

we know, they may be stupendous frauds. But that is none of our business, nor of the legislature's, nor of anybody's but the depositors and investors—and they do not complain.

OUR REOBEANT PRESS.

In spite of the general diffusion of intelligence it is perhaps no exaggeration to say that the majority of the people of the United States read little or nothing besides the daily newspapers. In their busy lives they find no time and feel small inclination to read from day to day more than the record of current events that the papers place at their disposal for one cent, or two, or at the most, three. From the daily press are derived their political opinions, their knowledge of literature and history, largely their views of life. On its columns must depend the popular preacher, the ambitious politician and all aspirants for fame, lest while they are reaching hundreds by voice their rivals address tens of thousands through the newspapers. Of all the powers of the land, the press to-day is the most mighty. It educates the young, it molds public opinion, it masters legislatures and presidents.

And yet upon what evil days has it, in this age of triumphant commercialism, fallen. No longer can a Greeley or a Bennett start with paltry resources on a great journalistic career. Newspaper proprietors must be men of millions or men with first of all the capacity to make millions. One of the most honorable of professions has become one of the most sordid of businesses. The sanctum has been degraded to a mere counting-room annex. The till yawns ever, esurient, edacious. The pen labors for its repletion.

The daily newspapers of the United States may be roughly divided into two classes—the old line and the new. There are gradations, of course, all the way from the dulllest gray to the brightest yellow, and the two classes are connected by a half-way, nondescript style of journal that belongs to both rather than to neither; but for purposes of characterization the one division will hold.

To glance first at the old-line pa-

pers: Here are dignity, reserve, taste, regard for the proprieties of life. The news is presented with due regard to proportion and coherence. Book reviews and dramatic critiques are able and discriminating. Literary ability is not wanting. But these merits, abundantly though they may satisfy the average prosperous and conservative citizen, are outweighed by the service that these journals render to plutocracy. The writing staff, from editor-in-chief to youngest reporter, are, willingly or not, retainers in the House of Monopoly. Of this every column affords its proof, alike in what it contains and in what, designedly, it does not contain. The demonstration culminates on the editorial page, where is displayed a past-mastership in the art of special pleading, of suppressing the true and suggesting the false, of making the worse appear the better reason. The thoughtful reader can but exclaim with Pope:

See skulking Truth to her old cavern fled,
Mountains of casuistry heaped o'er
her head.

Ever ready to cry "Demagogue!" and "Fanatic!" at those who dissent from their blood-rusted formulas; always seeing in the stone thrown by the striker a graver crime than in the breaking of statutes, the bribery of legislators and the robbery of the public by the corporation that employed him; ever faithful to the cause of unjust privileges and entrenched spoliation, what wonder is it that it is only prosperous and conservative citizens who are now influenced by the utterances of the old-line journals, and that to find utterances that carry weight with the many recourse must be had to journals of the newer, more sensational school?

To turn to these is to be at once repelled. Here vulgarity caters to ignorance, and there results a nightmarish product of freak typography, bad illustrations, slovenly syntax and literary slush. Contempt for private rights, rampant mendacity and truculent flunkeyism are distinguishing features. All sense of proportion is lost, and when a rich woman's lap dog dies the fall of a dynasty fills second place.

As offset there are usually in the news columns a fairer treatment of

radical men and measures than can be found in the old-line papers, and on the editorial page an expression of opinion, which, however crude it may be, is written with one eye at least open to the interests of the people, not with both fixed on the pocket-book of their exploiters.

This is something. Yet it has been proven abundantly that, however loud its protestations, the new journalism cannot be trusted far. It is pitched on too low a plane for uncompromising virtue, and when the crucial moment comes is generally found wanting. Even at its best it will always sidetrack social reform and political progress to revel in the details of the latest Tenderloin murder or Newport wedding.

The newspapers of the United States have twice elected a facile tool of monopoly to the presidential chair; they have deadened the popular conscience to the iniquity of the Philippine war; they have promoted the reaction to tory and imperial ideas that marks the opening of the twentieth century. Their influence is undisguisably undemocratic and un-republican.

What a field there would be in every great city for an unsubsidized, unpurchasable daily paper, which would combine with conservative methods of news gathering and presentation a fair and radical treatment of all public questions from the standpoints alone of truth, public honor and the people's interests; that would stand like a rock for democracy and progress; that would go to the root of everything and show the public just where and how it is plundered, and point the remedy.

Lacking such papers, may the progressive, independent weeklies in both city and country multiply in number and in circulation. In them rests largely hope for the future.

FRANK C. WELLS.

Brooklyn.

NEWS

South African reports of last week left Gen. De Wet and President Steyn in Cape Colony, on their way with 3,000 men to Philipstown, they having on the 10th crossed the Orange river a few miles north of Norval's

pont after escaping a trap laid for them by Lord Kitchener. These reports were unofficial, but they have since been confirmed by Lord Kitchener, who, in a dispatch of the 15th, tells of fighting De Wet on that day at an unnamed point north of Philipstown. From other later dispatches it appears that the fighting began on the 13th, and that De Wet was being gradually pushed back. On the 18th dispatches from London described him as dashing through Cape Colony with Lord Kitchener in person at his heels. Six flying columns were said to be operating against him, attempting another converging and enveloping movement. Beyond this there is nothing new.

The conduct of the war has already figured somewhat ominously in debate in the new British parliament, which on the 14th continued its first session after the recess (page 584) of January 15. King Edward opened the session, reading, on this occasion, his first speech from the throne. After ascending the throne in the house of lords, and taking the historic anti-catholic oath, the king proceeded with his speech, in which he briefly reviewed the condition of the empire, saying, with reference to the war in South Africa:

The war in South Africa is not yet entirely terminated, but the capitals of the enemy and its principal lines of communication are in my possession, and measures have been taken which will, I trust, enable my troops to deal effectually with the forces by which they are still opposed. I greatly regret the loss of life and expenditure of treasure due to the fruitless guerrilla warfare maintained by Boer partisans in the former territories of the two republics. Their early submission is much to be desired in their own interests, as until it takes place it will be impossible for me to establish in those colonies the institutions which will secure the equal rights of all the white inhabitants and protection and justice to the native population.

On the subject of appropriations he said:

The estimates for the year will be laid before you. Every care has been taken to limit their amount, but the naval and military requirements of the country, and especially the outlay consequent upon the South African war, have involved an inevitable increase.

Upon returning to their own chamber the commons debated the ministerial address in reply to the king's

speech, the principal subject of the debate being the war policy in South Africa. In the heat of debate on this subject on the 19th, a debate in which young Churchill and Secretary Chamberlain participated in support of the ministry, John Dillon precipitated an issue over the refusal of the under secretary of state for foreign affairs to respect the practice of cross-examining undersecretaries, which has prevailed in parliament. He refused to answer questions without formal written notice, doing so in obedience to the direction of the ministry. Thereupon Mr. Dillon moved an adjournment, which seems to have made an issue with the ministry over their new rule, though exactly how or why is not clear from the dispatches, and upon that issue the ministry was saved from defeat by a majority of only 45, when their normal majority is 130.

When we last referred to affairs in China (page 697) an agreement between the powers and the Chinese plenipotentiaries had been made under which certain punishments of specified anti-foreign leaders were to be inflicted by the Chinese government. Three were to be sentenced to death, with a commutation of the death sentence to banishment; three already dead were to be sentenced to death posthumously; and six were to be actually decapitated. This agreement has since been repudiated by the empress. A dispatch of the 15th from Peking tells of the receipt from her court of a brief note declaring the agreement impossible to meet, withdrawing powers of initiative from the Chinese plenipotentiaries, and positively refusing the infliction of any further punishment than the decapitation of Yu Hsien, governor of Shansi province, and permission to Prince Chwang to commit suicide. The same dispatch explains that the royal signature to this note had been secured by coercion, the whole court being hopelessly in the power of the principal anti-foreign leaders whose punishment is demanded by the powers. The foreign ministers have announced to the Chinese plenipotentiaries that negotiations can proceed only upon the basis of the original agreement. In consequence of this hitch in the negotiations the German field marshal, Waldersee, who is in nominal command of the allied forces, has urged the military chiefs of the different powers to co-

operate in an expedition, the object of which is supposed to be the capture of the emperor and the empress dowager with their court officials, who are at Siang-Fu in Shensee province, far in the interior. Gen. Chaffee, commander of the American forces in China, was instructed from Washington on the 18th to make an effort to secure the abandonment of Waldersee's expedition; and on the 20th a further note from the Chinese plenipotentiaries to the ministers of the allied powers was taken to indicate the abandonment by the Chinese court of its defiant attitude of the 15th.

From the Philippines the reports of the week relate chiefly to American attempts at civil organization. The province of Pangasinan was organized on the 17th with the following officers and salaries: Governor, Perfecto Sison, \$2,000; secretary, Romo Paclet, \$1,500; treasurer, Capt. Hardeeman, \$2,500; supervisor, Capt. Maloney, \$2,000; fiscal, Ignacio Villamor, \$1,500. There are some reports, however, of surrenders and of fighting. The fighting in the Island of Luzon for the week ending on the 17th is summed up as approximating 20 skirmishes, in which 25 Filipino officers and 330 men, with 350 rifles, 70 other arms, and 5,500 rounds of ammunition were taken by the Americans. On the 18th the Thirtieth United States infantry sailed for San Francisco with 26 officers and 751 men. The remaining 1,290 men and 48 officers are thus accounted for: Twenty officers and 68 men remain in Manila; ten men were killed and 37 are absent on sick leave; the remainder were discharged or died of disease and wounds.

Appointments are announced from Washington of the following American judges for the Philippines:

Supreme Court of the Philippine Islands—C. A. Willard, Minneapolis, and J. F. Cooper, Fort Worth.

Court of First Instance of the Philippine Islands—Henry C. Bates, St. Johnsbury, Vt.; Fletcher Ladd, Lancaster, N. H.; E. F. Johnston, Ann Arbor, Mich.; L. R. Wifley, St. Louis; A. F. Odlin, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

There appears to be no legal authority for these civil judicial appointments except the president's military power as commander-in-chief of the army.

American casualties in the Philip-