforms assume with us so decided and energetic a character, that the condition of every part of society is brought so fully to the light, and that criticism and correction are so fearlessly applied. We cannot, however, assent to a view which seems prevalent, that this movement is an almost automatic and necessary one; that the press must yield its columns to the so-called news, without purpose, conscience, or consideration; that every item which can command a reader is vendible, and that that which is vendible must find a place in a full market. If it be the function of the press primarily to stimulate and gratify public curiosity, to sweep together the information which an insatiate appetite has learned to crave, then, far from being

the great moral force of our times, it is but a new and dangerous condition imposed on moral forces, — it only gives more mercurial and volcanic features to society, without furnishing those clues of truth, those well-defined and patent purposes by which these are to be controlled and utilized. The character of a journal should as thoroughly pervade its news-columns as its editorials, and its editorials should be the seat of its strength. The simple circulation of news undoubtedly plays an important part in the form of our civilization, giving breadth of influence to the forces rife among us, bringing facts and theories into quick collision, with a speedy elimination of truth; yet these results can only be complete, safe, and satisfactory when those who are instrumental in them understand them, and contribute material pertinent to the issues in hand. News may easily lose its office and value by its very bulk; and it is not the man who loves news as news that draws from it its lessons, and makes it the data of a sound social philosophy. It is not till a reflective power of some sort has appeared, observing and classifying facts with reference to an end of its own, that the news of the day assumes any especial significance, or is made to subserve any important purpose.

The commercial paper might as well hope to reach its object by a promiscuous circulation of all the items and facts of trade, as the journal to attain the ends of daily influence and instruction by mere news. It is the office of the journalist, at least in a rapid, preliminary way, to subject the news to that discrimination which sifts it, gives it character, and sends it on a definite mission.

There are two sorts of influence that belong to the press. The one is involuntary, and incidental to its very existence; the other is designed, and turns on the ability with which its duties are discharged. The first is that by which intensity, diffusion, mobility, are imparted to our intellectual and social states, and changes of whatever character are carried speedily forward. This result is a necessary consequence of the mechanical facilities afforded by the press, into whosesoever

possession it may have fallen. The second form of influence much better deserves the name, is directly due to those who employ the press, who give it the material it is to circulate. This material, like all intellectual products, will owe its power to the moral purpose and thoughts of those who produce it; and the journalist, like other intellectual laborers, becomes influential only as he is fruitful in thoughts, sentiments, theories. He is thrown back on individual power, soundness of judgment, integrity of moral nature, for the extent and direction of his control. Merely as a medium of influencing men, the journal has its gains and suffers its losses. If its words come often, they go quickly; if they reach many, they touch most lightly; if they have command of the critical moments in political events and public sentiment, it is, nevertheless, only unusual skill, preconceived and definite ends, that can enable the editor to harvest his opportunities.

We wish to urge the thought, that it is not to the press as the press — to mere journalism, that we are to attach the notion of a great and overshadowing power. The evils we have spoken of are rather chiefly due to it — a perpetual trespass on the privacy of individuals, a useless consumption of leisure, a fretting tyranny of public sentiment, a reduction of individuality, a loss of political influence, a fresh trial of moral integrity, and the vanity of apparent power springing from the mere fact of publicity. These evils incident to the press are to be escaped by a more just and careful estimate of its real strength, and by the recognition of the fact, that it is only truly and permanently influential as it is the medium of a controlling purpose.

If what has now been said is true of the press as circulating items of news relatively indifferent in their moral character, in an enhanced degree is it true when its columns are filled with the details of crime. It does not follow, that because transgression is not to be covered up, it is therefore to be exposed. Exposure may as much be in the interest of vice as concealment. The one or the other is faulty ac-

cording to the motives that prompt it, and the consequences that flow from it. A Police Gazette may be the most truthful and the most pernicious of papers, making the revolting incidents of crime a matter of gossip and idle curiosity. The reasons which lead us to the infliction of punishments in private should prompt us to leave in their natural concealment the disgusting details of sin. If we must at times unearth the dead, let us do it as much as possible by ourselves. A distinct moral purpose should preside over and direct all exposure of the delinquencies and crimes of public and private men, and on no other condition are the vices of our time to be offered as the news, the wholesome food, of the day. We protest against blind journalism, that closes its eyes to the results of its own action as if there were such candor and good faith in the mere exposure and aeration of the details of vice as to correct their evil effects. The journalist, in advertisement, item, or editorial, may not work within the field of moral influence, and yet place himself on a purely commercial basis. He has to do with the obvious consequences of his own action. Irresponsible journalism is a force, but one in whose development the editor becomes as unconscientious an instrument as the engine he employs.

The new conditions imposed on society by the press compel us, indeed, to look more anxiously for wise and sincere men to use these increased facilities of diffusion, but by no means put it in the power of one class greatly to control society, aside from a personal strength and integrity commensurate with the ends aimed at. The conditions of influence which belong to the journalist are precisely those which fall to every man; and if his position gives him more opportunities, it also puts his powers to a severer test. Real, creative acts are, as of yore, not found in an instrument, but in the mind that uses it; and as often attend, therefore, on silent thought as on busy, bustling execution. It is the child that mistakes noise for work.