

The indirect benefit that will come to our college students from such a re-feeding of our teachers will be enormous. And, so far as the western sciences are concerned, no one will deny that the head fountain of such knowledge is not yet located in our country. And this is true not only of teachers, but of engineers, doctors, scientists, workers in municipal bureaux, and technical experts of government departments.

Even granting that foreign undergraduate education is in some cases desirable, we must concede that it is comparatively a luxury, and cannot be put before the more fundamental need of extending educational facilities to teachers and other people who are likely to become specialists in their own lines. And, dollar for dollar, no one will deny the money spent on experienced workers in special lines will bring better and more definite results than the money spent on young college students who do not yet know what they want.

Second, the whole of the fund appropriated for this purpose shall be devoted to the creation of public scholarships and fellowships for education abroad, open to all people of China. The award of such scholarships may, in some cases, be based on competitive

examinations, but, in the majority of cases should be based on the candidates' past records and special accomplishments, whether they be of an academic or practical order. It stands to reason that a teacher who has run a secondary school on the Dalton plan for a year or two should receive preference before a young budding idealist who imagines he is going to come back and be the president of a model university or to overthrow the Einsteinian theory or the Kantian ethics.

Third, in view of the enormous wastefulness of the modern educational system and the ridiculously long years it takes to give a man a preparation for life, more regard shall be had to individual merits and less to academic credits. A sophomore who does not feel the academic urge in him should be dissuaded from studying any further altogether, and the money spent on him will be more a concession to conventional snobbery than a real benefit to society or to himself. As they are wont to say at Johns Hopkins, the bright student shall also have a chance. Those who have any talent in them at all should be encouraged to have all the chance the nation can give them, and not be forced to mark time and wait for the last lame sheep to jump over the fence.

What Ails the Press of Shanghai?

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Among the many contributions to "civilization" which Shanghai may be justly proud of, there is one which needs to be carefully studied both for its inherent interest and for the vast social importance attached to it, namely, the press. There are, in this metropolis of ours, English, American, French, Japanese, Russian, and scores of Chinese newspapers. No other city in the world, with perhaps the single exception of New York City, presents such a fine spectacle of journalistic activity. Little wonder that people in the interior provinces look to Shanghai for the supply of information with regard to current events, that editors in the smaller and more secluded towns of the country clip and reproduce whole passages from a Shanghai newspaper in order to fill up yawning gaps in their own daily sheet, and that foreign journals send their more or less respectable correspondents here to obtain first-hand Far Eastern news. We who are fortunate enough to be in daily contact with this "civilizing" influence are so obsessed by the wonderful accomplishments of our press, that we lose all mental balance and can not see things in their proper perspective. But in our sober moments, when we are less enthused over our own merits and see ourselves as others see us, our preeminent position as a city of journalists at once dwindles into insignificance. Thus viewed, Shanghai not only fails to live up to its reputation as the center from which all news emanates, but its very claim to a seat in the journalists' fraternity may even be questioned. The argument is two-fold.

The first and principal function of a newspaper is undoubtedly the supply of accurate information. The

method which the journalist follows in the gathering and reporting of news is not unlike what the chemist or physicist employs in his laboratory. He has to be strictly objective, and not lend himself to flights of imagination. The moment he steps outside the bounds of the observable and let his fancy have full play, he has betrayed the fundamental tenets of his profession. In this respect, a journalist may be said to resemble a man on the witness-stand in that both are obliged to "speak the truth, and nothing but the truth." Applying this test to those engaged in journalistic work here in Shanghai, we find that they do not answer to our description and their standing as *bona fide* newspapermen is at least open to grave doubts.

A second consideration which makes the press to be one of the most important factors in social control and which ultimately justifies its existence is the formation and guidance of public opinion, a function which the newspapers in Shanghai discharge but poorly, if at all. The man in the street, even in highly civilized communities, generally shows little interest in public affairs; his attitude toward national questions is always apathetic, if not one of positive aversion. Hence James Bryce, in his masterly study of "The American Commonwealth," most judiciously observes: "to the great mass of mankind in all places, public questions come in the third or fourth rank among the interests of life, and obtain less than a third or a fourth of the leisure available for thinking." This is true not only of the illiterate and half-educated masses. "It is substantially no less applicable to the commercial and professional

classes than to the working classes; for in the former, as well as in the latter, one finds few persons who take the pains, or have the leisure, or indeed possess the knowledge, to enable them to form an independent judgment." That being so, it is clearly the duty of the newspaper as a social institution to enlighten the public on current problems and to present, in the form of editorial articles and comments, a judicious interpretation of significant events. No paper can afford to ignore this aspect of its functions without impinging upon its good name. The press in Shanghai, however, apparently cares little for its own good name, for it has never seriously considered paying much attention to its editorial columns.

The foregoing are of course merely general indictments which, if unsubstantiated with sufficient evidence, do not tell us anything concrete about the Shanghai press. In order to form an adequate conception of the newspapers here, it is necessary to inquire in some detail into the manner with which they are conducted. The subject naturally falls into two main divisions, according as the papers are published in a foreign, or in the Chinese, language.

Among the first group of papers, published in a foreign language, we shall take for special study our eminent contemporary, *The North-China Daily News*, partly because its influence is greater than any of the other papers, and partly because its views are invariably pushed to the extreme and, at times, even sound absurd. This organ, as is generally known, is the mouthpiece of British die-hardism and represents official conservative opinion. It stands for foreign rights and interests in any Sino-foreign dispute irrespective of the merits of the case. Even the May 30th Incident, in which innocent students and workers were shot down in cold blood, found an able advocate in the editor of *The North-China Daily News*. Our esteemed contemporary pretends to be an authority on Chinese affairs, about which it knows just as much as a Chinese laundryman in the United States knows about American political and social conditions. It judges Oriental customs and institutions by means of Occidental standards, not knowing that different peoples have different tastes, likes, and dislikes, and that what a European regards the *summum bonum* may not be taken exactly in the same light by the Chinese. Take for instance the very conception of the White Man's Burden, a conception so dear to the heart of every true Nordic and a conception which underlies all that has appeared in *The North-China Daily News*. It has apparently never occurred to its editor that the question may be looked at from an entirely different angle and that what is so euphemistically called the White Man's Burden may appear, in the eyes of the "inferior" yellow race, nay even in those of a fellow-Nordic like Nathaniel Peffer, to be no more than the White Man's Dilemma. The same thing holds true of the other essentially Western conceptions like democracy, Christian fellowship, business prosperity, industrial efficiency, mass education, and

so on through the whole gamut of modern political, economic, and social shibboleths. There is no assurance that the Chinese as a nation will take to them with the same kind of whole-hearted devotion as the Western peoples are doing. The fact is that in public questions there are no absolute standards of valuation, nor hard and fast rules for determining the preferability of a given point of view. In the end, people are always their own best judge; it is none of another's business to meddle in the affairs which concern them alone. *The North-China Daily News* must have been blissfully ignorant of this first principle of social science, otherwise it would not have insisted on its views with so much tenacity. The opinions it so profusely lavishes on China's domestic problems are really a misnomer. They are not opinions in the sense that the editorials of such respectable journals as *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Manchester Guardian*, *The Peking Leader*, *The North China Star* are opinions. They are sheer prejudices and nothing more.

If a paper which ostensibly calls itself "impartial, not neutral" is capable of mixing pre-conceived notions in its editorial comments; it has still less scruple in misrepresenting falsehoods as facts. Every time when there happens to be a civil war or a political commotion, *The North-China Daily News* is sure to carry in its columns the most sensational of news which, in retrospect, never seems to fulfill the pious wishes of our prescient editor. If its reports were to be relied upon, the Nanking authorities would have been overthrown quite a number of times, and Shanghai would have long fallen into Communist grip, thus rendering the gaiest city of the East unfit as a gambling resort. Granted that in the last eighteen years China has had more than a fair portion of the war scourge, but imaginary wars that are only fought in the mind of the editor are still more numerous. Of course, our good-natured editor is not wholly to blame for such anomalies. In the first place, he has to grapple with the curious way the Chinese names are Romanized. He has not learned from childhood to differentiate between Chang and Chiang as he does between Johnson and Johnston. For him, there is absolutely no individuality in the Romanized names, just as there is no sure method to enable him to tell the face of one Chinese from that of another. Accordingly, we find him once speaking of a certain famous bandit 'Chu Mao'—which, upon inquiry, turns out to be no more than an artificial combination of the names of two Communist leaders, Chu Teh and Mao Tze-tung—an amusing instance of editorial hybridism, indeed! Secondly, our erudite editor can not be blamed for over-proficiency in Chinese literature. He has to depend upon a Chinese translator for a good part of the news. He must either accept the latter's version on faith, or he goes without it. This leads him sometimes to serious misstatement of facts. The incident of General Chiang Kai-shek's visit to the different government departments on January 30 (New Year's day according to the Lunar Calendar) is a case in point. *The North-China Daily News* put it thus:

"The following is a translation of a striking address delivered by General Chiang Kai-shek at the usual weekly memorial service last Monday in Nanking. The original appeared in the 'China Times.' General Chiang said:

"I made a round of the different Government offices on the old New Year day and found that, *except for the Ministry of Interior*, which carried on its work as usual, *in the other Ministries and offices*, while they were in appearance kept open, nobody was there at work. It is regrettable that even Government officials found it difficult to break the old custom; so how can we blame the people for keeping up the old tradition?" (February 6, 1930).

As a matter of fact, what General Chiang said at the weekly memorial service on February 3 was substantially this:

"On the old New Year's day, I made an inspection of the different Government departments in the Capital, and found that some could really discard the old custom and carry on business as usual, *especially the Ministry of Interior*, which did not show a bit of relaxation. But *the great majority* (of the departments) only put up an appearance of obeying (the government's order); though nominally they did not have a holiday, actually nobody was to be found in the office." (廢歷元旦，本主席曾赴首都各機關視察，有的頗能革除舊習，如常辦公，尤其是內政部更沒有一點鬆懈的樣子；但大多數仍是陽奉陰違，名義上未放假，實際上在辦公室裏竟見不著人。... See The Central Daily News, Nanking, February 4, 1930.

A comparison between the corresponding italicized phrases in the foregoing versions of the same speech will show that *The North-China Daily News* has intentionally misrepresented the actual facts. But this is not all. In its issue of February 8, under the happy title of "How History Is Made," it again referred to the same incident and took the Kuo Wen News Agency to task for wilful misrepresentation. To quote:

"Readers' memories are not so short that they will have forgotten how General Chiang Kai-shek went round the government offices in Nanking on the old Chinese New Year Day, and, *with one exception*, the Ministry of Interior, found them *all empty and idle*. This fact was made known to the world by General Chiang's own speech at this week's memorial service and he used it as a text for some pointed remarks on disregard of law and national inertia." (February 8, 1930).

Reading through these versions in succession, one is amused to note our editor's mental revolution and to see how news is falsified by manipulating little words and phrases. If by this time our innocent editor is still interested in knowing how history is made, we are glad to enlighten him on this obscure point by again quoting his own words: *Thus is history made in China!*"

Whether or not a few clerks did, on a particular day, go to office is of course a trivial matter. We

would not have touched on the topic, were it not for the fact that *The North-China Daily News* made so much capital out of it. The whole incident *per se* is not worth a moment's notice, but *The North-China Daily News*, in devoting so much attention to perpetuate an obvious falsehood, has given the matter an unparalleled importance. Henceforth, it stands out as a glaring example of the essential cheapness of the foreign press. It indicates how foreign journalists fabricate "China news" for home consumption. It further confirms our conviction that foreign newspapers in Shanghai, while sympathizing for China's rightful aspirations and professing willingness to relinquish foreign rights and interests "as soon as political conditions in China render it possible to do so," are really not sincere in their expressions of friendship and goodwill. If they were, they would not have strained every nerve to slander the Chinese Government, even to the extent of giving a distorted view of actual facts. In this connection, it is perhaps not impertinent to add, parenthetically, that the present writer is neither a member of the Chinese Nationalist Party, nor has he held, is holding, or likely to hold a job under the Nationalist Government, so that he has no particular interest in apologizing for the Government. However, he does have a few personal friends in government service, and he knows from them that what *The North-China Daily News* made such a show of is a shameless untruth. So far as his personal knowledge goes, at least the Legislative Yuan, the Auditing Office, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, besides the Ministry of Interior, were, on the day in question, not "empty and idle." Therefore, the charges implied in such sweeping phrases as "except for the Ministry of Interior," "with one exception," and "all empty and idle" are certainly not borne out by facts.

What is true of the foreign press in Shanghai, as typified by *The North-China Daily News*, is equally true of the Chinese newspapers here with the difference that while the former errs through commission, the latter do not come up to the standards, set by respectable journals throughout the world, mainly through omission. The Chinese papers hardly have any editorial policy. Their editorial page is a diminutive affair, kept up merely as a matter of usage and tradition. Neither the editor nor the reading public cares an iota for what is said there. For all practical purposes, the editorial column might as well be blank space. The best that an editorial writer can do is to string together a series of words which can not in any way be interpreted to mean either one thing or another. Special effort is always made not to discuss current problems for fear of giving offence to those in power. Even in international affairs, the editors are generally so timid that they do not dare to mention a foreign Power by name when they make a few adverse remarks about it. Thus Japan is, almost by universal agreement, invariably referred to as "a certain country." This state of affairs is not to be duplicated anywhere else, except in India and Korea where Great Britain and Japan have reduced

them to the status of a mere colony and have completely stifled the freedom of the press. But in China, whose patriots never tire of re-asserting her territorial integrity and political independence, there is little reason why the editors should be so slavish. Those who style themselves "leaders of public opinion" should at least have enough intelligence to realize that their servile attitude not only lowers their own standing as journalists but, what is more, that it can not fail to be reflected in the behavior of the general public. This accounts for a large part of the inferiority complex so prevalent in all classes of the people.

Such being the timidity of a Chinese editor, one is naturally interested in knowing what sort of stuff he daily puts into his editorial column. Some papers, especially those which are supported by, or receive subsidies from influential persons, merely paraphrase a word or sentence from their patron, and guard themselves very carefully not to tread on his corns. Others register under a foreign government, claiming foreign protection and run on a purely business basis without having to commit themselves on any of the national or international issues of the hour. Still others quote a few excerpts from Confucian classics, write a moral dissertation in the approved style, and let the readers be reminded that China is a nation of virtuous and gentle folks in spite of open brigandage and social corruption which slowly but surely demoralize both the plunderer and the plundered. The acme of journalistic imbecility is reached when an editor delegates his duty of writing editorials to an outsider whose only relation to the paper is that at the end of each month he is paid a sum of money in proportion to the number of words he has contributed. In view of such ingenious devices, one has to concede that Chinese journalism, though comparatively young in other respects, has developed to a stage of perfection at least in the matter of turning out so much editorial nonsense every twenty-four hours.

From the hopeless condition of the editorial column, we pass on to a consideration of the news sheets which are just as unsatisfactory. The most striking feature about Chinese newspapers in this respect is that they have their attention fixed on the personal movements of politicians and military leaders to the exclusion of significant events in other fields of human endeavor. The reader learns from his paper precisely how many guests attended the wedding party and how much was spent on the bridal suit when an old general gave his second daughter in marriage to one of his political underlings, or when the ancient gentleman took a fancy to add another sweet sixteen to his swelling harem—a reader may learn all this from a single news item, but search through the files as he may, he would not be able to find out just how many people died of the recent famine in Kansu. Likewise, a detailed account is always given of the bunk which an ex-bandit may have spattered out on the baneful influences of political and social anarchy, but one hears scarcely anything from Chinese newspapers about Dr. Lin Yutang's learned address to the World's Chinese Students Federation on

"The Function of Criticism,"* about which even Mr. George E. Sokolsky has a good word to say. Similar events which interest a Chinese editor are birthday parties, parties in honor of longevity, funerals, feasts, and other social gatherings of a like nature, provided they are in one way or another connected with some prominent individual. Of course, we do not mean to imply that these things should be entirely deleted from the daily paper. We admit that when they are fairly sprinkled among the really pertinent news, they may sometimes afford amusement to those moronic few who care to follow such purely personal affairs. But if they are made the most prominent feature of a day's news, we have reason to suspect the editor as mentally defective in the appreciation of values.

Indeed, the trouble with the Chinese press in general seems to be that the editors are unable to sift the pertinent from the mass of bewildering materials on hand. They can not tell the important from the irrelevant. They see only the superficial aspects of an event, and seldom, if ever, inquire into its implications. They notice its more showy and formal aspects, but fail to grasp its real import. Thus they keep a faithful record of the arrival at and departure from Shanghai of all political and military leaders, but they do not inform the public either of the business which has brought these men here, or of the reasons which have called them away. They never neglect to report that at such and such a time the State Council or the Central Executive Committee held a session and that such and such persons were present at the meeting, but it is impossible to expect them to give a clear and full account of its proceedings and resolutions. While the reader may be fully apprised of the number of interviews between a foreign envoy and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, he seldom learns from his paper the nature of the discussion or the decisions arrived at. In this way, that imponderable quantity commonly known as politics, which has so far been a closed book to the mass of the people, will ever remain shrouded in mystery and there is no hope of arousing sufficient popular interest in public questions, so that democratic control of public affairs shall become a reality. Need it be added that all the political corruptions and back-stage manoeuvres of the past eighteen years are in part traceable to the indifference of our press, because they have not received that kind of salutary exposure which they deserve?

A further defect of the Chinese newspapers in Shanghai has reference to the manner the news items are made up and presented to the readers. Unlike foreign papers, they do not arrange their news in the order of importance, but group them on a purely territorial basis. The editor never makes an effort to join together bits of information relating to the same question. He merely publishes the telegrams and despatches according to their place of origin. Take for instance the recent decision of the Chinese Government to abolish extraterritoriality. When the Reuter's agent learns of the decision, he at once sends a telegram to

Shanghai which next day appears in the Chinese papers under the general heading of "Urgent Domestic News." If a Nanking correspondent writes a detailed account of events leading to the decision, his despatch will appear under "Special Nanking Correspondence." Any opinion which a foreign consul in Shanghai may express on the matter is treated as "Local News," and reactions to the decision in the form either of questions in the House of Commons, or of an interview to newspaper reporters in the White House, are published by our easy-going editor, working on the territorial basis, as "Foreign News." One explanation offered for this curious phenomenon is that Chinese society is still an essentially feudalistic society in which localism predominates over the sense of national unity; hence the editor is unable to rise, conceptually, beyond the bounds of a small locality. (See the article on "The Reconstruction of the Shanghai Newspapers" by Mr. Van Chung-yung in *The New Life Monthly*, November, 1929). But a more obvious reason readily suggests itself to one acquainted with the inner workings of an editorial office. The editor generally does nothing besides scrawling a few lines of editorial comment. The actual task of writing headlines and all that is entrusted to a number of assistants, each one of whom is in charge of a separate section which indicates a definite geographical limit. The practical working out of this system of editorial division of labor is to put news of entirely different characters in the same section or even in the same paragraph, and to separate items of news which, because they touch on the same general topic, ought to be joined together. This device, if it has nothing else to recommend, has at least the merit of being simple and convenient.

A recent development in Chinese journalism which, like the short skirt and silk stockings, has attracted general attention only in the last two or three years is the prominence given to society scandals, rapes, robbery and murders, abduction for ransom, gambling trials, and the like. The editors have without doubt learned the trick from an American tabloid paper, not knowing that the latter is not a particularly happy object for emulation. Along with social sensations, there come patent medicines and other fake advertisements. No other paper except a Parisian comic sheet can possibly equal a Shanghai newspaper in advertisements which cater to the sexual impulse of man. A casual glance at a Shanghai daily will show the preponderance of advertisements for philter, cures for gonorrhoea and syphilis, and panaceas for other mental and bodily disorders. These medicines, even though they might have those qualities ascribed to them, exert at least a suggestive influence on the minds of thousands of young readers and, therefore, should not be allowed to be openly advertised. No respectable newspaper in a civilized country sells its advertising columns so cheaply for such an anti-social purpose. But here in Shanghai, where Russian dancing girls and Japanese *geishas* conspire with French *masseuses* to lure the plastic youth, it is apparently necessary that such indispensable knowledge should be supplied to the victims

or would-be victims! That is at any rate the line of reasoning which the newspapers here adopt when they accept an advertisement of the above description. However, the most amazing instance of newspaper collusion with the advertiser to deceive the public occurred in the latter part of 1926 when a Shanghai paper published an advertisement, offering to sell worthless German paper marks at a "reasonable" price and assuring the prospective buyer that they would soon be "redeemed" by the German Government.

When we come to inquire into the foreign news which Chinese newspapers publish in their columns, the situation is worse. As there is no Chinese news agency abroad, nor do the papers themselves send any correspondents to Europe or America, the Chinese editor is entirely at the mercy of foreign propaganda. He has to publish any news as it comes. He can not exercise his power of selection, because he has nothing to choose from. The Reuter's Agency, the Associated and the United Press, the Havas Agency, the Tass, the Nippon Dempo, the Toho, and the Rengo are just so many sources from which foreign information, partly news and partly propaganda, comes into China. For good or ill, the Chinese reading public has to be contented with reports colored both by the political affiliation of the respective news agencies and by their nationalistic or imperialistic prejudices and bigotry. Aside from the danger of swallowing foreign propaganda in its entirety, there is the further question of the doubtful competency of the editor himself. International issues are so complicated, that it takes a person of rare gifts to master them in all their ramifications. Unfortunately, the Chinese editor is not so happily endowed. He probably knows no other modern language besides his own. Although he might have taken a course in Modern History when he was in college, he has failed to follow the trend of events in the last dozen years because he has been too busy in "making connections" with leading politicians and fellow-journalists, and has had no time to delve further into his subject. That leaves his cranium in a state of absolute vacuity so far as international questions are concerned. One can not, therefore, expect him to show much intelligence in his "Foreign News" column.

After going through both the foreign, as represented by *The North-China Daily News*, and the Chinese newspapers in Shanghai, one is justified in concluding that the press here neither serves the purpose of guiding public opinion, nor does it help to disseminate accurate information. It has lost its educative influence, and become a positive social liability. Not until those responsible for this state of affairs realize their own folly in following the same old rut is there any prospect of better things to come. No moralizing will save the situation; the only remedy lies in knowing one's own deficiencies and in devising means to remove them.