

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE DAILY CAT-AND-DOG FIGHT

There are other newspapers published in this “Roof-garden of the World.” There is the Hearst newspaper, the “Los Angeles Examiner,” which publishes the editorials of Arthur Brisbane, and follows, somewhat haltingly, the Hearst propaganda for government ownership. But so far as its local policy is concerned, it is entirely commercial, its fervors are for the local industry, of “boosting.” It has an especially annoying habit of disguising its advertisements so as to trap you into reading them as news. You will be informed in headlines of a notable event in local history, and when you read, you learn that Johnnie Jones, of 2249 S. Peanut Street, sold all his chickens within two hours by using “Examiner Want Ads.” Again, you read a headline about an aviator just returned from France, and what you learn about him is that Jones & Co. have put out twenty thousand pictures of him in twenty thousand boxes of “Frizzlies.” “This confection is especially delicious,” says our naïve “Examiner.” And now, as I write, some editor has an inspiration, and day after day I am confronted with an illustrated article: “*Aspirants to Shapely Limbs Title*. Who owns the most beautiful limbs on the stage? Look them over.”

Later on I shall tell of the “Examiner’s” treatment of various radicals. For the present I am dealing with personal experiences, so I relate that in the spring of 1919 I was invited to speak at a mass-meeting of the Jews of Los Angeles, in protest against the pogroms in Poland. The other speakers at this meeting expressed indignation at these pogroms; I endeavored to explain them. The French bankers, who now rule the continent of Europe, are engaged in setting up a substitute for the Russian Tsardom on the east of Germany; and this new Polish empire is using the Jews as a scapegoat, precisely as the Russian Tsardom did. Referring to President Wilson, I said; “I have supported him through the war, and I am not one of those who are denouncing him now. I think he has made a pitiful failure in Europe, but I understand that 214failure; it is due in part to the fact that the American people do not realize what is going on in Europe, and do not make clear their determination that American money shall not be poured out in support of reaction and imperialism.”

Such was the substance of my argument. Next day the “Los Angeles Times” did not mention it; while the “Los Angeles Examiner” reported it with outraged indignation, under the scare headline: “SINCLAIR ATTACKS WILSON.” In this form it was telegraphed all over the country. The amusing feature of the story is that the “Examiner” itself was at this time attacking Wilson most venomously—both on its

editorial page and in its Washington dispatches. But it did not want my aid; it would not permit a Socialist to “attack” the President of the United States!

In various cities there are various standards prevailing for the conduct of newspapers in their rivalries with one another. In New York the rule is that they never praise one another, and only denounce one another in extreme cases. One thing they absolutely never do is to mention one another’s libel suits. But here in Los Angeles the rivalry between the “Times” and “Examiner” is a daily cat-and-dog fight. Not merely do they spread each other’s libel suits over the front page; they charge each other with numerous crimes, they call names and make faces like two ill-mannered children. And they keep this up, day after day, for weeks, so that it is impossible to get the news of world-events in Southern California without having their greeds and spites thrust upon you.

One day you read in the “Times” that the “Examiner” is dressing up agents as soldiers, and circulating slanders against the “Times.” Next day there begins in the “Examiner” a series of cartoons of Harry Andrews, managing editor of the “Times,” representing him in grotesque and disgusting positions. Next day you read in the “Times” that William Bayard Hale, a former correspondent of the “Examiner,” is charged with having taken German money. Next day you read in the “Examiner” that Harry Carr, assistant managing editor of the “Times,” has been shown to have had his travelling expenses in Germany paid by the German government; also that Willard Huntington Wright, former literary editor of the “Times,” is accused of having taken German money. Next day you read in the “Examiner” that the mayor of Los Angeles has been indicted upon a charge of taking bribe-money from negro 215brothel-keepers, and that his chief confederate is Horace Karr, former political editor of the “Times.” Next day you read in the “Times” about this same Horace Karr—only he isn’t a former political editor of the “Times,” he is a former reporter for the “Examiner”! This particular civic scandal is spread over a page of both papers for a month, the “Examiner” playing it up, the “Times” playing it down, both of them telling patent falsehoods, and both of them continuing, day after day, to describe Horace Karr as a former employe of the other!

One of the funniest instances of this rivalry occurred recently upon the death of Mrs. Phoebe Hearst, mother of William Randolph Hearst, owner of the “Examiner.” I made a study of the “Examiner” and the “Times” next morning. The “Examiner” gave three columns on the first page and five columns on the third page to accounts of Mrs. Hearst and her virtues. There were two pictures, one a picture of Mrs. Hearst, occupying fifty-eight square inches, and the other a picture of “the family of William Randolph Hearst visiting their grandmother,” this occupying forty square inches.

The “Times,” of course, was not so much interested in Mrs. Hearst. It gave her only the amount of space which it would give to any California millionaire who died—that is, two columns. The picture of Mrs. Hearst occupied only twenty-four square inches, and the contrast with the picture in the “Examiner” was most diverting. The picture in the “Examiner” showed a magnificent and stately lady, some duchess by Gainsborough. How the picture in the “Times” originated I do not know, but it appeared as if the editor of the “Times” had said to his artist: “Find me a picture of the ugliest old woman you have on file; or better yet, get me a picture of a grim old man with a double chin, and draw me a woman’s bonnet on top of him, and a woman’s dress over his shoulders, and label it ‘Mrs. Phoebe Apperson Hearst.’”

Also there are three afternoon papers in Los Angeles—all three sensational, all three commercial, with hardly the pretense of a public policy. There was brought to my attention the case of Raoul Palma, a young Mexican Socialist of an especially fine type, who had earned the enmity of the Los Angeles police by persisting in speaking on the Plaza. They had brought against him a charge of murder, as perfect a case of “frame-up” as I ever saw. I spent much time investigating the case, which failed for lack of evidence when brought before a jury. But the city editors and managing editors of the Los Angeles newspapers, to whom I took the evidence of this “frame-up,” were not moved to any fervors. I was able to get one or two small items published, but I was not able to find a spark of human feeling, nor yet an ideal of public welfare in the management of the journals upon which I called. But suppose that I had gone to them with the news that I was about to build a new million dollar hotel in Los Angeles; or that I had purchased the Catalina Islands, and was about to develop them for tourists; or that I was about to start an airplane service up the coast!

Quite recently a great rubber concern has started a six million dollar factory in Los Angeles; and such ecstasies as seize our papers! Columns and columns, day after day; pictures of the wondrous structure, and of the president of the company—I think I have had the features of this pudgy little person thrust upon me not less than a dozen times! And his ideas—not merely about the rubber business and the commercial prospects of Southern California, but about the League of Nations, and the “Plumb plan” and labor unions and strikes and Bolshevism!

On the other hand, there is a movement now under way to organize the actors in the motion-picture industry in Southern California; and how much space does this get from the Los Angeles newspapers? On August 18, 1919, there was held in the Hollywood Hotel a mass meeting of members of the theatrical profession, to inform them concerning the meaning of the actors’ strike in New York, and to solicit

donations for the strikers. Not a line about this meeting in any Los Angeles paper! And not a line about the strike of the moving picture workers which came soon afterwards!

Now, as I finish this book, the office of the “Dugout,” a returned soldiers’ paper, is raided by the Federal authorities. The editor, Sydney R. Flowers, served three years as a volunteer in the Canadian army, was twice wounded, and once gassed. He joined a veterans’ organization in Los Angeles, but found it was being courted by the Merchants’ and Manufacturers’ Association as a strike-breaking agency; so he rebelled, and started a rival organization, and now the “M. and M.” plotters have persuaded the government to raid his rooms and break up his propaganda. It happened that I myself was present, and saw the raid, and half a dozen witnesses can testify to the condition in which the offices were left. At my instance the “Examiner” sent a photographer and took a flashlight of the scene; but then it suppressed the picture! As for the “Times,” it quite solemnly informs its readers that the war veterans wrecked their own offices, in order to have a ground of complaint against the government! It repeats this, in circumstantial detail, two days in succession!

This is a somber tale I am telling, so let us not miss the few laughs that belong. Some time ago I had a call from a young lady reporter for the “Los Angeles Record.” She was a very young lady indeed—just out of school, I should say—and she explained that Max Eastman had given an interview on the subject of “free love,” and would I please to give an interview on the subject of “free love.” In reply I explained to this young lady that as a result of previous painful experiences I had made an iron-clad rule on the subject of the sex-question. I would not trust any newspaper reporter, not even the most amiable, to interpret my views on that delicate subject.

The young lady argued and pleaded. She did her very charming best to get me to give her a hint of my opinion of Max Eastman’s opinion of “free love.” But I have become a wise bird—having had my wing-feathers shot out so many times; I gave no hint, either of my own opinions or of my opinions of Max Eastman’s opinions.

Finally the young lady said: “Do you ever write on the subject, Mr. Sinclair?”

I answered: “Sometimes I do. When I write, I choose my own words and say what I mean, and then I am willing to stand by it.”

“Well,” said the young lady, “will you write an article on ‘free love’ for the ‘Record’?”

“Certainly I will,” said I—“if the ‘Record’ will pay my price.”

“What is your price?”

“Ten cents a word.”

The young lady looked troubled. “I don’t know if the ‘Record’ could pay that,” said she, “but this is my position—I will explain frankly, and hope you won’t mind. I’ve just started to be a newspaper woman, and I’m very anxious to make good. I don’t have to earn my living, because my parents have money. What I want to do is to have a career. 218 If I go back to the ‘Record’ and report that I failed to get an interview, I won’t keep this job. So won’t you please write an article for me, and let me pay for it at the rate of ten cents a word?”

You may share a smile over this queer situation. I pleaded embarrassment, I argued with the young lady that I couldn’t possibly take her money. But she argued back, very charmingly; she would be heart-broken if I did not consent. So at last I said: “All right, I will write you an article. How many words do you want?”

The young lady meditated; she figured for a while on the back of her note-book; and finally she said: “I think I’d like fifty words, please.”

Really, I explained, I couldn’t express my views on such a complicated subject in the limits of a night letter; so the young lady raised her bid to a hundred words. In the end we had to break off negotiations, and she went away disappointed. I was told afterwards by friends that she published an article in the “Record,” describing this interview, and having an amusing time with me; so presumably her job was saved. I didn’t see her article, for the “Record” is an evening paper, and publishes half a dozen editions, no two alike, and the only way you can find out what it says about you is to stand on the street-corner for six or eight hours, and catch each fleeting edition as it fleets.

I have come to the end of my own experiences. I read the manuscript and the proofs, over and over, as I have to do, and a guilty feeling haunts me. Will the radical movement consider that I have forced upon it a ventilation of my own egotisms, in the guise of a work on Journalism? I cannot be sure; but at least I can say this: Have patience, and read the second part of the book, in which you will find little about myself, and a great deal about other people, to whom you owe your trust and affection; also a mass of facts about your Journalism, without reference to anybody’s personality.

219

PART II

THE EXPLANATION

CHAPTER XXXV

THE CAUSES OF THINGS

I studied Latin for five years in college, and from this study brought away a dozen Latin verses. One of them is from Virgil: "Happy he who has learned to know the causes of things." The words have stayed in my mind, summing up the purpose of my intellectual life: Not to rest content with observing phenomena, but to know what they mean, how they have come to be, how they may be guided and developed, or, if evil, may be counteracted. I would not have taken the trouble to write a book to say to the reader: I have been persecuted for twenty years by prostitute Journalism. The thing I am interested in saying is: The prostitution of Journalism is due to such and such factors, and may be remedied by such and such changes.

Here is one of the five continents of the world, perhaps the richest of the five in natural resources. As far back as history, anthropology, and even zoology can trace, these natural resources have been the object of competitive struggle. For the past four hundred years this struggle has been ordained by the laws and sanctified by the religions of man. "Each for himself," we say, and, "the devil take the hindmost." "Dog eat dog," we say. "Do others or they will do you," we say. "Business is business," we say. "Get the stuff," we say. "Money talks," we say. "The Almighty Dollar," we say. So, by a thousand native witticisms, we Americans make clear our attitude toward the natural resources of our continent.

As a result of four centuries of this attitude, ordained by law and sanctified by religion, it has come about that at this beginning of the twentieth century the massed control of the wealth of America lies in the hands of perhaps a score of powerful individuals. We in America speak of steel kings and coal barons, of lords of wheat and lumber and oil and railroads, and think perhaps that we are using metaphors; but the simple fact is that the men to whom we refer occupy in the 222world of industry precisely the same position and fill precisely the same roles as were filled in the political world by King Louis, who said, "I am the State."

This power of concentrated wealth which rules America is known by many names. It is "Wall Street," it is "Big Business," it is "the Trusts." It is the "System" of Lincoln Steffens, the "Invisible Government" of Woodrow Wilson, the "Empire of Business" of Andrew Carnegie, the "Plutocracy" of the populists. It has been made the theme of so much stump-oratory that in cultured circles it is considered good form to speak of it in quotation marks, with a playful and skeptical implication; but the simple fact is that

this power has controlled American public life since the civil war, and is greater at this hour than ever before in our history.

The one difference between the Empire of Business and the Empire of Louis is that the former exists side by side with a political democracy. To keep this political democracy subservient to its ends, the industrial autocracy maintains and subsidizes two rival political machines, and every now and then stages an elaborate sham-battle, contributing millions of dollars to the campaign funds of both sides, burning thousands of tons of red fire, pouring out millions of reams of paper propaganda and billions of words of speeches. The people take interest in this sham-battle—but all sensible men understand that whichever way the contest is decided, business will continue to be business, and money will continue to talk.

So we are in position to understand the facts presented in this book. Journalism is one of the devices whereby industrial autocracy keeps its control over political democracy; it is the day-by-day, between-elections propaganda, whereby the minds of the people are kept in a state of acquiescence, so that when the crisis of an election comes, they go to the polls and cast their ballots for either one of the two candidates of their exploiters. Not hyperbolically and contemptuously, but literally and with scientific precision, we define Journalism in America as the business and practice of presenting the news of the day in the interest of economic privilege.

A modern newspaper is an enormously expensive institution. The day is past when a country printer could set up a hand-press and print news about the wedding of the village blacksmith's daughter and the lawn-party of the Christian Endeavor Society, and so make his way as a journalist. Now-a-days 223 people want the last hour's news from the battle-field or the council-hall. If they do not get it in the local paper, they get it in the "extras" from the big cities, which are thrown off the fast express-trains. The franchise which entitles a paper to this news from all over the world is very costly; in most cities and towns it is an iron-clad monopoly. You cannot afford to pay for this service, and to print this news, unless you have a large circulation, and for that you need complicated and costly presses, a big building, a highly trained staff. Incidentally you will find yourself running an advertising agency and a public employment service; you will find yourself giving picnics for newsboys, investigating conditions in the county-hospital, raising subscription funds for a monument to Our Heroes in France. In other words, you will be an enormous and complex institution, fighting day and night for the attention of the public, pitting your composite brain against other composite brains in the struggle to draw in the pennies of the populace.

Incidentally, of course, you are an institution running under the capitalist system. You are employing hundreds, perhaps thousands of men, women and children. You are paying them under the iron law of wages, working them under the rule of “the devil take the hindmost.” You have foremen and managers and directors, precisely as if you were a steel-mill or a coal-mine; also you have policemen and detectives, judges and courts and jailers, soldiers with machine-guns and sailors with battleships to protect you and your interests—precisely as does the rest of the predatory system of which you are a part.

And, of course, you have the capitalist psychology; you have it complete and vivid—you being the liveliest part of that system. You know what is going on hour by hour; you are more class-conscious, more alert to the meaning of events than anyone else in the capitalist community. You know what you want from your wage-slaves, and you see that they “deliver the goods.” You know what you are furnishing to your advertisers, and your terms are “net cash.” You know where you get your money, your “credit”; so you know “Who’s Who” in America, you know whom to praise and whom to hate and fear.

There are perhaps a dozen newspapers in America which have been built up by slow stages out of the pennies of workingmen, and which exist to assert the rights of workingmen. The ones I happen to know are the “New York Call,” the “Jewish Daily Forwards,” the “Milwaukee Leader,” the “Seattle Union Record,” the “Butte Daily Bulletin.” It should be understood that in future discussions I except such newspapers from what I say about American Journalism. This reservation being made, I assert there is no daily newspaper in America which does not represent and serve vested wealth, and which has not for its ultimate aim the protection of economic privilege.

I am trying in this book to state the exact facts. I do not expect to please contemporary Journalism, but I expect to produce a book which the student of the future will recognize as just. So let me explain that I realize fully the differences between newspapers. Some are dishonest, and some are more dishonest; some are capitalistic, and some are more capitalistic. But great as are the differences between them, and clever as are the pretenses of some of them, there is no one which does not serve vested wealth, which has not for its ultimate aim the protection of economic privilege. The great stream of capitalist prosperity may flow irregularly, it may have eddies and counter-currents, stagnant places which deceive you for a while; but if you study this great stream long enough, you find that it all moves in one direction, and that everything upon its surface moves with it. A capitalist newspaper may espouse this cause or that, it may make this pretense or that, but sooner or later you realize that a capitalist newspaper lives by the capitalist system, it fights for that system, and

in the nature of the case cannot do otherwise. Some one has said that to talk of regulating capital is to talk of moralizing a tiger; I would say that to expect justice and truth-telling of a capitalist newspaper is to expect asceticism at a cannibal feast.

It would be instructive to take the leading newspapers of America and classify them according to the nature of their financial control, showing precisely how and where this control shapes the policy of the paper. There will be certain immediate financial interests—the great family which owns the paper, the great bank which holds its bonds, the important local trade which furnishes its advertising. Concerning these people you observe that no impolite word is ever spoken, and the *début* parties given to the young ladies of these families are reported in detail. On the other hand, if there are interests aggressively hostile to the great family, the great bank, the important local trade, you observe that here the newspaper becomes suddenly and unexpectedly altruistic. It will be in favor of public ownership of the gas-works; it will be in favor of more rigid control of state banks; whatever its policy may be, you will, if you sit at the dinner-tables of the rich in that city, have revealed to you the financial interests which lie behind that unexpected altruism.

In the days of the ancient régime, nations went to war because someone made a slighting remark about the king's mistress; and in our present Empire of Business you find exactly the same thing happening. I know of a newspaper which is still living upon the reputation it made by defending the strikers in a great labor struggle. The paper had never defended strikers before, it has never defended strikers since; but on this occasion it happened that the president of the corporation involved in the strike had remarked at a dinner-party that the owner of the newspaper was living with an opera-singer.

Some ten years ago I remember that the city of Chicago was torn wide open by a teamsters' strike. Brickbats were flying, mobs were swarming in the streets, militiamen were stabbing people with bayonets. Some time afterwards there was an investigation, and it transpired that a certain labor-leader, Sam Parks by name, had been paid five or ten thousand dollars by a great mail-order house to call a strike on a rival mail-order house. And in precisely this way great newspapers quarrel, and the public has no idea what it means. I have heard a leading Hearst editor tell, quite simply and as a matter of course, how Mr. Hearst would come into the office at twelve o'clock at night and turn the batteries of the "New York American" and "Journal" upon the business and politics of August Belmont, because Mr. Belmont had slighted Mr. Hearst, or Mr. Hearst's wife—I forget which—at a dinner-party. One year you would see Mr. Hearst printing a cartoon every day, showing "Charlie" Murphy, boss of Tammany

Hall, in convict's stripes; next year Mr. Hearst would make a deal with Tammany—and the other newspapers of New York would be showing Mr. Hearst in convict's stripes!

Or come to the other side of the continent, and consider the "San Francisco Chronicle," owned by "Mike" de Young. ²²⁶Here is a picture of Mr. de Young, drawn by one of his wage-slaves, a man who for many years has helped to run his profit-machine:

He uses much perfume, and is extremely conceited. He is author of the remark that no reporter is worth more than twenty dollars a week, or ever will be. He is a secret laugh-producer because of his inordinate love for the camera spotlight. Strangely enough, his likeness is seldom to be found in any paper except his own; the "Chronicle's" camera men have standing instructions at public gatherings to pay as little attention to other men as possible and to concentrate on de Young. On his own paper everybody is Jones or Smith except himself. He must always be referred to as Mr. de Young. Owner of much valuable real estate near Golden Gate park, he made a vigorous fight to have the Panama-Pacific Exposition located in the park, hoping thereby to increase the value of his holdings. Defeated, he turned his wrath on the exposition officials, and denounces them at every opportunity. Mention of President C. C. Moore of the Exposition Company is forbidden in the columns of the "Chronicle."

There are differences, of course, in the moral character of men. There are some men who do not take part in large-scale real-estate intrigues, and some who do not live with opera-singers; there are capitalists who pay their debts, and regard their word of honor as their bond. And there have been newspapers owned by such men, and conducted according to such principles. You could not buy the editorial support of the "Springfield Republican" or the "Baltimore Sun"; you could not buy the advertising space of these papers for the cheaper and more obvious kinds of fraud. But ask yourself this question: Is there a newspaper in America which will print news unfavorable to department-stores? If the girl-slaves of the local department-store go on strike, will the newspaper maintain their right to picket? Will it even print the truth about what they do and say?

Some years ago a one-time teacher of mine was killed by falling down the elevator-shaft of a New York department-store. I noted that my newspaper did not give the name of the department-store. As a matter of curiosity, I bought all the newspapers, and discovered that none of them gave the name of the department-store. It was not absolutely essential, of course; my one-time teacher was just as dead as if the name of the store had been given. But suppose the accident had taken place at the People's

House, owned by the Socialists—would all the newspapers of New York have withheld the name of the place?

227In New York City one of the Gimbel brothers, owners of a Philadelphia department store, was arrested, charged with sodomy, and he cut his throat. Not a single newspaper in Philadelphia gave this news! This was in the days before Gimbel Brothers had a store in New York, therefore it occurred to the “New York Evening Journal” that here was an opportunity to build up circulation in a new field. Large quantities of the paper were shipped to Philadelphia, and the police of Philadelphia stopped the newsboys on the streets and took away the papers; and the Philadelphia papers said nothing about it!

And this department-store interest supervises not only the news columns, but the editorial columns. Some years ago one of the girl-slaves of a New York department-store committed suicide, leaving behind her a note to the effect that she could not stand twenty-cent dinners any longer. The “New York World,” which collects several thousand dollars every day from department-stores, judged it necessary to deal with this incident. “The World,” you understand, is a “democratic” paper, a “liberal” paper, an “independent” paper, a paper of “the people.” Said the “World”:

There are some people who make too large a demand upon fortune. Fixing their eyes upon the standards of living flaunted by the rich, they measure their requirements by their desires. Such persons are easily affected by outside influences, and perhaps in this case the recent discussions, more often silly than wise, concerning the relation of wages to vice, may have made the girl more susceptible than usual to the depressing effects of cheap dinners.

And do you think that is a solitary instance, the result of a temporary editorial aberration? No, it is typical of the capitalistic mind, which is so frugal that it extracts profit even from the suicide of its victims. Some years ago an old man committed suicide because his few shares of express-stock lost their value. The “New York Times” was opposing parcel-post, because the big express-companies were a prominent part of the city’s political and financial machine; the “New York Times” presented this item of news as a suicide caused by the parcel-post!

228

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE EMPIRE OF BUSINESS

Let the reader not misunderstand my thesis. I do not claim that there exists in America one thoroughly organized and completely conscious business government. What we

have is a number of groups, struggling for power; and sometimes these groups fall out with one another, and make war upon one another, and then we see a modern application of the ancient adage, "When thieves fall out, honest men come into their own." If, for example, you had studied the press of New York City at the time of the life insurance exposures, you would certainly have concluded that this press was serving the public interest. As it happens, I followed that drama of life insurance with the one man in America who had most to do with it, the late James. B. Dill. Judge Dill ran a publicity bureau in New York for several months, and handed out the greater part of this scandal to the newspaper reporters. He told me precisely how he was doing it, and precisely why he was doing it, and I knew that this whole affair, which shook the nation to its depths, was simply the Morgan and Ryan interests taking away the control of life insurance money from irresponsible people like "Jimmy" Hyde, and bringing it under the control of people who were responsible—that us, responsible to Morgan and Ryan. The whole campaign was conducted for that purpose; the newspapers of New York all understood that it was conducted for that purpose, and when that purpose was accomplished, the legislative investigations and the newspaper clamor stopped almost overnight.

And all through this terrific uproar I noticed one curious thing—there was never in any single newspaper or magazine or speech dealing with the question the faintest hint of the one intelligent solution of the problem—that is, government insurance. I made several efforts to get something on the subject into the New York papers; I gave interviews—I have forgotten now to what papers, but I know that these interviews never got by the blue pencil. It took the emergency of war-time to force government insurance—and now the lobby of 229the private insurance companies is busy in Washington, trying to scuttle government insurance, as government telegraphs and telephones, government railroads, government shipping, government employment agencies, have all one by one been scuttled.

The thieves fall out; and also new thieves are continually trying to break into the "ring." There is always an enormous temptation presented by our peculiar newspaper situation; our Journalism is maintaining a vacuum, with incessant pressure on the outside. The people want the news; the people clamor for the news; and there is always a mass of vitally important news withheld. The Socialist papers are publishing scraps of it, orators are turning it into wild rumor on ten thousand soap-boxes; if only the people could get it in a newspaper or a magazine, what fortunes they would pay! And of course there are wide-awake men in the world of Journalism who know this: what more natural than that one of them should now and then yield to the temptation to get rich by telling the truth?

The whole history of the American magazine-world is summed up in that formula. Some fifteen years ago our magazine publishers made the discovery of this unworked gold-mine; “McClure’s,” “Success,” “Everybody’s,” “The American,” “Hampton’s,” “Pearson’s,” the “Metropolitan,” even the staid and dignified “Century” jumped in to work this mine. Their circulations began to go up—a hundred thousand increase a month was not unknown in those days of popular delirium. Magazine publication became what it had never before been in American history, and what it has never been since—a competitive industry, instead of a camouflaged propaganda. Is it not a complete vindication of my thesis, that in a couple of years half a dozen magazines were able to build up half a million circulation, by no other means whatever than telling what the newspapers were refusing to tell? And is it not a proof of the pitiful helplessness of the public, that they still go on reading these same magazines, in spite of the fact that they have been bought up by “the interests,” and are filled with what one of their “kept” editors described to me, in a voice of unutterable loathing, as: “Slush for the women!”

For, of course, the industrial autocracy very quickly awakened to the peril of these “muck-raking” magazines, and set to work to put out the fire. Some magazines were offered 230 millions, and sold out. Those that refused to sell out had their advertising trimmed down, their bank-loans called, their stockholders intimidated—until finally, in one way or another, they consented to “be good.”

“Success” refused to “be good”; it persisted in exposing Cannonism, and maintaining a “People’s Lobby” in Washington; so “Success” was put out of business. The “National Post” adopted a radical policy, and it was put out of business; likewise “Human Life,” edited by Alfred Henry Lewis; likewise the “Twentieth Century Magazine,” edited by B. O. Flower; likewise the “Times Magazine”—a monthly having nothing to do with the “New York Times,” but edited by a young man of means who naïvely supposed that he would be allowed to tell the truth to the people of New York. “Pearson’s” of the old régime was brought to ruin, and it survives in its new form by the defiant genius of one man, Frank Harris. “Harper’s Weekly” started out bravely, with Norman Hapgood as editor, and Charles R. Crane as “angel”; for two or three years it fought the advertising boycott, and then it died.

In the “Profits of Religion” I told in detail the story of how “Hampton’s Magazine” was put out of business. I did not intend to repeat this story, but it happens that I have just met my old friend Ben Hampton again, and have gathered fresh details. I will let him tell his own story:

Never in the history of magazine-publishing was there such a great success in such a short time as that of "Hampton's." This is not my conversation. It is simply the records of the American News Company. We had, I think, 425,000 circulation, and we broke all records for the same length of time. No other magazine ever succeeded with an investment as small as ours. When they took the magazine away from me I think we had nearly thirty thousand dollars a month advertising.

But it is a peculiarity of magazines that when they grow too fast they lose money for a time. You have contracted for a year to publish advertisements, based on a circulation of a hundred thousand copies. If, three months later you have four hundred thousand circulation, you are giving four times as much as you were paid for; also, you have to have four times as much paper and press-work, for which you do not get returns until three months later. Hampton put in all his fortune and his wife's, and then he started selling stock to his 231 readers. He had just got by the difficult place; his printing-company and the bank which owned the printing-company had audited his books, and the bank-auditor had certified that in the first four months of 1911 the magazine "had earned a profit of not less than three thousand and not more than seven thousand dollars per month."

Yet they put "Hampton's Magazine" out of business! Hampton had started Charles Edward Russell's articles exposing the "New Haven" swindle—two or three years before the truth broke out, you understand. An agent from the "New Haven" came to inform him that if he started this publication, he would be put out of business. I now learn for the first time the name of this agent—Sylvester J. Baxter. Readers of the "Profits of Religion" will give a start of recognition: the same gentleman who contributed that wonderful boost of the "New Haven" to the "Outlook," organ of the Clerical Camouflage! And the "Outlook" pretended not to know that this was an official boost of the "New Haven," and to have been astonished when the "New Haven" ordered a big edition of this issue!

Let Ben Hampton tell the rest of the story:

A nice young man got a job in our accounting department. He was one of the finest fellows we had ever had around. He was willing to work days and nights, and he did work days and nights, and one night when he was working, he took a copy of our list of stockholders. Of course, we did not find this out for months. In the meantime, a man and a woman, working separately, visited all our stockholders they could reach and told them I was robbing the Company. They said I had a large estate in the Adirondacks and a home in the Fifth Avenue district of New York City. At that time Mrs. Hampton and I were having a time to buy clothing for the children. We were drawing

almost no salary from the magazine, and we had put all our money in the undertaking. In fact, we were near the line of desperation, we were so hard up.

Something like twenty brokers on the Wall Street curb began to advertise our five dollars par stock at four dollars, down to three dollars a share. We sent to them and offered to buy the stock and were never able to buy one share. One of the brokers afterwards admitted to us that they had none of the stock, and that they were paid to do the advertising.

All these methods, of course, created confusion in the minds of our stockholders, and practically killed our efforts to raise thirty thousand dollars, which was the insignificant sum of money needed to pay off our paper bill. We were entitled to a line of credit of three hundred thousand dollars at the paper makers. We owed the paper maker, I think, about forty thousand dollars and he notified us 232arbitrarily on a Monday that we would have to pay the bill Wednesday, or he would decline to furnish paper for the current edition, which was then on the press.

When I saw trouble coming I got together a committee of my stockholders in New York City, and a group of about a dozen men endorsed three notes of ten thousand dollars each. The net worth of these dozen men was over two million dollars. We took the notes to one bank in New York City. The bank accepted them. We checked against them, and got money on them, and the next day were notified we would have to take the notes out of the bank.

Of course you say this is an illegal proceeding, and can't be done. I assure you it was done. We were thrown out of that bank, after the bank had accepted our paper, and after we had checked against it. The manager of the bank told me that he was powerless—that the “down-town” folks had thrown us out. Several other banks that had loaned me money for ten years told me that they could not do anything for me now—that I was in bad “down-town.”

One banker who flatly said he would loan us money whether Morgan's crowd wanted him to or not, was put out of business himself within a few months. This man's name is Earle. He was then running the Nassau Bank. I do not know whether Earle would tell his story or not, but the way the Morgan crowd drove him out of the banking business was one of the coldest-blooded things I ever heard of. They punished him for trying to accept perfectly good banking-paper to help me out of my crisis.

The foregoing facts are dictated hurriedly but there are some points in them that I believe you will want. Of course you know the finish of the properties. Within ten days after the thing began to close in on me, I had to turn my affairs over to the lawyers, and

then a group of people appeared who were said to be the “International Correspondence” group of Scranton, Pa. They brought in letters from bankers, etc., showing they were very reputable and high-classed, and I had the choice of going into the hands of the receiver, or letting them take the property. They paid me just money enough so I could get my stock out of hock. The rest of the money they were to pay me was evidenced by a contract. I turned the contract over to my attorneys for protection of my preferred stockholders. Within a few weeks’ time we became convinced that the fellows who had taken over the property intended to loot it. The bookkeeper told me they took one hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars out of the property in a few months, and took the books down to the East River and threw them off the bridge.

The result of it all was that I worked with the United States Government and had the crowd indicted. In time we brought them to trial. The trial lasted four or five weeks. We literally could not prove anything. We did prove that “Hampton’s Magazine” was a valuable piece of property and that it was making money, but we could not prove that the fellows who got it were crooks. All the records were destroyed. The result was, the judge threw the case out of court, after it had been in court for four or five weeks, and we never got back any of the money. Of course, the property in the meantime had been ruined.

233I have told about several of the magazines which consented to “be good.” I have shown the pitiful plight of the “American,” and the miserable piffle they are publishing. And what is the meaning of it? The meaning was given in an item published in the “New York Press” early in 1911, when the “American Magazine” was taken over by the Crowell Publishing Company. The “Press” stated that this concern was controlled by Thomas W. Lamont, of J. P. Morgan and Company, and declared “The ‘American’ will do no more muck-raking.” In answer, the “American” in its next issue made a statement, haughtily announcing that the same editors, John S. Phillips, Ray Stannard Baker, Ida Tarbell and Finley Peter Dunne were remaining in charge, and that “the policy of the magazine will be unchanged.” To a discussion of this, my own language is inadequate; I have to employ the vocabulary of my son, a student in high school: “The poor boobs!” Four years these editors stuck it out, and then they quit, and a couple of young fellows who had been their office-clerks are now the “editors” of the “American Magazine”—which boasts a million circulation, and fifty-eight thousand lines of advertisements per month! Now, as I write, I learn that this Crowell Publishing Company has purchased “Collier’s,” and we shall see the same thing happening to our “National Weekly”!

In the same tragic way, my old friend Ridgway, who published the “Condemned Meat Industry,” is out of “Everybody’s,” and a new and wholly “tame” staff is in charge,

acceptable to the Butterick Publishing Co. In the same way S. S. McClure was turned out of his magazine, which once published Ida Tarbell's exposure of Standard Oil, and now publishes the solemn futilities of Cleveland Moffett, and anti-Socialist propaganda by the unspeakable Newell Dwight Hillis. It happened the other day that I was glancing over a back number of "McClure's," and my eye was caught by the opening instalment of a serial, announced in this style:

At last! A great new novel by the author of "The Broad Highway." "BELTANE THE STRONG," by JEFFREY FARNOL, who also wrote "The Amateur Gentleman" and "The Money-Moon." This is no ordinary story. Many novelists would have written three books, some six, in the time Jeffrey Farnol has given to this tremendous love-tale of Beltane and Lady Helen. The result is the finest thing of its kind "McClure's" has ever printed—by all means the novel of the year.

And opposite this is a full-page pink and purple illustration 234 of a misty, mystical girl in a thrilling state of semi-nudity, with this quotation:

Breathless and as one entranced he gazed upon her: saw how her long hair glowed a wondrous red 'neath the kisses of the dying sun; saw how her purpled gown, belted at the slender waist, clung about the beauties of her shapely body: saw how the little shoe peeped forth from the perfumed mystery of its folds—and so stood speechless, bound by the spell of her beauty.

"The perfumed mystery of its folds!" Such is the perfumed garbage now being fed to the American public in the name of Sam McClure!

Or take the "Metropolitan," which a few years ago announced itself as a Socialist magazine. We were all tremendously thrilled by the idea that the money of Harry Payne Whitney was to be used to bring about Social Justice in America; but then we saw the "Metropolitan" suppress its exposé of Rasputin at behest of the embassy of the late Tsar; now we see it turning over its editorial columns to Gen. Leonard Wood, to be used in a propaganda for universal military training! In this greatest crisis of history, the people's cause is left without a single champion in our popular magazines. There are only the Socialist papers, and two or three radical weeklies of limited circulation; the rest is Barbarism.

In every newspaper-office in America the same struggle between the business-office and the news-department is going on all the time. The business of getting the news involves "hustle," and young brains are constantly being brought in, and these young brains have to be taught the discipline of special privilege, and sometimes they never entirely submit. They have powerful arguments on their side. "You want circulation,

don't you? What's the use of a paper without circulation? And how can you get circulation if you let the fellow around the corner have this 'scoop'?" So the owner of the paper has to get busy and make a gentleman's agreement with the other papers to suppress the news; and sometimes it turns out that the other fellow isn't a gentleman, and there is a row, and the live young "hustlers" get their way for a while, and the public gets a bit of the news.

Various stages of this struggle are exemplified by different newspapers, or by the same newspaper at different times. You may see a staid old family organ—say the "New York Tribune," owned by a rich capitalist, Whitelaw Reid, who publishes it as a side issue to gratify his vanity, taking his pay in the form of an ambassadorship. The circulation of such a paper will go steadily down. But then perhaps the old man will die, and his sons will take charge, and his sons won't feel like paying out twenty or thirty thousand dollars a month, and will get a "live newspaper man" to "put life into" the paper; or perhaps they will sell out to people who have less money, and will be tempted to give the public a little of what it wants.

The fundamental thing that the public wants is, of course, enough to eat. Modern society is complex, and there are thousands of public issues clamoring for newspaper attention, but in the final analysis all these questions boil down to one question—why is the cost of living going up faster than wages and salaries? So the spectre of "radicalism" haunts every newspaper office. The young publisher who wants to make money, the "live newspaper man" who wants to make a reputation, find themselves at every hour tempted to attack some form of privilege and exploitation.

So come "crusades." The kind of crusade which the newspaper undertakes will depend upon the character of circulation for which it is bidding. If the paper sells for three cents, and is read by bankers and elderly maiden aunts, the newspaper will print the sermons of some clergyman who is exposing the horrors of the red-light district, or it will call on the district attorney to begin prosecuting the loan-sharks who are robbing the poor, or it will start a free ice fund for babies in the tenements. Any cause will do, provided the victims are plunderers of a shady character—that is, small plunderers.

Or perhaps the newspaper is a popular organ. It sells at a low price to the common people. In that case it may go to extremes of radicalism; it may clamor for government ownership, and attack big public service corporations in a way that seems entirely independent and fearless. You say: "Surely this is honest journalism," and you acquire the habit of reading that newspaper. But then gradually you see the campaign die down, the great cause forgotten. The plundering of the public goes right on, the only

thing that has been changed is that you, who used to be a reader of the “World,” are now a reader of the “Journal”; and that is the change which the “Journal” had in mind from the outset. You will see the 236 “Journal” tabulating the amount of advertising it publishes each week or each month, and boasting that it is greater than the “World” publishes; and maybe you feel proud about that, you like to be in the boat with the best fishermen—even though you are there as a fish.

Anyone who is familiar with the newspaper-world can think of a score of publications to which the above statement would apply. There exists a chain of one-cent evening papers scattered over the country, the Scripps papers, catering to working-class audiences. They were founded by a real radical and friend of the people, E. W. Scripps, and for a decade or two were the main resource of the workers in many localities. Now E. W. Scripps is a sick man, out of the game, and his eldest son, who runs the papers, is a young business man, interested in the business management of a great property; so in one city after another you see the Scripps papers “toned-down.” They espouse the cause of strikers no longer. The other day I was staggered to find them dragging out that shop-worn old bugaboo, the nationalization of women in Russia! In the Seattle strike the Scripps paper, the “Star,” “scabbed” on the strike, and its editorial attitude won it the name, the “Shooting Star.”

Or take the “New York World.” This paper was built up by one crusade after another; it was the people’s friend for a generation. Today it is a property worth several million dollars, living on its reputation. It still makes, of course, the old pretenses of “democracy,” but when it comes to a real issue, it is an organ of bitter and savage reaction, it is edited by the telegraph and railroad securities in which the Pulitzer fortune is invested. The “New York World’s” opinion of the “Plumb plan” is that of a Russian grand duke discussing Bolshevism.

Or the Hearst papers. They too have been made out of the pennies of the masses; they too have lured the masses by rainbows of many-colored hopes. They still ask for government ownership—when they happen to think of it; but they lie remorselessly about radicals, and exclude the word Socialism from their columns, except when some Socialist is sent to jail. They support Sinn Fein and twist the lion’s tail, because it brings in the Irish-Catholic pennies; but the one revolution in which their heart is really engaged is the one which is to make Hearst’s Mexican acres into American acres.

I would call the reader's attention to the fact that in this book I am dealing with our standard magazines and newspapers, the ones which are considered respectable, which all ladies and gentlemen accept as they accept the doctor's pills and the clergyman's sermons, the Bible and the multiplication table and Marian Harland's cook-book. I have not made my case easy by dwelling on the cultural content of the "mail order" and "household" publications, of which there are scores with a circulation of a million or more; or of the agricultural papers of the country, whose total circulation amounts to tens of millions. How I could freeze your blood if I were to summarize the contents of the "Ladies' World," the "Gentlewoman," the "Household Guest," "Home Life," the "Household," "Comfort," the "Home Friend," "Mother's Magazine," "Everyday Life," the "People's Popular Monthly," the "Clover Leaf" weeklies and the "Boyce" weeklies, the "Saturday Blade" and the "Chicago Ledger"! If I were to tell about the various "Family Story Papers," which are left in area-ways for servants! Or the "fashion-papers," the "Butterick Trio," with close to two millions, the "Woman's World," with two millions, and "Vogue," the "Delineator," the "Parisienne," the "Ladies' Pictorial," "Needlecraft" with their half million or more. Or the "fast" papers, which cultivate a taste for perfumed smut—and which I will not advertise by naming! Or the papers of the sporting and racing and gambling worlds, down to the "Police Gazette," with its "leg-shows" and illustrated murders!

Also the local papers, the small dailies, the weeklies and semi-monthlies and monthlies by the thousands and tens of thousands! If you wish to get a complete picture of American Journalism, you must take these into account; you must descend from the heights of metropolitan dignity into the filthiest swamps of provincial ignorance and venality. Hardly a week passes that someone does not send me a copy of some country paper which calls for the stringing-up of Socialists to 238 lamp-posts, and denounces highly educated Bolshevik leaders in editorials with half a dozen grammatical errors to the column.

And if you go to the small town in Pennsylvania or Arkansas or Colorado, or wherever this paper is published, you find a country editor on the level of intelligence of the local horse-doctors of Englewood, New Jersey, and Tarrytown, New York, whose proceedings I have described in this book. Frequently you find this editor hanging on by his eye-teeth, with a mortgage at the local bank, carried because of favors he does to the local money-power. You find him getting a regular monthly income from the copper-interests or the coal-interests or the lumber-interests, whatever happens to be dominant in that locality. You find him heavily subsidized at election-time by the two political machines of these great interests. His paper is used to print the speeches of the candidates of these interests, and five or ten or fifty thousand copies of this

particular issue are paid for by these interests and distributed at meetings. Campaign circulars and other literature are printed in the printing-office of this newspaper, and of course the public advertising appears in its columns—a graft which is found in every state and county of the Union, and is a means by which hundreds of millions of dollars are paid as a disguised subsidy by the interests which run our two-party political system.

Our great metropolitan newspapers take a fine tone of dignity, they stand for the welfare of the general public, they are above all considerations of greed. But the conditions under which these small-town newspapers are published do not permit them to pretend to such austerity, or even to conceive of it. They are quite frankly “out for the stuff”—as everybody else they know is “out for the stuff.” For example, the “Tarrytown News,” which jumped on me with its cloven hoofs, declaring that my home had been raided as a “free love” place. This “Tarrytown News” explained quite honestly why it was opposed to allowing agitators to come to Tarrytown and denounce the Rockefellers. And why was it? Because the Rockefellers stood for religion and the home, the Constitution and the Star-Spangled Banner and the Declaration of Independence? No, not at all; it was because the Rockefellers carried a payroll in Tarrytown of thirty thousand dollars a month!

239The average country or small-town editor is an entirely ignorant man; the world of culture is a sealed book to him. His idea of literature is the “Saturday Evening Post”—only as a rule he doesn’t have time to read it. His idea of art is a lithograph of the President and Vice-President with a stand of flags. His idea of music is “Onward, Christian Soldiers,” and “Columbia the Gem of the Ocean.” He has an idea what is good for his readers; “optimism” and “boost,” “cheer-up” stuff, “mother, home and heaven” stuff, “sob” stuff, “slush for the women.” He has no money to pay writers, of course; he doesn’t even set type, except for local news. He gets his “filler” in the form of “boiler-plate,” sent practically free from Washington and New York—this matter containing fiction, poetry, “special stories,” novelty and gossip of the sort his readers find entertaining. What difference does it make if sandwiched in between this reading matter is the poison propaganda of the Merchants’ and Manufacturers’ Association, of the tariff-lobbyists, the railroad-lobbyists, the liquor-lobbyists, the whole machine of capitalist graft and greed?

Several years ago I had a brilliant and wonderful idea. I was finishing “King Coal,” and thought that I had an excellent serial, timely, and full of swift incident. I ascertained that there were seventeen thousand weekly newspapers in America; surely among this number must be a few hundred which would like to give their readers the truth about labor conditions in a basic American industry! I would build up a little syndicate

of my own, I would market my future books, and perhaps those of other writers! I prepared a circular, outlining the plan, and offering the entire serial for some nominal sum, ten or fifteen dollars, plus the cost of the plates from which the printing would be done. I prepared a sample sheet, containing the first half-dozen chapters of "King Coal"; you may consult the volume and satisfy yourself as to whether they are interesting chapters. I sent out the offer to thousands of weeklies, and waited for replies. How many do you think I got? I didn't keep a record, but you could have counted them on your fingers, without your thumbs!

No, the editors of country and small-town newspapers are not giving their readers the truth about labor conditions in basic American industries. They know, as the phrase is, "which side their bread is buttered on," and they keep that side up with care. I have said that there are fortunes to be made by giving the news to the people; I must qualify the statement by explaining that it must be done on a large scale, and you must have capital to keep you going until you reach the people who can understand you. If you try it on a small scale, and without capital, you are crushed before you get your head out of the mud. And you know that, and govern yourself accordingly. The other day I had a call from the editor of a small newspaper, out here in this broad free West, about which you read in romances. The editor explained that he hadn't dared to write and order my books; he couldn't afford to let a check, payable to me, go through his bank; he called personally, and would carry the books home in his trunk!

Also this chapter would be incomplete without mention of the swarm of "house organs," published by big industrial concerns for the edification of their employes. According to the "New York Times" (Oct. 26, 1919), there are three hundred and seventy-five such publications in America, many with circulations running into thousands. During the war seventy-three were started in the shipyard industry alone. "During the past spring and summer they multiplied like bacteria." And the "Times" tells admiringly of the subtle arts whereby slave-labor is cajoled and idealized: "saying it in ragtime ... jazz variations to the vast delight of its reading public ... a Diamond Dick sort of tale ... the story has punch ... all as intimate as the small town weekly" ... and so on through columns of poison prescriptions. They trap the poor devils in their homes:

The woman's page is one of the most carefully thought out departments, on the theory that the influence of the family is counted on to sway the man from radicalism. Fully half of this group of publications is sent to the man's home by mail, to give the wife first innings. In this particular magazine the woman's page is fairly crawling with babies....

You hardly notice the propaganda even when you're looking for it with a microscope, but it is there. It is in the weave and the woof, rather than in the conspicuous pattern. You find it in similes, "like soap in the home of a Bolshevik. Some novelty!" The agitator is taken down from the dignity of his soapbox throne and flippantly advised to bathe.

241

CHAPTER XXXVIII

OWNING THE PRESS

The methods by which the "Empire of Business" maintains its control over Journalism are four: First, ownership of the papers; second, ownership of the owners; third, advertising subsidies; and fourth, direct bribery. By these methods there exists in America a control of news and of current comment more absolute than any monopoly in any other industry. This statement may sound extreme, but if you will think about it you will realize that in the very nature of the case it must be true. It does not destroy the steel trust if there are a few independent steel-makers, it does not destroy the money trust if there are a few independent men of wealth, but it does destroy the news trust if there is a single independent newspaper to let the cat out of the bag.

The extent to which outright ownership of newspapers and magazines has been acquired by our financial autocracy would cause astonishment if it were set forth in figures. One could take a map of America and a paint-brush, and make large smudges of color, representing journalistic ownership of whole districts, sometimes of whole states, by special interests. The Upper Peninsula of Michigan would be swept with a yellow smudge—that is copper. The whole state of Montana would be the same, and the greater part of Arizona. A black smudge for Southern Colorado, and another in the Northern part—that is coal. A gray smudge in Western Pennsylvania, and another in Illinois—that is steel. A green smudge in Wisconsin, and another in Oregon and Washington—that is lumber. A white smudge in North Dakota and Minnesota—that is the milling trust, backed by the railroads and the banks. A dirty smudge in central California, representing "Southern Pacific" and "United Railways," now reinforced by "M. and M."

Ten years ago there was a terrific reform campaign in San Francisco, and the reformers started a little weekly called the "Liberator." I quote from one issue:

242 Many San Francisco weekly papers were bought up with cash payments, coming principally from the offices of the "United Railroads." But this did not seem to satisfy the plans of the defense, and suddenly the Calkins Syndicate developed into a

concern of astonishing magnitude. From the publisher of obscure weeklies and dailies, it established a modern publishing plant, and took over much of the printing of the "Sunset Magazine," which contract alone brought the Calkins outfit several thousand dollars a month. The "Sacramento Union" and the "Fresno Herald" were purchased, and a bid made for the "San Francisco Post." The syndicate failed to get the "Post." The "San Francisco Globe" was started instead. Whatever money could do in the newspaper line, Calkins for a few months did. Newspaper men knew, of course, that the losses were enormous. The questions were, "Who is filling the sack? How long will the sack last?"

And wherever in America there has been an honest investigation, the same conditions have been revealed. The Calkins syndicate had its exact counterpart in Montana; or rather two counterparts, for Senator Clark and Marcus Daly, copper kings, were carrying on a feud, and each purchased or established a string of newspapers to slander the other. Now the gigantic "Anaconda" has swallowed them both, and there are only two newspapers in Montana which are not owned or controlled by "copper." One of these is owned by a politician who, I am assured, serves the "interests" without hire; and the other is the "Butte Daily Bulletin," Socialist, whose editor goes in hourly peril of his life. In Oklahoma nearly everything is "Standard Oil"; and at the other end of the continent is the New York "Outlook," one of whose important stockholders was discovered to be James Stillman, of the National City Bank of New York—Standard Oil!

I have given elsewhere a picture of conditions in Los Angeles. In San Diego are two papers owned by the sugar-king, and one paper of the Scripps group. In San Francisco are two Hearst papers, the "Examiner" and the "Call"; the "Chronicle," owned by "Mike" de Young, whom I have portrayed; and the "Bulletin" whose assorted knaveries will soon be set forth in detail. Also there is a monthly, the "Sunset," formerly owned by the Southern Pacific, and now serving the anti-union campaign of the "M. and M."—the Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association which has raised a million dollar slush fund; also a weekly, popularly known as "the Rich Man's Door-mat," and a number of gossip-weeklies and "kept" political sheets. The "Labor Digest" has recently gone over with startling suddenness to the cause of capital, reversing 243 itself absolutely on the Mooney case. The publisher, a veteran labor union official, recently informed an applicant for the job of editor that he was "running the paper to make money." The applicant said that he favored the Plumb plan; so there was "nothing doing."

Moving on up the coast, there is the "Portland Oregonian," owned by the estate of a huge-scale lumber operator, one of the richest men in the Northwest. An employee of this paper writes to me:

He was so public-spirited and free-handed that the appraisal of the estate showed that he had invested to the extent of five dollars in war savings stamps and in only five thousand dollars worth of war bonds, and that under direct compulsion, so it was revealed, of his fellow-citizens. The "Oregonian" is born of corporate power, conceived for corporate purposes, and exists to do the corporate bidding, avowedly so.

Also there is the "Portland Telegram," owned by the two sons of a timber magnate, who obtained most of his lands by the popular "dummy entry" system. The same informant, who once worked for this paper, writes me of these owners:

Neither has ever had to do a stroke of work in his life, and the attitude of both toward the man on the payroll is the most typically snobbish I have ever encountered. The younger brother directs the paper, although he could not earn fifteen dollars a week salary in any department if he were put on his own. The paper consequently is so wobbly in its policies and practices that it rapidly is becoming a joke.

In this vicinity is a third paper, owned by a politician of whom friends tell me that he has in past times taken the popular side, but now is old, and has got himself a business manager. A friend who knows this young man describes him:

"Energetic, cold as steel, a typical corporation, business, money man, who is wiping the paper clean of every trace of democracy."

And then, moving farther North to Seattle, there is the "Times," an enormously valuable property, built up with the financial assistance of the Hill interests and the Great Northern Railroad—which, I believe, made more money out of a small investment than any other enterprise in America. The "Times" is paying five per cent dividends on six million dollars, and so naturally believes in the profit system. Also there is the "Star," a Scripps paper—the "Shooting Star," which was willing to lose thirty-five thousand readers in order to smash the Seattle strike. And finally there is the "Post-Intelligencer," which was purchased in the interest of James J. Hill and the Great Northern Railroad, and placed one hundred and seventy thousand dollars worth of its bonds in the hands of these interests. The paper was taken over, says my informant, by "the notorious Jacob Furth interests of Seattle. Furth was head of the Seattle transportation lines and the Seattle National Bank, and was the village pawnbroker. The paper had gradually gotten more and more into debt to the banks, and its present ownership arose out of that fact."

Such is the newspaper plight of the Pacific coast! And now come to the Atlantic coast, and take one of our great centers of culture; take the Hub of the Universe, take Boston. The newspaper plight of Boston is beyond telling. There is the "Evening Transcript,"

owned by an extremely wealthy and reactionary family, serving every wealthy and reactionary interest, and incidentally taking advertising bribes, as I shall presently show. There is the “Boston American,” owned by Hearst, and the “Boston Daily Advertiser,” also owned by Hearst. The latter is the oldest newspaper in Boston, and a year ago its circulation was cut down to a thousand copies, its publication being continued merely in order that Hearst may retain its Associated Press franchise. There is the “Boston Globe,” and its evening edition, controlled, I am informed, by Standard Oil. There is the “Boston Herald,” and its evening edition, the “Traveler,” owned by the Plant and United Shoe Machinery interests, with ex-Senator Crane holding the balance of power. There is the “Post,” also heavily in debt to Crane—who is one of the leading reactionaries of New England. The owner of the “Post” is described to me by one who knows him as “a sick man, who like all men who have accumulated a great deal of wealth, is inclined to be conservative and fearful of change.”

Finally, there is the “Christian Science Monitor,” owned and run by a group of wealthy metaphysicians, who teach that Poverty is a Delusion of Mortal Mind, and that Hunger can be relieved by Thinking. I make it a practice when a public emergency arises, and I have something to say which I think is important, to send it to leading newspapers by telegraph collect. Sometimes the newspapers publish it, nearly always they accept it and pay for it—because they judge there is a possibility of their getting something important by this method. 245The “Christian Science Monitor” stands alone among American newspapers in that it wrote me not to send it telegrams, because there was no chance of its caring to print what I might have to say!

Or take Cincinnati, where I happen to have friends on the “inside.” There is the “Cincinnati Inquirer” and “Post,” owned by the estate of McLean, who made thirty million dollars out of street railway and gas franchises, obtained by bribery. This estate also owns the “Washington Post,” whose knaveries I shall tell about later on. And there is the “Times-Star,” owned by Charles P. Taft, brother of our ex-president. “Charlie” Taft married twenty million dollars, and bought a newspaper, and started out as a valiant reformer, and everybody in Cincinnati thought how lovely that a fine, clean, young millionaire was going in for civic reform. But at the very outset he trod on the toes of Boss Cox, and Boss Cox showed how he could injure the Taft fortune; whereupon “Charlie” made a deal with the boss, and since then his paper has been the leading champion of civic corruption.

In most big cities you find papers owned by big local “trusts,” and one or two others belonging to a “trust” of newspapers, a publishing-system like that of Calkins or Capper or Munsey or Scripps or Hearst. For the rule that the big fish swallow the little ones applies in the newspaper world as elsewhere. The publisher of a big newspaper

comes upon a chance to buy a small newspaper in a neighboring city, and presently he finds himself with a chain of newspapers. Then he learns of a magazine that is “on the rocks,” and it occurs to him that a magazine can help his newspapers, or vice versa. So you find Munsey, a self-confessed stock-gambler, with three magazines and several newspapers; the Hearst machine with a dozen newspapers, also “Hearst’s Magazine,” the “Cosmopolitan,” and four other periodicals. Every month in the Hearst newspapers you read editorials which are disguised advertisements of these magazines.

Also it has been discovered that magazines can combine to their financial advantage. The agents who come to your home and pester the life out of you for subscriptions find that they can get more of your money by offering clubbing-rates for a group of magazines: a farm paper, another paper with “slush for the women,” a third paper with slush for the whole family—such as I have quoted from the “American” and 246 “McClure’s.” So you see a vast commercial machine building itself up. There is Street and Smith, with no less than eight magazines, all of them having enormous circulations, and devoted exclusively to trash. There is the Butterick Company, with seven; “Vanity Fair” and the Crowell Company, with four each; the Curtis Company, “Munsey’s,” the “Atlantic,” the “World’s Work,” the “Smart Set,” the “Red Book”—each with three. In England we have seen great chains of publications built up in connection with the selling of cocoa and soap; in America we see them built up in connection with the selling of dress-patterns, as with the Buttericks; with the boosting of moving pictures, as formerly done by “McClure’s”; with grocery-stores and stock-manipulation, as “Munsey’s”; with the selling of subscription-books, as “Collier’s,” or dictionaries, as the “Literary Digest.” Or perhaps it will be a magazine run by a book-publisher, as a means of advertising and reviewing his own books; and if you investigate, you find that the book-publisher in turn is owned by some great financial interest, which sees that he publishes commercial stuff and rejects all new ideas. This process of centralization has continued in England until now Lord Northcliffe owns fifty or sixty magazines and newspapers of all varieties.

Northcliffe had a personal quarrel with Lloyd George, and that part of British “Big Business” which makes its profits out of the Lloyd George policies felt the need of more publicity, and went into the market and bought the “Chronicle” for several million dollars. When the masters of industry pay such sums for a newspaper, they buy not merely the building and the presses and the name; they buy what they call the “good-will”—that is, they buy *you*. And they proceed to change your whole psychology—everything that you believe about life. You might object to it, if you knew; but they do their work so subtly that you never guess what is happening to you!

By way of illustration, let me tell you the amusing story of one American newspaper which was thus bought in the open market. Some years ago there was a Standard Oil magnate, H. M. Flagler, who took a fancy to the state of Florida, and entertained himself by developing it into a leisure-class resort. He owned all the railroads, and a great chain of hotels, and also, as a matter of course, the State legislature. He had the misfortune to have an insane wife, and the laws of Florida ²⁴⁷did not permit him to divorce this wife, so he caused to be introduced and passed a bill permitting divorce on grounds of insanity. But, being a moral citizen, who believed in the sanctity of marriage for everybody but himself, Mr. Flagler allowed this law to stand only long enough for him to get his divorce. He then had his legislature repeal the law, so that no one might be corrupted by his evil example.

He married another woman, and shortly afterwards left her a widow with a hundred million dollars. Needless to say, such widows are not left very long to mourn; Mrs. Flagler espoused a certain Judge Bingham, a leading citizen of Kentucky. A pre-nuptial contract barred him from inheriting her estate; nevertheless she managed, eight months after their wedding, and six weeks before her death, to present to him a trifling matter of five million dollars. Then she died, and he, being lonely, and in possession of spare cash, looked around for something to play with. He decided to play with you—that is, with a newspaper!

There was an old newspaper in Louisville, the “Courier-Journal,” which had been made by the genius of Col. Henry Watterson, a picturesque old-style Democrat, a radical of the Jeffersonian type, who stormed with vivid and diverting ferocity at the “robber barons” of Wall Street. The paper had got into financial difficulties, owing to family quarrels of the owners, and Judge Bingham bought it, with its evening edition, the “Louisville Times,” for something over a million dollars. Col. Watterson was to stay as “Editor Emeritus”; that is, he was to be a figurehead, to blind the public to the sinister realities of modern capitalism. But modern capitalism is too greedy and too ruthless a force for the old-style gentleman of the South; Col. Watterson could not stand the editorial policy of his new owner, so he quit, and today the “Courier-Journal” challenges the “Los Angeles Times” as an organ of venomous reaction. I quote one sample of its editorials—the subject being that especially infamous variety of pervert known as the “Christian Socialist clergyman.” Behold him!—

Some person who has never worked in his life—except his tongue—and yet talks to his “congregation” about problems of workingmen. This rogue is sometimes an elocutionary shyster who rambles about the downtrodden—meaning his prosperous followers and, of course, himself—the expected revolution, the rights of the pee-pul, and so on. What he desires to do is to heroize himself, to appear to his pee-pul

as 248a courageous leader against oppression; which is to say, against the law and the Government which protect this people in the possession of their homes, automobiles and liberties.

Col. Watterson resigned. But as a rule the professional journalist pockets his Brass Check, and delivers the goods to his master in the silence and secrecy of the journalistic brothel. A professional journalist may be defined as a man who holds himself ready at a day's notice to adjust his opinions to the pocket-book of a new owner. I have heard Arthur Brisbane remark that the "New York Times" was sold on several occasions, and on each occasion its "editor" was sold with it. Yet when you read this "editor's" preachments, they are all so solemn and dignified, high-sounding and moral—you would never dream but that you were reading actual opinions of a man!

Quite recently we saw the "New York Evening Post" put up on the journalistic bargain-counter. I have told how the "Evening Post" treated me at various times, so you will see that the paper was hardly to be classified as "radical." But during the war it became treasonable to the gigantic trading corporation which calls itself the British Government; it persisted in this stubborn course, even when it knew that J. P. Morgan & Company were selling billions of British bonds, and handling all the purchases of the British Government in America. When the Bolsheviki gave out the secret treaties of the Allies, the "Evening Post" was the one non-Socialist newspaper in America which published them in full. So it was evident that something must be done, and done quickly, about the "Evening Post."

The paper was in financial difficulties, because of the constantly increasing cost of material and wages. Its owner gave an option to his associates, with the pledge on their part that they would not take the paper to "Wall Street"; then, three weeks later, the paper was sold to Thomas W. Lamont, of the firm of J. P. Morgan & Company; the owner being kept in ignorance of the name of the purchaser. So now the "New York Evening Post" looks upon the peace treaty, and finds it "a voice from heaven." "A voice from heaven" commanding the French to grab the Saar Valley, and the Japs to seize Shantung! "A voice from heaven" commanding the workers of Russia to pay the bad debts of the Tsar—and to pay them through the banking-house of J. P. Morgan & Company!

249And if you do not care to get your opinions from the gigantic trading-corporation which calls itself the British government, you may read the "New York Evening Mail," which was bought with the money of the German government! Or you may read the "New York Evening Sun," which was bought by Frank A. Munsey, with part of the

million dollars which he boasted of having made out of your troubles in the 1907 panic. If you do not like papers which are bought and sold, you may read the “New York Evening Telegram,” which has remained the property of the Bennett estate, and is working for the pocket-book of the Bennett estate, forty-one editions every week. In the morning, you may read the “Herald,” which is working for the same estate. If you get tired of the point of view of that estate, you may try the estate of Whitelaw Reid, capitalist, or of Joseph Pulitzer, invested in railroads and telegraphs, or of Searles, of the Sugar Trust. Or, if you prefer living men, you may give up your mind to the keeping of Adolph Ochs, of the Traction gang, or of William Rockefeller of Standard Oil, or of William Randolph Hearst of Eternal Infamy. This concludes the list of choices that are open to you in New York—unless you are willing to read a Socialist paper, the “New York Call”; and of course you cannot get the “Call” all the time, because sometimes the police bar it from the stands, and sometimes the soldier-boys raid its offices and throw the editors out of the windows, and sometimes the Postmaster-General bars it from the mails, and at all times he refuses it second class entry. So if I wish to get it out here in California, I have to pay two and one half times as much as I pay for the papers of the Searles estate and the Pulitzer estate and the Hearst estate and the Bennett estate and the Reid estate.

250

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE WAR-MAKERS

What is the moral tone in the offices of these great “kept” institutions? The best description I know of the inside of such a newspaper is found in an article, “The Blue Pencil,” by Maxwell Anderson, published in the “New Republic” for December 14, 1918. It is very evident that Mr. Anderson has worked in the office of some newspaper; he doesn’t give names, but his text indicates that the city is San Francisco. The name of the imaginary owner is H. N. De Smith, and if you are familiar with San Francisco affairs, you don’t have to be a wizard to make your guess.

Mr. Anderson portrays one after another of the staff of the paper: the managing editor, the assistant managing editor, the city editor, the copy reader, the reporter, the dramatic critic, the artist, the designer, the copy boy. Every one of these persons is a slave with a chain about his neck; everyone of them clearly understands that his function in life is to subserve the glory of his owner.

They think unkindly of Hank De Smith; they speak derisively of his park, his policies, and the amount he is supposed to drink up in a day. But they obey him. Pasted before each man is a typed schedule of prejudice, known technically as the son-of-a-bitch

list, and consisting of the names of men who must be given no free publicity. Here all prominent radicals and the business men who have refused to advertise in the paper are lumped in an eternal obloquy of silence.

“Refer to Dealer

“Any copy containing name of:,,,,

“Names Not to Appear in Headlines:,,,

“Use Title of ‘Mr.’

“Only in connection with H. N. De Smith.”

What smouldering envies or balked ambitions may lie behind this absurd catalogue they do not know. But when this same De Smith buys a block of charity stock, as a matter of course they run headlines across the second title page to inform the city of it

“Praise Hank, from whom all blessings flow,” the tall and heavy Texan sneers gravely.

251And here is the assistant managing editor; I have interviewed such a managing editor as this, not once, but fifty times; and not only in San Francisco, but in a score of other American cities:

He is acute and politic, as you discover when first you hear him call up Henry N. De Smith to ask for a decision. Such action is very seldom necessary. The assistant managing editor knows the owner’s prejudices and failings by long association. He is versed in a most essential knowledge of what may be printed in the paper, and what it would be dangerous for the public to know. Under his care comes the immense problem of general policy, the direction of opinion in the city in the paths most favorable to his master’s fame and fortune. Nothing unpleasing to friend or advertiser must by any chance appear. It means nothing to him that given such conditions, advertising becomes a kind of legitimate blackmail, for his mind is not attuned to delicate moral vibrations.

Such is San Francisco; and lest you think that is prejudice, or an anomaly, come to Chicago and have a glimpse of the insides of the “Chronicle,” given in a book of confessions, “The Career of a Journalist,” by William Salisbury:

It was no easy matter, either, to be Copy Reader on the “Chronicle.” In addition to the average Copy Reader’s immense fund of knowledge, one had to know almost by heart the names of the sixteen corporations in which owner Walsh was interested, such as banks and street railways and gas and contracting companies. He had to know, too, the names of the prominent men Mr. Walsh liked or disliked, so as to treat them

accordingly. A mistake in such things would much more quickly bring a telephone order from Mr. Walsh's banking offices for changes in the staff than any other error.

It may seem an extreme statement; but I doubt if there is a newspaper-office in America in which such things as this do not happen. There may be newspapers whose owners sternly refrain from using them as a means of personal glorification; there may be newspapers which do not give special attention to the owner's after-dinner speeches, and to the social events that go on in the owner's home. But is there any paper which does not show consideration for the associates and intimate friends of the owner? It happened to me once to be sitting in a hotel-room with a millionaire who was under arrest and liable to serve ten years in jail. This man's relatives were among the rulers of the city, and I heard him go to the telephone and call up his relatives, and advise them how to approach the newspapers, and precisely what instructions to give; next morning I saw those instructions followed by the newspapers. Has any man ever held an executive position on a newspaper in America without witnessing incidents of this sort? The testimony available is not merely that of radicals and "muck-rakers." Here is a most conservative editor, Hamilton Holt, in his book, "Commercialism and Journalism," mentioning "a certain daily whose editor recently told me that there was on his desk a list three feet long of prominent people whose names were not to be mentioned in his paper."

Is there any newspaper which does not show consideration for the business interests of its owners? Come to Los Angeles, which I happen to know especially well, because I live only twelve miles away from it. It calls itself the "City of the Angels"; I have taken the liberty of changing the name to the "City of the Black Angels." This city gets its water-supply from distant mountains, and its great financial interests owned vast tracts of land between the city and the sources of supply. There were four newspapers, all in a state of most ferocious rivalry; but all of them owned some of this land, and all of them united in the campaign for an aqueduct. For years they kept the population terrified by pictures of failing water-supply; people say they had the water run out of the reservoirs, and the city parks allowed to dry up! So they got their aqueduct, and land that had cost forty dollars an acre became worth a thousand dollars. A single individual cleared a million dollars by this deal.

I have given in this book a fairly thorough account of the "Los Angeles Times," the perfect illustration of a great newspaper conducted in the financial interest of one man. The personality of that man infected it so powerfully that the infection has persisted after the man is dead. I have never heard anybody in Los Angeles maintain that the "Times" is an honest newspaper, or a newspaper which serves the public interest; but I have heard them say that Otis was "sincere according to his lights," that

“you always knew where to find him.” I have heard this said by several different men, and it is extraordinary testimony to the extent to which newspaper knavery can be successful.

No, you didn’t “always know where to find Otis”; for many years it was a toss-up where you would find him, for Otis had two offices in Los Angeles. One was the office of the “Times,” 253a “Republican” newspaper, maintaining ferociously the “open-shop” policy—so ferociously that some outraged labor leaders blew it up with a dynamite-bomb. But at the same time Otis owned secretly another Los Angeles newspaper, the “Herald”; and the “Herald” was an “independent” newspaper, a “Democratic” newspaper, a “closed-shop” newspaper! So here was Otis handing out one kind of dope to the Los Angeles public with one hand, and handing out the opposite kind of dope to the Los Angeles public with the other hand—and taking in money from the Los Angeles public with both hands. When you read my statement that “Big Business stages a sham-battle every now and then, to make the people think they are controlling the government,” you smiled, no doubt—taking it for the exuberance of a radical. But what better proof could you have of a sham-battle, than to find the same man fighting furiously on both sides?

And how comes it that the public of Los Angeles is ignorant of this extraordinary situation? Why, simply that when the news came out, there was no Los Angeles newspaper that would feature it; the newspapers were in on some “deal,” and the only place the story could be exploited was in “La Follette’s,” in Wisconsin! It was told there by Frank E. Wolfe, formerly managing editor of the “Herald,” the man who took the orders of Otis and carried them out.

Some thirty years ago my friend Gaylord Wilshire started in Los Angeles a publication called the “Nationalist,” advocating the ideas of Edward Bellamy. This paper was printed at the office of the “Los Angeles Express,” and one day, walking down the street, Wilshire met General Otis.

“I see you people have got a weekly paper,” said the General.

“Yes,” said Wilshire.

“Well, now, the ‘Times’ has a new and modern printing-plant. We would like very much to do that work for you. Suppose you give us a trial.”

“Well, General, it’s all right so far as I am concerned, because I don’t mind such things; but some of my associates consider that you don’t treat our ideas fairly in the ‘Times’.”

“Oh, now, now, you don’t mind a thing like that! Surely, now, you ought to understand a joke!”

254 “Well, as I say, I don’t mind, but some of my associates take it seriously.”

“Well, I’ll show you about that. We’ll fix that up very easily.”

So the General went off, and next day there appeared in the “Times” an editorial speaking very cordially of the Edward Bellamy brand of social idealism. And thereafter for two or three weeks, the “Times” spoke pleasantly of the Edward Bellamy brand of social idealism, and it faithfully reported the meetings of the Nationalists. But the “Nationalist” did not change its printing-plant, and so the General got tired of waiting, and shifted back to his old method of sneering and abuse. This, you understand, for a job-printing contract worth fifty, or perhaps a hundred dollars, a week!

By methods such as these Otis grew wealthy, and later on he purchased six hundred and fifty thousand acres of land in Northern Mexico. When the Diaz régime was overthrown, Otis had trouble in getting his cattle out, so he wanted a counter-revolution in Mexico, and for years the whole policy of his paper has been directed to bringing on intervention and conquest of that country. At one time the Federal authorities indicted Harry Chandler, son-in-law of Otis, and his successor in control of the “Times,” for conspiracy to ship arms into Mexico. Mr. Chandler was acquitted. If you will turn back to page [209](#) of this book, you will find a statement by a prominent Los Angeles lawyer as to jury trials in the “City of the Black Angels.”

Mr. Hearst also owns enormous stretches of land in Mexico, and Mr. Hearst also understands that if Mexico were conquered and annexed by the United States, the value of his lands would be increased many times over. Therefore for fifteen years the Hearst newspapers have been used as a means of forcing war with Mexico. Mr. Hearst admits and is proud of the fact that it was he who made the Spanish-American war. He sent Frederick Remington to Cuba to make pictures of the war, and Remington was afraid there wasn’t going to be any war, and so cabled Mr. Hearst. Mr. Hearst answered: “You make the pictures and I’ll make the war.”

That was in 1897 or 1898. I was a boy just out of college, and fell victim to this modern kind of “war-making.” I was 255 walking on the street, and heard newsboys shouting an extra, and saw these words, printed across the front page of the “New York Evening Journal”:

WAR

DECLARED!

So I parted with one of my hard-earned pennies, and read:

WAR

may be

DECLARED

soon

But did that bit of knavery keep me from buying the Hearst newspapers forever after? It did not. I am an American, and can no more resist sensational headlines printed in a newspaper than a donkey can resist a field of fat clover. So I still take a Hearst newspaper, the “Los Angeles Examiner,” and watch Mr. Hearst prepare my mind for the bloody process of annexing millions of Hearst acres to my country. Both the Hearst paper and the Otis paper print elaborate accounts of how the government is preparing to invade Mexico. There are details of diplomatic negotiations and of military preparations, stories elaborate, complete, and apparently entirely authentic. Once in a while the State Department issues a formal denial that it has any such intentions, or is making any such preparations; the “Times” and “Examiner” print these denials—and then go on blandly printing their stories! I am left to wonder which is lying, the American government or the American press.

You know the part which the newspapers of Europe took in the making of the late war, the “last” war, as we were told. You know that the Krupps owned and subsidized the “reptile press” of Germany, using it to foment hatred of France. You know that at the same time they subsidized some of the leading Chauvinist newspapers of France, to publish denunciations and threats against Germany, so that the new war appropriations might be forced through the Reichstag. Karl Liebknecht exposed this infamy in Germany, and the ruling caste of the country never forgave him, and in the crisis of the late rebellion they found their chance to pay him back.

Among the secret documents made public by the Bolsheviki were some letters from the Russian Minister to France, 256informing his home government of negotiations whereby Russia was to be allowed to seize Constantinople. He told how the French newspapers might be used, and pointed out how Italy did this while she was grabbing Tripoli:

It is of the highest importance to see to it that we have a good press here.... As an example of how useful it is to have money to offer the press ... I know how Tittoni has worked up the leading French papers most thoroughly and with the most open hand. The result is now manifest to all.

We read about such infamies in Europe, and shudder at them, and congratulate ourselves that our “sweet land of liberty” is more clean. But put yourself in the place of an educated Mexican, and see how it appears to him. American financial promoters bring their wealth to Mexico, and buy the Mexican government, and obtain ownership of the most valuable land and oil and minerals of the country. The Mexican people overthrow this corrupt government, and attempt to tax these legally stolen properties; but the foreign governments say that these properties may not be taxed, and the newspapers owned and published by these foreign interests carry on for years an elaborate campaign of slanders against Mexico, to the end that the American people may make war upon the Mexican people and exploit them. And this is done, not merely by the Otis paper and the Hearst papers, which all thinking people know to be corrupt; it is done by papers like the “New York Times” and “Tribune” and “Chicago Tribune,” which are considered to be entirely respectable. As I write, the correspondent of the “New York Tribune” in Mexico, L. J. de Bekker, resigns, and states as his reason that his dispatches were suppressed or cut in the “Tribune” office.

And of course, in a campaign of this sort they count upon the cordial help of the Associated Press. Says the “Heraldo de Mexico,” August 15, 1919: “We see that the Associated Press lies with frequency.” And you do not have to take this solely on the word of a Mexican newspaper. The Mexican minister of foreign relations gives out a letter from the vice-president of the Mexican Northwestern Railroad, whose offices are in Toronto, Canada: “I see that the Associated Press mentions with frequency, in its reports, the name of our company.” He goes on to explain that the Associated Press has stated that his company complains of the confiscation of lands, 257 whereas these reports are wholly false; his company has had no difficulty whatever with the Mexican government. He says: “It is intolerable that our name should be used.” And also the Associated Press sends out a circumstantial story of the alleged withdrawal of the Canadian Pearson’s from business in Mexico. The vice-president of this company issues a point-blank denial that he has had any difficulty with the Mexican government. Says Mr. de Bekker, protesting to the assistant manager of the Associated Press: “It is a most marked example of the A. P.’s unfairness. And it is a fair presumption that the A. P. will not carry this denial.”

The Mexicans are a backward people, and we complain that there are bandits among them. But which is worse, the spontaneous violence of a primitive people, or the organized and systematic treachery of a highly developed people? You have a child; and suppose that, instead of loving this child, understanding and helping it, you do nothing but scold at it, menace it, and tell falsehoods about it—would you be surprised if the child now and then kicked your shins?

CHAPTER XL

OWNING THE OWNERS

The second of the methods by which our Journalism is controlled is by far the most important of all the four. I do not mean merely that the owners are owned by mortgages, and such crude financial ties. They are owned by ambition, by pressure upon their families, by club associations, by gentlemen's agreements, by the thousand subtle understandings which make the solidarity of the capitalist class. I have written elsewhere of labor-leaders, otherwise incorruptible, who have accepted "the dress-suit bribe." These same bribes are passed in the business-world, and are the biggest bribes of all. When you have your shoes shined, you pay the bootblack ten cents; but can you figure what you are paid for having your shoes shined? When you buy a new suit of clothes, you pay the dealer, say, one hundred dollars; but can you figure what you are paid for being immaculately dressed, for having just the right kind of tie, just the right kind of accent, just the right manner of asserting your own importance and securing your own place at the banquet-table of Big Business?

If you are the publisher of a great newspaper or magazine, you belong to the ruling-class of your community. You are invited to a place of prominence on all public occasions; your voice is heard whenever you choose to lift it. You may become a senator like Medill McCormick or Capper of Kansas, who owns eight newspapers and six magazines; a cabinet-member like Daniels, or an ambassador like Whitelaw Reid or Walter Page. You will float upon a wave of prosperity, and in this prosperity all your family will share; your sons will have careers open to them, your wife and your daughters will move in the "best society." All this, of course, provided that you stand in with the powers that be, and play the game according to their rules. If by any chance you interfere with them, if you break their rules, then instantly in a thousand forms you feel the pressure of their displeasure. You are "cut" at the clubs, your sons and daughters are not invited 259to parties—you find your domestic happiness has become dependent upon your converting the whole family to your strange new revolutionary whim! And what if your youngest daughter does not share your enthusiasm for the "great unwashed"? What if your wife takes the side of her darling?

It is such hidden forces as this which account for much of the snobbery in American newspapers; the fact that in every department and in every feature they favor the rich and powerful, and reveal themselves as priests of the cult of Mammon. I have watched the great metropolitan dailies, and those in many smaller cities and towns; I have yet to see an American newspaper which does not hold money for its god, and

the local masters of money for demi-gods at the least. The interests of these Olympian beings, their sports, their social doings, their political opinions, their comings and goings, are assumed by the newspapers to be the object of the absorbed interest of every American who knows how to read.

On every page and in every column of every page the American newspaper preaches the lesson: "Get money, and all things else shall be added unto you—especially newspaper attention." When Mr. John P. Gavit, managing editor of the "New York Evening Post," wrote to Mr. Melville E. Stone, general manager of the Associated Press, that I had a reputation "as an insatiable hunter of personal publicity," what Mr. Gavit meant was that I was accustomed to demand and obtain more space in newspapers than the amount of my worldly possessions entitled me to. Some years ago my wife went for a visit to her home in the far South, after the unusual adventure of marrying a Socialist; she met one of her girlhood friends, who exclaimed:

"My, but your husband must be a rich man!"

"My husband is a poor man," said M. C. S.

Whereat the girl-friend laughed at her. "I know better," said she.

"But it's true," said M. C. S. "He has no money at all; he never had any."

"Well," said the other, skeptically, "then what are the papers all the time talking about him for?"

A large part of what is called "conservatism" in our Journalism is this instinctive reverence for wealth, as deeply rooted in every American as respect for a duke in an English butler. So the average American newspaper editor is a horse that stands without hitching, and travels without a whip. But emergencies arise, a fork in the road, a sudden turn, a race with another vehicle; and then a driver is needed—and perhaps also a whip! I showed you Mr. Ochs pulling the "Metropolis" story off the front page of the "New York Times" at one o'clock in the morning. Every Hearst editor has stories to tell of one-o'clock-in-the-morning visits from the owner, resulting in the whole policy of the paper being shifted. And where the owner is owned, maybe somebody will call *him* up and lay down the law; maybe an agent will be set to keep watch over his doings, and to become the real master of his paper. I could name more than one famous editor and publisher who has been thus turned out of his job, and remains nothing but a name.

For great "interests" have a way of being wide-awake even at the late hour when the forms of newspapers close; they have a way of knowing what they want, and of getting

it. "I am a great clamorer for dividends," testified old Rockefeller; and imagine, if you can, a publishing enterprise controlled by old Rockefeller—how closely the policy of that enterprise would be attended to! Imagine, if you can, one controlled by Pierpont Morgan!

It happens that I can tell you about one of these latter. The story has to do with one of the most famous publishing-houses in America, a house which is a national institution, known to every literate person—the ancient house of "Harper's," which now has the misfortune to have an eight hundred thousand dollar mortgage reposing in the vaults of J. P. Morgan & Company. Would you think me absurd if I should state that the publishing-business of Harper & Bros. is managed to the minutest detail by this mortgage?

First, recall to mind "The Money-changers," a novel dealing with the causes of the 1907 panic. The "villain" of this novel is a certain "Dan Waterman," a great financier who dominates the life of Wall Street, and who in his relations to women is an old wild boar. The veil of fiction was thin, and was meant to be. Every one who knew the great Metropolis of Mammon would recognize Pierpont Morgan, the elder, and would know that the picture was true both in detail and in spirit. Naturally old "J. P." himself would be furious, and his hired partisans would be looking for a chance to punish his assailant.

261Very well. Five years passed, and I was editing an anthology of revolutionary literature. I was quoting authors from Homer to H. G. Wells, several hundred in all, and as part of the routine of the job, I addressed a long list of authors and publishing-houses, requesting permission to quote brief extracts from copyrighted books, due credit of course to be given. Such quotations are a valuable advertisement for any book, the more valuable because they are permanent; the request is a matter of form, and its granting a matter of course. It proved to be such in the case of all publishing-houses both in America and in England—all save one, the house of the eight hundred thousand dollar mortgage! This house informed me that no book of mine might contain a line from any book published by them. My reputation was such that I would injure the value of any book which I quoted!

I am interested in this capitalistic world, and try to find out as much about it as I can. So I took the trouble to visit the dingy old building in Franklin Square, and to interview the up-to-date gentleman who had rendered this unexpected decision. He was perfectly polite, and I was the same. I pointed out to him that some of the authors—"his" authors—were personal friends of mine, and that they themselves desired to be quoted in my anthology. Mr. Charles Rann Kennedy, for example, was a Socialist. Mr.

William Dean Howells was one of Harper's own editors; he was in that very office, and I had in my hand a letter from him, giving cordial consent to the publication of two passages from "A Traveller from Altruria"! Also Mr. H. G. Wells, an English Socialist, who had honored me with his friendship, had published "When the Sleeper Wakes" through "Harper's," and now requested that I be permitted to quote from this book in my anthology. Also Mark Twain had honored me with his friendship; he had visited my home in Bermuda, and had expressed appreciation of my writings. He was no longer where I could consult him in the matter, but I offered evidence to Messrs. Harper & Bros. proving that he had not regarded me as a social outcast. But no matter; the decision stood.

I took the question to the authors themselves, and I am sorry to have to record that neither Mr. William Dean Howells nor Mr. Charles Rann Kennedy cared to support a fellow-Socialist in this controversy with a great capitalist publishing-house. So it comes about that you will not find Mr. Kennedy or Mr. Howells quoted in "The Cry for Justice"; but you will find "When the Sleeper Wakes" quoted, the reason being that Mr. Wells did stand by me. Mr. Wells lives farther away, and is not so deeply influenced by an eight hundred thousand dollar mortgage in the vaults of a Wall Street banking-house!

The point of this story is the petty nature of the vengeance of this mortgage, the trouble it took, the minute detail into which it was willing to go. The moral for you is just this: that when you pick up your morning or evening newspaper, and think you are reading the news of the world, what you are really reading is a propaganda which has been selected, revised, and doctored by some power which has a financial interest in you; and which, for the protecting of that financial interest, has been willing to take trouble, and to go into the most minute detail!

You will miss the point of this book if you fail to get clear that the perversion of news and the betrayal of public opinion is no haphazard and accidental thing; for twenty-five years—that is, since the day of Mark Hanna—it has been a thing deliberately planned and systematically carried out, a science and a technique. High-priced experts devote their lives to it, they sit in counsel with the masters of industry, and report on the condition of the public mind, and determine precisely how this shall be presented and how that shall be suppressed. They create a public psychology, a force in the grip of which you, their victim, are as helpless as a moth in the glare of an arc-light. And what is the purpose of it all? One thing, and one only—that the wage-slaves of America shall continue to believe in and support the system whereby their bones are picked bare and thrown upon the scrap-heap of the profit-system.

CHAPTER XLI

THE OWNER IN POLITICS

What counts with newspapers, as everywhere else in the business world, is not so much the bulk of the wealth as its activity. Wealth which is invested in government bonds and farm-mortgages is asleep, and will stay asleep until the profit system itself is threatened. On the other hand, one or two hundred thousand dollars which happens to be in the hands of new men, trying to break into the game, may be exercising an influence out of all proportion to its amount. Such wealth may be bidding for a new franchise. It will come to the newspaper publisher and offer him stock; or it will point out to him that if the franchise is granted, certain real estate that he holds will be increased in value; or it will offer to help nominate him for mayor; or it will point out to him that his rival newspaper is enlisted on the other side, and is looking for some unrighteous graft. The story of every newspaper is a story of such a game of power-politics incessantly going on. No newspaper can exist without taking part in it, because every newspaper wields influence, and every newspaper must cast its decision on every issue that arises. Every paper is expected to have its candidates for political office; every paper is expected to have its political policies, and inevitably in our system these candidates and these policies are a screen behind which great financial interests move to their ends.

For example, here is the "Denver Post," as portrayed by Judge Lindsey, founder of the children's court. Lindsey is telling in his book, "The Beast," how one of the political machines sought to use him as a candidate for Governor:

A few days later the "Post" endorsed me editorially as a candidate for Governor, and there was a flurry in the corporation camp. The paper was no more than on the streets before Mr. Field (telephone magnate) ... made a frantic effort to have the edition stopped and the paper's support reconsidered. But the "Post" had just lost in a fight with Evans (gas magnate) about a public franchise deal, and the proprietors were eager for revenge. Their newspaper rivalry with Senator Patterson made them ambitious to defeat him as leader of the reform Democrats, by forcing my nomination in spite of him. I found myself in the storm-centre of a small political cyclone.

264 You may recall Mr. Bonfils, one of the owners of the "Denver Post," who "jollied" me over the telephone during the time of the Colorado coal-strike. Now hear Judge Lindsey:

When this latter ticket was named I found it largely composed of Speer corporation Democrats. Mr. Fred G. Bonfils, one of the proprietors of the "Denver Post" (which was still supporting me), assured me that Speer and his city organization would aid me if I would agree to lend my name to this ticket.

In short, the corporations being sure of Adams (the opposition candidate), now wished to make sure of me by tying me to the candidacy of a lot of corporation tools who would never allow us to obtain a reform law. I refused to lend my name to any such business, and I lost thereby the support of the "Post" and the Speer Democrats.

And then, of course, Judge Lindsey was marked for destruction by the "Post." He tells how a false news dispatch reported him as saying in a public lecture in the East that the copper king of the state ought to be hanged. The Denver Chamber of Commerce passed a resolution declaring Lindsey "an enemy of the state." Says Lindsey: "The 'Denver Post' followed the resolution with a demand that I be driven from town, and stirred up all possible enmity against me as a 'defamer' of my state."

Or take San Francisco. Here is Fremont Older, for twenty-five years managing editor of the "Bulletin," telling the story of his life. I shall have more to say about Older later on; for the present, take one incident from his book. Older, leading a terrific reform campaign, is after the "man higher up," and decides that the highest of all is Herrin, head of the law department of the Southern Pacific Railroad. "Herrin is the man behind the corruption of our whole state. Herrin is the man who has broken down the morals of thousands of our young men, debauched our cities and our towns and our villages, corrupted our legislatures and courts." But it appears that Crothers, owner of the "Bulletin," has been taking money from Herrin in times past.

Crothers became very nervous about it and suggested several times to me that he didn't want Herrin attacked. I felt then that he feared Herrin would expose the Wells money paid the paper, but in spite of that power which Herrin held over us, I continued to go on with the campaign against him.

Frequently Crothers would go into the printing office and look over the headlines himself, and if he discovered Herrin's name, would insist on its being lifted out of the paper, but even with this interference I managed to keep up the fight.

Finally, he told me flatly that he wanted the attacks on Herrin stopped, the criticism of Herrin to cease. I replied frankly that it was impossible for me to do that, that the entire reportorial force was under full headway in the fight, and they were writing, all of them, from the angle of the paper's policy as it appeared to them, and I could not go to each man and tell him that he must not criticise Herrin.

“I can’t do it, Mr. Crothers, because I am ashamed for you. If it’s to be done, you’ll have to do it yourself. I can not.”

He did not have the courage to do it, and it was never done. However, all the time our opponents were trying to reach into the office. They succeeded in getting the business manager at that time to undertake to break me down, but I resisted all his efforts. The fight became more burdensome, because it extended into the very building in which I worked.

The political campaign waxed warmer, and Crothers demanded that Older should support Herrin’s candidate; but Older refused.

He replied that he owned the “Bulletin,” and that it would support whomever he chose. I grew very angry and excited and replied, “Yes, what you say is perfectly true. You do own the ‘Bulletin,’ but you don’t own me, and I won’t stand for Crocker.”

I walked out of the room, very angry, determined never to return. I went to my wife and told her that I was through with the “Bulletin.” She wanted to know the reason and I told her that Crothers had gone back to his old methods. He was determined to get behind the candidate who represented the men we had been fighting, and I could not bring myself to continue in my position.

Or take St. Paul, Minnesota. Here is the grain country, entirely possessed by the milling interests, with their allied railroads and banks. Until the Farmer’s Nonpartisan movement arose, the politics and journalism of Minnesota were exclusively in the hands of these interests. In the “Nonpartisan Leader” for May 27, June 3 and June 10, 1918, appeared a series of articles by Walter W. Liggett, formerly exchange editor of the “St. Paul Pioneer Press” and its evening edition, the “St. Paul Dispatch.” Mr. Liggett made a great number of damaging charges against these newspapers, and in order to make sure of the facts, I address their managing editor, inquiring if he has ever published any denial of the charges, or if he cares to deny them to me. His answer is:

We never made any reply at all to them.... Nor do I care, 266as you suggest, to make any denial to you personally. It seems to me the record of the “Dispatch” and the “Pioneer Press” is the important thing, and this is open to anybody who cares to read our files.

The letter concludes by warning me of the risk I shall run if I reprint “the assertions of a dismissed employe.” I reply to the writer, Mr. H. R. Galt, managing editor of the “Dispatch” and the “Pioneer Press,” that his letter is unsatisfactory. The strong point about Mr. Liggett’s three articles is that they are based upon precisely the thing Mr. Galt invites—a study of the files of the newspapers. Mr. Liggett states that certain

things are found in these files. I offer to send Mr. Galt copies of the articles, which he says he does not possess; I again invite him to point out to me in detail which of Mr. Liggett's charges are false. I also ask him why, if the charges are false, he did not take Mr. Liggett up at the time, and inflict upon him the legal penalties with which he threatens me. I suggest that any jury of Americans will display curiosity about that point. To which Mr. Galt replies:

I shall be content to advise you again, as I did in my previous letter, that the articles upon which you have apparently based your verdict are untruthful in every particular in which they reflect upon the "Dispatch" and "Pioneer Press," and that in republishing them or any part of them, or in repeating any statements reflecting on these newspapers which may be contained in them, you will not only be publishing falsehoods, but having been advised in advance that they are falsehoods, you will publish them maliciously.

Now pray proceed with your indictment of American Journalism as reported by Mr. Liggett, and do not worry yourself about the curiosity of any jury so far as we are concerned. At the proper time we shall be abundantly able to satisfy any curiosity on this point.

Now, when a man comes at me making a face like that, I have but one impulse in my soul—that is, to jump into a pair of seven-league boots, and turn and skedaddle as hard as I know how to the other side of the world and hide in a coal-bin. I am not joking; that is really the way I feel. There is nothing in the world I dread so much as a personal wrangle, and these fierce and haughty and powerful men throw me into a tremble of terror. The things I enjoy in this world are my books and my garden, and rather than go into a jury-room, and wrangle with fierce and haughty and powerful men, I would have my eye-teeth pulled out. But then I think, as I have thought many times in my life before, of the millions of pitiful wage-slaves who are exploited by these fierce and haughty and powerful men. I think of the millions of honest and true Americans who swallow the poison that is fed to them by our capitalist newspapers; and so I clench my hands and bite my lips together and turn on the fierce and haughty and powerful men with a yell of rage. Then a strange and startling, an almost incredible thing happens—the fierce and haughty and powerful men jump into *their* seven-league boots, and turn and skedaddle to the other side of the world and hide in a coal-bin!

Why is this? Is it because I am an especially terrifying person, with an especially terrifying face? No; it is simply because, in these contests, I have always taken one precaution at the outset—I have made certain of having the truth on my side. I have

cast in my lot with the truth; whereas these fierce and haughty and powerful men with whom I enter the lists of combat have made all their success out of falsehood, and fear truth as they fear nothing else on God's earth.

Before I go to the bat with Mr. Galt, managing editor of the "St. Paul Dispatch" and "Pioneer Press," I will point out one important fact about my life, as follows:

In the course of my twenty years career as an assailant of special privilege, I have attacked pretty nearly every important interest in America. The statements I have made, if false, would have been enough to deprive me of a thousand times all the property I ever owned, and to have sent me to prison for a thousand times a normal man's life. I have been called a liar on many occasions, needless to say; but never once in all these twenty years has one of my enemies ventured to bring me into a court of law, and to submit the issue between us to a jury of American citizens. Several times they have come near to doing it. I was told, by a lawyer who was present at the event, that there was a conference, lasting three days and a good part of three nights, between Mr. J. Ogden Armour and his lawyers, in which Mr. Armour insisted upon having me arrested for criminal libel, and his lawyers insisted that he could not "stand the gaff." As you have seen in this book, Mr. William E. Corey threatened to sue me for libel; I am informed that young Mr. Rockefeller desired ardently to do it, and Madame Tingley, the "Purple Mother" of Theosophy, actually sent her lawyers after me for my jests about her in 268 "The Profits of Religion." But, if Mr. H. R. Galt actually files a suit against me, he will be the first of our captains of privilege who has ventured that far.

Now, to return to the "St. Paul Dispatch" and "Pioneer Press": I have not made a detailed study of the files of these papers, but I have made a study of the Nonpartisan League movement and its "Nonpartisan Leader," also I have made a study of Mr. Walter W. Liggett, formerly exchange editor of the "Dispatch" and the "Pioneer Press." Mr. Liggett assures me that every statement he makes can be abundantly proven from the files of the papers, and I believe Mr. Liggett. Accordingly I take the risk of summarizing the statements which Mr. Liggett published concerning these two papers, and which these two papers allowed to pass unchallenged. My guess is that Mr. H. R. Galt will do one of two things: either he will do what Mr. Ogden Armour did, and what Mr. Corey did, and what Mr. Rockefeller did, and what Madame Tingley did—that is, nothing. Or else he will do what the Associated Press did in the case of the "Masses"—he will file a suit, or ask for an indictment, and thus get occasion to publish in his papers a high-sounding and dignified statement of his own righteousness; he will put me to the expense of employing lawyers and making a thorough study of his files; and then, when the case comes up, he will drop it, and say not one word about it in his papers!

Now, what is it that Mr. Liggett has to say? His statements are briefly as follows:

The “St. Paul Dispatch” and “Pioneer Press” were financed and put on their feet by a street-car magnate, and for twenty years, from a generous and pure emotion of gratitude, have supported this street-car magnate in all his doings; hiding his tax-dodging and his franchise grafting, ridiculing and misrepresenting his employes when they go on strike. The papers could probably not be purchased for a million dollars, yet they pay taxes on less than fifty-seven thousand dollars. Until quite recently they were charging the city an illegal price for the publication of city advertisements, and only quit when an independent citizen forced an exposure. They have defended the Hill railroad interests systematically; they have suppressed news of public agitation against the packers and the millers, and have editorially defended these and other profiteers. After borrowing three hundred thousand 269dollars from the Capital Trust and Savings Company, they did their best to start a run on the St. Paul municipal bank, and only failed because their false statements were promptly exposed. They have lied systematically about the farmers’ movement, and have refused to publish corrections, even in the form of paid advertisements. They were ultra-patriotic, and urged all employers to continue their employes’ wages while the latter were in the army; but they themselves failed to follow this advice!

And now come, Mr. Galt, and explain to a jury of American citizens how it happened that these articles, “untruthful in every particular in which they reflect upon the ‘Dispatch’ and the ‘Pioneer Press,’” were allowed by you to be published in a paper having two hundred thousand circulation in Minnesota and adjoining states, and were left unanswered and unchallenged by you for a period of fifteen months!

The Nonpartisan League is an issue, not only in Minnesota and North Dakota, but all over the country where the interests are in terror of a farmers’ revolt. And so the whole power of the kept press is enlisted to malign it. The League is doing business through the Scandinavian-American Bank of Fargo, and the enemies of the League raid this institution, with the help of subservient public officials, and throw it into the hands of a receiver. From one end of the country to the other goes the story of crooked banking by the farmers’ party, and is featured by the capitalist press. The “New York Times” has several detailed dispatches, also solemn editorials. A week or two later the Supreme Court of the State denounces the proceedings as a conspiracy, declares the bank sound, and orders its return to the owners. The “Times” gives this—not one line! Or take the “Kansas City Star,” a most completely respectable organ, which features the smash-up of the bank, and reports the restoration in a tiny item, giving the name of the bank, but not mentioning it as the League bank—understanding perfectly well that

ninety-nine out of a hundred readers will not make the connection, and will not know that the League has been vindicated!

And then, a few days later, the American Bar Association issues a denunciation of the League, declaring it is “pure Socialism,” and Socialism means the “nationalization of women.” The “Chicago Tribune” gets out a big headline:

270 “SOCIALISTS HOPE TO COMMUNIZE U. S. GIRLS, CLAIM.”

The “Chicago Tribune” is in politics you see; and like Richard Croker, it is working for its own pocket all the time. Let us hear William Marion Reedy, a journalist of forty years’ training:

In Chicago there is the case of two great newspapers, one of them Republican and the other Independent, which have been found clearly guilty of robbery of the school children of that city. Through the connivance of a school board, one of the members of which was an attorney for one of these newspapers, the land occupied by both these journals, in the very heart of the business center of Chicago, was leased to these great institutions for the moulding of public opinion, on a basis of a site-value absolutely absurd and ridiculous, and upon terms very much lower than those granted on similar lands to other lease-holders in the same neighborhood. This favor exacted of a public body, and at public expense was given solely through fear of attack by, or desire to stand well with the publications in question. When there came into power in the school board, under Mayor Dunne, a number of men who could not be reached by political or other interests, and these men attempted to set aside the outrageous lease in question, both these papers began a crusade against the honesty and intelligence of the school board, and developed the campaign into one for the election of a mayor who would oust these school board members who tried to win back the property for the school children. They rallied to their support all the corrupt and vicious element of the Chicago slums, likewise the forces that could be controlled by the street railways and other public service corporations, elected the mayor, and turned the honest members of the school board out of office. They have since been reinstated, but not until the corporation Mayor had appointed a sufficient number of “safe and sane” friends of the powers that be, to block any effort that might be made by the honest members to secure from these great publications a just compensation for the use of the land belonging to the public schools of Illinois and Chicago.

Reedy omits to give us the names of these two Chicago newspapers. As I am dealing with names in this book, I state that one of them is the most “respectable” of all Chicago’s newspapers, the “Tribune,” which carries on its front page the legend: “The World’s Greatest Newspaper.” The other is the most “liberal” of all Chicago’s

newspapers, the “Daily News,” owned by Victor F. Lawson, who is generally cited as the one among the fifteen directors of the Associated Press who has any trace of progressive sympathy.

271

CHAPTER XLII

OWNING THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

When it comes to the Associated Press, the clearest statement I have read was made by Charles Edward Russell in “Pearson’s Magazine,” April, 1914. Says Russell:

About nine hundred daily newspapers in the United States, comprising the great majority of the journals of influence and circulation, receive and print the news dispatches of the Associated Press.

This means that concerning any event of importance an identical dispatch is printed about fifteen million times and may be read by thirty million persons.

According to the construction and wording of that dispatch, so will be the impression these thirty million persons will receive, and the opinion they will form and pass along to others.

Here is the most tremendous engine for Power that ever existed in this world. If you can conceive all that Power ever wielded by the great autocrats of history, by the Alexanders, Caesars, Tamburlaines, Kubla Khans and Napoleons, to be massed together into one vast unit of Power, even this would be less than the Power now wielded by the Associated Press.

Thought is the ultimate force in the world and here you have an engine that causes thirty million minds to have the same thought at the same moment, and nothing on earth can equal the force thus generated.

Well-informed men know that the great Controlling Interests have secured most of the other sources and engines of Power. They own or control most of the newspapers, most of the magazines, most of the pulpits, all of the politicians and most of the public men.

We are asked to believe that they do not own or control the Associated Press, by far the most desirable and potent of these engines. We are asked to believe that the character and wording of the dispatches upon which depends so much public opinion is never influenced in behalf of the Controlling Interests. We are asked to believe that Interests that have absorbed all other such agencies for their benefit have overlooked

this, the most useful and valuable of all. We are even asked to believe that, although the Associated Press is a mutual concern, owned by the newspapers, and although these newspapers that own it are in turn owned by the Controlling Interests, the Controlling Interests do not own, control or influence the Associated Press, which goes its immaculate way, furnishing impartial and unbiased news to the partial and biased journals that own it.

That is to say that when you buy a house you do not buy its foundations.

272The point about the Associated Press upon which it lays greatest stress, and which it never fails to bring forward in defending itself, is that it is a “mutual” corporation; it is owned and controlled by the many hundreds of newspapers which use its services. In La Follette’s magazine during the year 1909 there appeared a series of articles on the Associated Press by William Kittle. Mr. Kittle showed, taking the figures of the year 1909, that the seven hundred newspapers which then used the service had less than one-seventh of the voting control of the organization. The rest of the votes were cast on bonds which had been sold to certain of the members. These bonds represented a voting-strength of four thousand, eight hundred and ninety as against seven hundred and seventy-five votes of the member newspapers. The total of fifty-six hundred and sixty-five votes elected the board of directors, and this board, having power to issue new bonds at any time, could keep its control absolute. Could anyone imagine a smoother scheme for holding a corporation in bondage? And then fancy Melville E. Stone coming before the public and making this statement concerning his organization:

It is purely mutual in its character, and in this respect is unique. All of the other news-supplying agencies of the world are proprietary concerns. It issues no stock, makes no profit, and declares no dividend. It does not sell news to any one. It is a clearing-house for the interchange of news among its members only.

I wrote to Mr. Stone, explaining that I was discussing his organization in my book, and wished to be scrupulously fair in every statement I made; would Mr. Stone tell me the present status of these bonds and their votes? Mr. Stone delayed for some time to answer, and when he did so, explained the delay:

First, because I have been taking a vacation, and have had no leisure to think of you, and second, because in the slight reading I have given to your publications, I was led to believe that any failure to acquaint yourself with the facts of a matter would in no wise embarrass you in presenting your case.

My answer was that, curiously enough, this was precisely the impression I had formed of Mr. Stone's organization; the only difference being that whereas he admitted having given only a slight reading to my publications, I had had intimate first-hand experience with his organization over a period of fifteen or twenty years.

273However, Mr. Stone consented to give me a list of the present bond-holders; also his explanation of the matter:

In the organization of the Associated Press in 1900 it was necessary to provide a certain sum to buy fixtures, etc., and certain first mortgage bonds were issued and sold to the members, the proceeds being applied in the way indicated. The Charter authorized an issuance of \$150,000. But this sum was found to be unnecessary. The actual issue was \$131,425. This has since been reduced by redemption in certain cases so that today there is outstanding \$113,125. Under the law of New York, holders of first mortgage bonds are entitled to vote for Directors in proportion to their holdings. They have no right to vote upon bonds on any other matter in the conduct of the business.

Many times, in the course of my experiences as a muck-raker, I have had great captains of privilege endeavor to impose upon my intelligence; but I cannot recall having ever been offered so childish a pretext as I am here offered by Mr. Stone. I am asked to believe that in the nineteen years of its history, this enormous concern has been able to pay off less than twenty thousand dollars of the debt incurred for its office furniture! I am asked to believe that these bond-holders have votes because the law requires them to have votes; and that never once has it occurred to the shrewd gentlemen who manage the Associated Press that by the simple device of remaining in debt for their office furniture, they can keep their organization permanently and irrevocably in the control of the big reactionary newspapers of the country!

Will Irwin, writing in "Harper's Weekly" five years ago, speaks of the "ring of old, Tory, forty-one vote papers in control" of the Associated Press. It appears that the bonds of the organization are for twenty-five dollars each, and when the association was formed, the big insiders each took one thousand dollars worth—giving them forty votes, with one additional vote as member.

I look down the list which Mr. Stone sends me, and I see that these "forty-one vote papers" include all of the biggest reactionary sheets in America. One after another I look for those which I have pilloried in this book—they are all here! The "Los Angeles Times" is here, and de Young's "San Francisco Chronicle," and the "San Francisco Bulletin," of the itching palm, and the "San Francisco Examiner," which sent out my Shredded Wheat story, and the "Sacramento Union," which was sold to the Calkins

syndicate. Here is the "Pueblo Chieftain," which circulated the foul slanders about Judge 274Lindsey and the miners' wives. Here is the "Baltimore News" of Munsey, the stock-gambler. Here is the "Washington Post," which, as I shall narrate, had a typewritten copy of a speech by Albert Williams, and deliberately made up false quotations. Here is the "Chicago Tribune," which slandered Henry Ford, and the "Chicago Daily News," which, with the "Tribune," robs the Chicago school-children. Here is the "Cincinnati Times-Star," which set out to fight Boss Cox, and didn't. Here is the "Boston Herald," which, I shall show you, refused President Wilson's speech as an advertisement, and the "Boston Traveller," which lied about my magazine. Here is the "Kansas City Star," which hounded Mrs. Stokes to jail, and the "St. Paul Dispatch," whose misdeeds I have just listed. Here is the "Oil City Derrick," owned by Standard Oil, and the "Seattle Post-Intelligencer," whose bonds were found in the vaults of the Great Northern Railroad. Here is the "Portland Oregonian," which exists for large-scale capital, and the "Milwaukee Sentinel," owned by Pfister, who owns most of Milwaukee. Here is the "New York Herald," which suppressed my Packingtown story, and paid me damages for the Tarrytown libel. Here is the "New York Evening Post," which failed to expose the Associated Press, and the "New York World," which favors twenty-cent meals for department-store girls; here is the "New York Tribune," which lied about the Socialist state legislators, and the "New York Times," which has lied about me so many times that I can't count them.

Such are the newspapers which control the Associated Press: a "stand-pat" machine, precisely like the Aldrich machine which once controlled the United States Senate, and the Cannon machine which once controlled the House. Mr. Stone does his best to persuade me that in the maintenance of this control the bonds have not played any part. He writes:

Since the organization, over one hundred elections of directors have taken place. In one case only, I believe, was the result different from what it would have been if no votes had been cast upon the bonds.

And here again Mr. Stone is treating me as a child. Of the total bonds the big insiders control nine-tenths. Of the total number of votes cast at elections, they control five-sixths. A successful rebellion is thus obviously impossible; and the penalty of an unsuccessful rebellion, as I shall presently show, 275is annihilation; yet Mr. Stone feels virtuous because nobody rebels! Let Mr. Stone pay off his debts for office furniture, and place all the nine-hundred-odd members of the Associated Press on an equality as regards votes, and then let him boast that the bonds have no effect upon elections!

Ten years ago Mr. Kittle made a study of the fifteen directors of the Associated Press. They were all publishers of large newspapers, and from these newspapers could be judged. Just one was a “liberal,” Nelson, of the “Kansas City Star”—and he has since died. All the other fourteen were classified as “conservative or ultra-conservative.”

Said Mr. Kittle:

The other fourteen papers are huge commercial ventures, connected by advertising and in other ways with banks, trust companies, railway and city utility companies, department-stores and manufacturing enterprises. They reflect the system which supports them.

There have been many changes of personality in the Associated Press in the last ten years, but there has been no change in this respect; the statement of Mr. Kittle’s remains the truth about the fifteen directors. And likewise there has been no change in the policy of the organization, as Mr. Kittle reported it:

The dispatches themselves disclose the attitude of the management. They give scant courtesy to movements for constructive legislation in the public interest. The reports, scores of which have been examined, are meager, fragmentary, isolated. Every time Tom Johnson was successful in more than fifty injunction suits, the general public in other states heard little or nothing of it. When an election recently went against him, everybody heard of the “failure” of municipal ownership. When La Follette for five years, by a continuous contest, was placing law after law on the statute-books, the matter was ignored or briefly reported in distant states; and temporary defeats were given wide publicity. When Kansas, in 1908, rejected a conservative and elected a progressive United States Senator, the general public at a distance from that state did not know the real issue involved. For more than two years, there has been a strong movement in California against the rule of that state by special and corrupt interests, but that fact, merely as news, has never reached the general public in the East. The prosecution of offenders in San Francisco has only been a part of the wider movement in California. The strong movement in New Hampshire, headed by Winston Churchill, to free that state from the grasp of the Boston and Maine Railway Company and the movement in New Jersey led by Everett Colby, which resulted in the defeat of Senator Dryden, the president of the Prudential Insurance Company, have not been given to the people adequately as matters of news.

276And this is the testimony of every independent-minded newspaper man with whom I have talked about the Associated Press. Will Irwin, writing in “Harper’s Weekly,” shows how the old reactionary forces shape the policy of the organization. “The subordinates have drifted inevitably toward the point of view held by their

masters.” And again, of the average Associated Press correspondent: “A movement in stocks is to him news—big news. Wide-spread industrial misery in a mining camp is scarcely news at all.” At a conference at the University of Wisconsin, the editor of the “Madison Democrat” stated that he had been a correspondent of the Associated Press for many years, and had never been asked “to suppress news or to color news in any way whatever.” Reply was made by A. M. Simons: “I have had many reporters working under me, and every one of you know that you will not have a reporter on your paper who cannot ‘catch policy’ in two weeks.”

The general manager of the Associated Press makes public boast of the high character of his employes. “Throughout the profession, employment in its service is regarded as an evidence of character and reliability.” Such is the glittering generality; but investigate a little, and you find one Associated Press correspondent, Calvin F. Young, of Charleston, West Virginia, engaged in sending strike-news to his organization, and at the same time in the pay of the mine-owners, collecting affidavits against the strikers. You find a second Associated Press correspondent, E. Wentworth Prescott, of Boston, dipping into the slush funds of the New Haven Railroad, and giving an explanation of his services, so lacking in plausibility that Interstate Commerce Commissioner Anderson remarks: “I don’t see why they couldn’t just as well have hired you to count the telegraph poles on the street!”

The Associated Press is probably the most iron-clad monopoly in America. It was organized originally as a corporation under the laws of Illinois, but the Illinois courts declared it a monopoly, so it moved out of Illinois, and reorganized itself as a “membership corporation,” thus evading the law. Today, if you wish to start a morning newspaper in the village of Corn Center, Kansas, you may get an Associated Press franchise; but if you want to start one in any city or town within circulating distance of the big “forty-one-vote” 277 insiders, you might as well apply for a flying-machine to visit the moon. The members of the Associated Press have what is called “the right of protest”—that is, they can object to new franchises being issued; and this power they use ruthlessly to maintain their monopoly. Says Will Irwin:

To the best of my knowledge, only two or three new franchises have ever been granted over the right of protest—and those after a terrible fight. Few, indeed, have had the hardihood to apply. When such an application comes up in the annual meeting, the members shake with laughter as they shout out a unanimous “No!” For owing to the exclusive terms of the charter, an Associated Press franchise to a metropolitan newspaper is worth from fifty thousand dollars to two hundred thousand dollars. Abolish the exclusive feature, throw the Association open to all, and you wipe out these values. The publishers are taking no chances with a precedent so dangerous.

A few years ago the editor of the “News” of Santa Cruz, California, applied for the Associated Press franchise for his paper. The San Francisco manager of the Associated Press refused it, and gave this explanation, according to a statement by the editor of the “News”:

The San Francisco daily papers owned all the Associated Press franchises for that city, and they also controlled a vast outlying territory, including Santa Cruz, eighty miles away, and would refuse to permit Associated Press dispatches to be printed by me or anyone else in Santa Cruz.

There is only one way to get by this barrier, and that is to pay the price. Joseph A. Scranton, proprietor of the “Scranton Republican,” forced a man who wished to start another newspaper in Scranton to pay him ten thousand dollars before he could have the Associated Press franchise for that small city. When the “San Francisco Globe” wanted the Associated Press franchise, it had to buy the “San Francisco Post” at the price of a hundred and ten thousand dollars. Admittedly the “Post” had no value, it was not a competitor in any sense; the price paid was for the franchise alone—and it was stated by the “San Francisco Star” that the greater part of the value consisted in a lower telegraph rate, a special privilege granted by the Western Union telegraph company to the Associated Press.

Also the Associated Press, being a membership corporation or club, possesses the legal right to expel and to discipline its members. This right it has specifically asserted in its charter; 278it may expel a member “for any conduct on his part, or on the part of anyone in his employ or connected with his newspaper, which in its absolute discretion it shall deem of such a character as to be prejudicial to the welfare and interest of the corporation and its members, or to justify such expulsion. The action of the members of the corporation in such regard shall be final, and there shall be no right of appeal or review of such action.”

This, you perceive, is power to destroy any newspaper overnight. Not merely may a franchise worth two hundred thousand dollars be wiped out at the whim of the little controlling oligarchy; the entire value of the newspaper may be destroyed; for of course a big morning newspaper cannot exist without its franchise. The masters of the “A. P.” hold this whip over the head of every member; and Will Irwin tells what use they make of it:

Two or three liberal publishers have expressed to me, after mutual pledges of confidence, their opinion of the “A. P. cinch.” And they have finished by saying something like this:

“But for heaven’s sake don’t quote me in print, and don’t tell anyone I’ve said this. The fine for such an offense runs from fifty thousand dollars up!”

In my story of the Colorado coal-strike, I showed you the “A. P.” suppressing news, and the newspapers of the country, without one single exception, keeping silence about it. I showed you one bold managing editor promising to tell the truth, and then suddenly stricken dumb, and not carrying out his promise. Now I have shown you the meaning of the phenomenon.

And yet, in spite of everything, members of the Associated Press do “kick”; they “kick” repeatedly, and word of their “kicks” gets out. Fremont Older complained repeatedly, and so did Van Valkenburg, of the “Philadelphia North American.” Herman Ridder complained—as Mr. Stone himself admitted when a Senate committee pinned him down. I quote a significant colloquy from a Senate “lobby” investigation:

Senator LaFollette: Mr. Stone, has there ever been any complaint made by members of your association of unfairness on the part of the manager or the management of the Association regarding news?

Mr. Stone: Oh, yes, sir. There is hardly—

279Senator LaFollette: Have the members of your association or any member of your association complained that you suppressed important news?

Mr. Stone: Oh, yes, sir, we have had that for years.

Senator LaFollette: That you have colored news?

Mr. Stone: No, sir, I do not think anybody has ever said that. Well, I don’t know about that. We have had complaints on all sides.

This is the Committee on Finance of the United States Senate, holding hearings on the subject of reciprocity with Canada (Senate Document 56, Sixty-second Congress, First Session, Vol. II). The newspapers of the country want a clause by which they can get free paper-pulp from Canada; so the Associated Press sends out full reports of the testimony of newspaper publishers before the Senate Committee. But when certain farmers appear and oppose the reciprocity scheme—listen to Senator McCumber, questioning Herman Ridder, a director of the Associated Press:

How do you account for the fact, which every senator here must have noticed, that while these farmers were giving their testimony the reporters of the Associated Press leaned back in their chairs day after day scarcely taking a note, and that the moment any man came forward to give testimony in favor of this bill every pencil came out and

every pad was on the table and all of our good friends were studiously at work? And that has been the case all through these hearings.

And again:

It is a notorious fact that we have been able to get but one side of the question before the public so far as these hearings are concerned.

Also, consider the testimony brought out by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary (sixty-third Congress, First Session, Senate Resolution 92, Vol. II). It appears that the head of the Sugar Trust had issued a long statement, advocating free raw sugar, and this press-agent material had been sent out in full by the Associated Press. The senators question Melville E. Stone, to find out why, and they cannot even get the name of the Associated Press correspondent who handled the material! It is brought out that the beet sugar interests of the West, which are fighting the Sugar Trust, have made bitter complaint concerning this article, and have been to the head of the Denver office of the Associated Press to demand that their side too shall be given a hearing. You remember how I went to the head of the Denver office of the Associated Press, to try to get a hearing for *my* side—the people’s side—and how completely I failed? Needless to say, it is different when a representative of Big Business makes complaint; this gentleman obtains the promise of the Associated Press to send out six hundred and fifty words, and later on Mr. Stone is found writing to his Denver manager:

Personally I am inclined to discourage the carrying of long statements of a controversial nature, but inasmuch as we carried Mr. Arbuckle’s statement rather fully, my judgment is that we might have handled a little more of Mr. Hamlin’s provided it was prepared as briefly as our copy here indicates.

Here, you see, we are close to the heart of a grave problem. Here are enormous sums of “easy money” in sight. If the managers and district managers and correspondents of our great press associations all sternly decline to touch this “easy money,” they are all, all honorable men; also, they are different from most other men in most other branches of Big Business in America.

Do they all decline? I sincerely hope so. But I recall how Max Eastman, in the “Masses” for July, 1913, made very specific charges against the Associated Press, which thereupon caused Eastman’s arrest for criminal libel. The indictment brought by the Grand Jury against Eastman and Art Young quotes a paragraph from the offending editorial, as follows:

I am told that every trust is to be encouraged to live its life and grow to such proportions that it may and must be taken over by the working public. But one trust that I find it impossible to encourage is this Truth Trust, the Associated Press. So long as the substance of current history continues to be held in cold storage, adulterated, colored with poisonous intentions, and sold to the highest bidder to suit his private purposes, there is small hope that even the free and the intelligent will take the side of justice in the struggle that is before us.

The indictment goes on to interpret the above:

Meaning and intending thereby that the said corporation intentionally withheld, suppressed and concealed from its members information of important items of news and intelligence and intentionally supplied its members with information that was untruthful, biased, inaccurate and incomplete, and that the said corporation *for and in consideration of moneys paid to it* intentionally supplied to its members misinformation concerning happenings and events that constituted the news and intelligence of the day.

281 Then the indictment quotes another paragraph from the editorial:

The representative of the Associated Press was an officer in that military tribunal that hounded the Paint Creek miners into the penitentiary in violation of their constitutional liberties; and this fact is even more significant and more serious than the abrogation of those liberties. It shows that the one thing which all tribes and nations in time have held sacred—the body of Truth—is for sale to organized capital in the United States.

The indictment interprets this as follows:

Meaning and intending thereby that the said corporation was willing to and did *in consideration of money paid to it* knowingly supply to its members information of such untruthful, biased and prejudiced nature and so distorted and incomplete *as the person paying such money might desire*.

This indictment was widely heralded in the press, and everybody thought they were going to get the truth about the Associated Press at last. But when the case was ready for trial, it was mysteriously dropped. For six years I have wondered why it was dropped. I cannot say now that I know; but I have just met Max Eastman, and heard from his lips the story of a certain eminent corporation lawyer in New York, who on several occasions has “kicked over the traces” of Big Business. This man knows a great deal about the Associated Press, and he came forward in this “Masses” case, offering to assist the defense, and to conduct the trial. It was his plan to summon the

heads of high finance in New York, beginning with Pierpont Morgan, and to question them as to the precise details of their relationship to the Associated Press! Aren't you sorry that trial didn't come off? And don't you think it a very serious matter that the Associated Press did not face this precise and definite issue, which it had so publicly raised? Let me speak for myself: If any man accused me in the specific and damaging way above quoted, I would consider that my time, my money, my energy, my very life must be called to the task of vindicating my honor. And if, instead of fighting, I put my tail between my legs and sneaked away from the scene, I would expect men to conclude that there was some guilt upon my conscience.

282

CHAPTER XLIII

THE OWNER AND HIS ADVERTISERS

The third method by which the "kept" press is kept is the method of the advertising subsidy. This is the "legitimate" graft of newspapers and magazines, the main pipeline whereby Big Business feeds its journalistic parasites. Financially speaking, our big newspapers and popular magazines are today more dependent upon their advertisers than they are upon their readers; it is not a cynicism, but the statement of a business fact, that a newspaper or popular magazine is a device for submitting competitive advertising to the public, the reading-matter being bait to bring the public to the hook.

And of course the old saying holds, that "he who pays the piper calls the tune." The extent to which the bait used in the game of journalistic angling is selected and treated by the business fishermen, is a subject which might occupy a volume by itself. Not merely is there general control of the spirit and tone of the paper; there is control in minute details, sometimes grotesque. For example, Arthur Brisbane wrote an article on dietetics, deploring the use of package cereals. The advertising men of the "Evening Journal" came to him, tearing their hair; he had knocked off a hundred thousand dollars a year from the "Journal's" income! Brisbane wrote an editorial pointing out that stiff hats caused baldness, and the "Journal" office was besieged by the hat-dealers who advertised in the paper. Brisbane went to Europe and wrote editorials supporting a municipal subway. Said the advertising man: "Don't you know that Mr. — at Wanamaker's is dead against that sort of thing?"

Max Sherover, in his excellent little pamphlet, "Fakes in American Journalism," writes:

The editor of a New York paper wrote an instructive editorial on the right kind of shoes to wear. The editorial was not inspired by any advertiser. It was simply the result of the editor's study and investigation of the problem of footwear. He advised against the

wearing of the shoe with the curved point and urged in favor of the square-toed shoe. One of the big advertisers somehow got wind of the shoe-editorial that was intended to appear on the following day. 283It so happened that this store-keeper had a shoe-sale scheduled for the following week. He called up the business manager of the newspaper on the 'phone. After five minutes of conversation the editorial went to the waste-basket.

And if the advertisers censor the general ideas, needless to say they censor news about themselves. Henry Siegel owned a department-store in New York; his wife divorced him, and nothing about it appeared in the New York papers—that is, not until after the department-store failed! Our great metropolitan dailies are, as you know, strong protectors of the sanctity of the home; you saw how they treated Upton Sinclair, when he got tied up in the divorce-courts; you saw how they treated Gorky and Herron. But how about the late C. W. Post, of “Postum” fame, when he decided to divorce his wife and marry his stenographer? Hardly a line in the newspapers throughout the country!

I have told how the Philadelphia newspapers suppressed the suicide of one of the Gimbel brothers. This same firm has a store in Milwaukee, and I have before me a letter from the District Attorney of Milwaukee County, setting forth what happened when the vice-president of this firm was indicted for bribing an alderman:

Representatives of Gimbel Brothers requested, as I am credibly informed, the newspapers in which their commercial advertisements appeared to suppress the facts connected with the proceedings of Mr. Hamburger's trial. With two exceptions, so insignificant as to justify their being entirely ignored, the English press did so. The five daily English newspapers published no account whatever of the trial, which occupied about one week and disclosed sensational matter which would have undoubtedly been published broadcast in an ordinary case. Some of these papers printed a very brief notice at the time the case was called, stating this fact, but not all of them did even this much.... It was shown that all the books of account of the Gimbel Brothers, together with their correspondence and legal documents pertaining to the transaction in connection with which the bribery was alleged were burned under the direction of the defendant immediately after it was brought to his attention that the grand jury which indicted him was in session and about to investigate this case. This destruction of the books and documents occurred within the period of the statute of limitation, and less than three years after some of the entries had been made in them. The only explanation for this singular proceeding given by defendant or his business associates was that they lacked room in their vault and found it necessary to do away with papers, books and documents which they felt they could

dispense with. I mention this particular line of evidence because I am satisfied that if such a showing had been made in an ordinary case of bribery the facts 284disclosed would have been given the widest publicity by the daily press. That the proceedings of this trial were suppressed by the English papers of this city for commercial reasons which appealed to their advertising department is unquestioned. Every newspaper man of my acquaintance to whom I have mentioned the matter has admitted the fact and deplored it.

In the same way, when Wanamaker's was detected violating the customs laws, only one Philadelphia newspaper reported the circumstances. There was organized a league for honest advertising, and you might have thought that such a league would have appealed to our highly moral newspapers; but when this league prosecuted a merchant in New York for selling furs under false names, not one newspaper mentioned the circumstances. This merchant was convicted, and again not one New York newspaper mentioned it. In Chicago various firms were prosecuted for misbranding goods, and the local papers suppressed the news. In Milwaukee four firms were prosecuted for selling a potted cheese doped with chemicals, and the newspapers withheld the names of the firms. Says Will Irwin: "I have never seen a story of a shop-lifting case in which the name of the store was mentioned." Also he makes the following statement concerning the most august of the Brahmin newspapers of New England:

The "Boston Evening Transcript" published in its issue of April 8th the fact that a workman had fallen from a tree, that an aged pauper had been found dead in bed, that the Harvard Shooting Club was about to hold a meet, but not the fact that "Harvard Beer," known to every consumer of malt liquors in Massachusetts, was in peril of the law for adulteration. Neither was the fact noted on Monday, April 10. But on Tuesday, April 11, "Harvard Beer—1,000 pure" appeared in the pages of the "Transcript"—as a half-page advertisement!

Every newspaper editor feels this pressure—even though he feels it only in his imagination. A horse that travels in harness does so, not because he likes to travel, but because he carries in his subconsciousness the memory of the whip and the bit which "broke" him in the days of his wild youth. And if, by any chance, he forgets this whip and bit, he is quickly reminded. William Winter, a dramatic critic who had served the "New York Tribune" for forty-four years, was forced to resign because his reviews of plays injured the advertising business of the "Tribune." Certain managers were making money out of producing indecent plays; Mr. Winter rebuked these plays, the 285advertisers protested to the "Tribune," and the managing editor of the "Tribune" censored Mr. Winter's reviews. During the controversy, Mr. Winter wrote to

the managing editor that he had desired to injure the business of the producers of indecent plays; to which the managing editor replied; "My instructions with regard to that page are that the articles are not to be framed with any such purpose."

The same thing happened to Walter Pritchard Eaton, dramatic critic of the "New York Sun." I learned of it just as my book was going to press, and wired Mr. Eaton for the facts. Here is his answer:

Syndicate withdrew ads from "Sun" after my review of Soul Kiss, demanding my discharge. Six months later I was fired, no cause given. Next Sunday all ads back in paper. No actual proof but conclusion pretty plain.

Everywhere in the world of Journalism, high and low, you see this power of the advertiser. I live in the beautiful millionaire city of Pasadena, and every afternoon I get my news of the world from a local paper, which is in some ways among the best. It publishes no scare headlines, and practically no scandal; but in its attitude toward its big commercial advertisers, the attitude of this newspaper is abject. There is a page of moving-picture advertisements, and side by side are columns of "write-ups" of these plays. Nine out of ten of these plays are unspeakable trash, but from the notices you would think that a new era of art was dawning upon Pasadena. All this is "dope," sent out by the moving-picture exploiters; such a thing as an independent and educative review of a moving-picture is not conceivable in my local newspaper. And it is the same with "write-ups" of bargain-sales, and new openings of department-stores. It is the same with the chain of leisure-class hotels; the man who manages and finances these hotels is a local god, and everything he does and says takes the top of the column.

This system of publicity in return for advertising is a fundamentally dishonest one, but it is inseparable from the business of publishing news for profit, and the legitimate and the illegitimate shade into one another so gradually that it would be hard for an honest editor to know where to draw the line. The rule will differ with every newspaper; it may differ with every editor and every mood of every editor. I have made a little study of it with my local newspaper, and had some amusing experiences. Belonging to the Socialist local in Pasadena, I several times had occasion to solicit publicity for Socialist meetings. Being a naturally polite person, I did not go to the editor and say, "I'll buy ten dollars worth of advertising space, if you'll publish a quarter of a column of news about my radical venture." What I did was to insert the advertisement, and then send to the editor the matter I wanted published, and it was published. So I thought this was a regular rule; but some time later, when the labor-men of Pasadena started a co-operative store, and I became vice-president of the enterprise, I inserted

an advertisement of the store, and again presented my “copy” to the newspaper, and I did not get so much space. The advertising manager of the newspaper explained to the manager of the store that his paper could not boost a co-operative store, because the local merchants which supplied the bulk of its advertising were hostile to such an enterprise!

At the last election the people of California had to decide upon a social insurance measure, and a friend of mine wrote an article in favor of this measure, and could not get it published. I suggested that she publish it as an advertisement, but the “Pasadena Star-News” refused it, even in that form, and explained to me the reason—that the lady had referred to Christian Science as “a foolish belief”! The partisans of Christian Science are accustomed to rent a page in this paper every now and then, and to have their foolishness published without question.

A still stranger experience befell a gentleman in Boston, Sinclair Kennedy by name. In April, 1918, Mr. Kennedy learned that his state was falling far behind in the purchase of war savings and thrift stamps, and by way of helping his government in its thrift campaign, he prepared an advertisement consisting of three quotations, the first from a speech by President Wilson, the second from a speech by the Secretary of the Treasury, and the third from a speech by the Chairman of the National War Savings Committee: all three of the quotations urging that people should purchase only necessities, so that the energies of the country might go to war-production. The “Boston Herald and Journal” contracted to publish this advertisement in four issues; it published it in two issues, and then refused to publish it again, and paid to Mr. Kennedy the sum of five hundred dollars damages for breach of contract. The “Boston Post” refused to publish the advertisement at all, its manager giving the reason that it was “contrary to public policy”! I have read of many Socialists being sent to jail upon a charge of interfering with the government’s war activities, but if the manager of the “Boston Post” was sent to jail, the other newspapers did not report it!

What this amounts to is a censorship of the small and occasional advertisers by the large and permanent ones; this censorship is common, and sometimes it is made to wear the aspect of virtue. The best-paying advertisements are those of automobiles and other leisure-class luxuries; as such advertisers will not publish alongside cheap patent medicine fakes, publications like “Collier’s” and the “Outlook” make a boast of censoring their advertisements. But when it comes to protecting their high-priced advertisers, these publications are, as I have shown, every bit as unscrupulous as the sellers of cancer-cures and headache-powders. I, who wish to attack these high-priced advertisers, am forced to publish what I have to say in a paper which can only exist by publishing the advertisements of cancer-cures and headache-powders. This

is very humiliating, but what can I do? Stop writing? If I could have my way, of course, I would write for a publication having a large circulation and publishing honest reading matter and honest advertising matter. But no such publication exists; and I have to decide the question, which does the least harm, a publication with honest advertising matter and dishonest reading matter, or a publication with honest reading matter and dishonest advertising matter.

Also, of course, there will be censorship of advertisements containing news. If the newspaper is suppressing certain facts, it will not permit you to make known these facts, even for money. The "Los Angeles Times," although it bitterly opposed single tax, was willing to take my money for an advertisement in favor of single tax; but the "Times" would not take my money for an advertisement reporting a meeting at which the truth about Russia was told. The "Times" would not sell me space to make known that the Socialists of the city had challenged the Superintendent of Schools to debate the truth of certain false statements which he had made about Russia.

In Louisville is the "People's Church," conducted by an independent clergyman in a theatre, and attended by one or two thousand people every Sunday. The "Louisville Courier-Journal" 288 and its evening edition, the "Times," have not contented themselves with suppressing all news about these meetings for several years; they have also refused all advertisements of this "People's Church." (Since this was written they have put the "People's Church" out of business!)

Some fifteen years ago the most important news being put before the American people was in the form of paid advertisements signed by Thomas W. Lawson. The "New York Times" refused to publish these advertisements, and tens of thousands of New Yorkers, myself among them, were obliged to buy other newspapers in consequence. It cost the "Times" large sums of money to refuse these Lawson broad-sides, but the "Times" made a virtue of it, because the broad-sides threatened the entire profit system, without which the "Times" could not exist. In the same way the newspapers of Baltimore and Boston refused advertisements of a magazine run by Thomas E. Watson in Georgia, on the ground that he was publishing in his magazine articles attacking foreign missions. If you do not believe that interests like this exercise pressure upon newspapers, just try to publish in any capitalist newspaper an advertisement of a book or pamphlet attacking the Roman Catholic Church!

Here in Los Angeles I know a man who set himself up in business as a land-appraiser, and interfered with the leading industry of our community, which is selling real estate to "come ons" from the East. He advised one client that some land in Imperial Valley was worthless, because it contained nearly three per cent of alkali; and this judgment

was later vindicated by a report of the U. S. Bureau of Soils, which I have read. But it happened that this land lay perilously near to the tracts of a great land company, in which the heads of Los Angeles newspapers are interested. The three leading newspapers of Los Angeles broke their contracts with this land-appraiser, threw out his “copy” and ruined his business, and now he is working as a cowboy in the “movies.” And if you think that the power of the real estate sharks is confined to the places where they prey, consider the experience of Rob Wagner, who wrote two articles about the Southern California land-sharks for the “Saturday Evening Post.” The first article, being full of fun, a farce-comedy, was accepted and paid for at once; the second, giving the real story, and being full of meat, was turned down.

289

CHAPTER XLIV

THE ADVERTISING BOYCOTT

If the newspaper fails to protect its big advertisers, the big advertisers will get busy and protect themselves. This happens every now and then, and every newspaper editor has seen it happen. Sometimes an editor gets sick of the game and quits, and then we have a story. For example, William L. Chenery, who was editor of the “Rocky Mountain News” during the Colorado coal-strike, tells me that “the business men of Denver attempted both an advertising and a social boycott in order to prevent the publication of strike news.... I was told that the owner of the paper would not be admitted to the Denver Country Club so long as our editorials seemed to support the cause of the strikers.”

Or take the case of Boston. George French, managing editor of a Boston paper, told how his paper lost four hundred dollars on account of one item which the “interests” had forbidden. Says Mr. French, “That led to a little personal conversation, and to my retiring from the paper.” He goes on to state:

You cannot get anything into the newspapers that in any way rubs up against the business policy of the banks and department stores, or of the public service corporations. Those three great departments of business are welded together with bands ever so much stronger than steel, and you cannot make any impression on them. News of department stores that is discreditable, or in any way attracts unfavorable attention, is all squelched, all kept out of the papers.

I have told how Otis of Los Angeles ran the “Times” as a Republican paper and an “open-shop” paper, and at the same time ran secretly the “Herald,” a Democratic

paper and a “closed-shop” paper. Here is a glimpse of the “Herald” office, as narrated by Frank E. Wolfe, former managing editor of the paper.

The Merchants’ and Manufacturers’ Association took up the proposition of an aviation meet at Domingues Field. This was managed by the walking delegate of the Merchants’ and Manufacturers’ Association. The manager gave out the concessions. I went to Domingues Field 290 personally after the meet had been running a few days and found conditions so abhorrent there that I came back and personally wrote a story about fourteen or sixteen “blind pigs” running....

Immediate reprisals came through the M. and M.—which controls all the advertising placed in the newspapers of the city—by way of taking out of the “Herald” the advertising of a certain department-store—the manager or proprietor of this store being one of the chief moguls of the aviation field. They took their ad out, and the business-manager of the “Herald” came storming in to see me, as they always do in cases of this sort, to see who wrote the story. And when I told him I wrote it myself from facts I had, he wanted me to print an apology. That I have not yet done.

There is a law against workingmen getting together and enforcing a boycott; the Danbury hatters tried it, and the courts fined them several hundred thousand dollars, and took away their homes and turned them out onto the street. But if big advertisers choose to get together and boycott a magazine, the law of course would not dream of being impolite. At the very time that this Danbury hatters case was in the courts, the late C. W. Post was explaining in “Leslie’s,” our barber-shop weekly, how he broke the newspapers and magazines to his will.

A friend of mine once had the honor of meeting Mr. Post and standing in his private vault and being permitted to handle a package containing four million dollars worth of government bonds. All this had been made out of advertisements, which had persuaded the public to buy package cereals, of precisely the same food-value as bread, at a price several times as high as bread. On January 23rd, 1913, Mr. Post published in “Leslie’s” an article, urging business men to organize and refuse to give advertisements to “muck-raking” publications; and “Leslie’s” contributed an illuminating cartoon, “The Fool Who Feeds the Monster!” On April 10th Mr. Post contributed another article, describing his methods. He had his clerks go over all publications, listing objectionable matter, and he sent a form letter to offending publications, threatening to withdraw his valuable advertising unless they promised to be “good” in the future.

Mr. Post told what he was doing. There were others who preferred to work in the dark. Perhaps the most significant case was that of “Collier’s Weekly” and the Ballinger

“land fraud” scandals. Norman Hapgood and Robert Collier broke the Taft administration on that issue, and President Taft, a 291 venomous old man when he was crossed, issued a furious denunciation of “Collier’s”: whereupon the National Association of Manufacturers, the most powerful organization in the country, took the field against “muck-raking” magazines. They not only applied the advertising boycott to “Collier’s,” they set the banks to work, as in the case of “Hampton’s,” and they took away control of the magazine from Robert Collier, and put it into the hands of a banking committee, where it stayed. “Robbie” took to flying aeroplanes, and a year or two ago he died, and “Collier’s” published a full-page obituary of him, telling the many services he had performed for the public—except the one really important service, that he had broken the Taft administration over the Ballinger “land fraud” issue! Imagine a magazine, that, on the death of its owner, does not dare to mention the greatest event of its owner’s life!

I had an opportunity to watch, from the inside, the operation of this advertising boycott, in the case of my article, the “Condemned Meat Industry.” Many pages of advertising were withdrawn from “Everybody’s Magazine”—not merely advertisements of hams and lard, but of fertilizers, soaps and railways. Lawson several times tried to publish the names of these boycotting advertisers, but “Everybody’s” would not let him. “Everybody’s” possibly reflected that it might not keep up this muck-raking business always; when it had secured enough readers, it might let down and become respectable, and then all the big advertisers would come back to it—as they have done!

The few men who really did mean business knew that the advertisers would never come back to them, so they fought the fight through to a finish—their own finish. So it was with “Hampton’s,” so it was with “Pearson’s” under the old régime. “Pearson’s” tried publishing on the cheapest newsprint paper and with no advertisements, and for two or three years “Pearson’s” was the only popular magazine in America from which you could get the truth. It was the only one which dared to fight the Railroad Trust and the Beef Trust, the only one which dared tell the truth about the Associated Press, and about Capitalist Journalism in general.

Early in 1914 it published a series of articles by Charles Edward Russell: “Keeping the Kept Press,” “The Magazine Soft-Pedal,” and “How Business Controls the News.” Russell told the story of the “Boston Traveller,” which was bought by 292a young reformer, and put under the control of a real newspaper man, Marlin E. Pew. The young reformer died, and the Shoe Machinery Trust bought the paper and ordered Pew to be good. He refused, and stood on the contract which he had with the paper. He had a story affecting a big financial house. Threats were made, the business manager was

confronted with ruin, the paper was tied up, and Pew was forced to sell his contract for cash. I write this story, and the name of the paper sounds familiar to me. I search my memory. Oh, yes! It was the “Boston Traveller,” which, a couple of years ago, published a report to the effect that the authorities of Boston were about to confiscate copies of my magazine, and that copies had been thrown out of the library of Radcliffe College. I wrote to the librarian of Radcliffe College, and she replied that the report was a complete fabrication.

Also Russell told how someone tried to run an independent newspaper in Indianapolis, where the street-railway companies, by various manipulations, had boosted the capitalization of the railways from three million dollars to fifty-seven million dollars. The “Indianapolis Sun” exposed the fact that the congestion on these railways was caused by the fact that all the cars were forced to pass in front of certain big department-stores. Then the wage-slaves of the railways started to organize; the “Sun” backed them, and told how the companies had automobiles which threw their lights on the entrance to the hall where the men met, and took the name of every man who entered. Also the “Sun” reported how the railway-companies were having the union leaders slugged—and so the “Sun” reporter was slugged! The Merchants’ Association got busy, and the “Sun” advertisers were warned of a boycott. A “safety commission” of the Chamber of Commerce was organized, and a meeting was held, at which explicit instructions were given to all newspaper editors. The circulation of the “Sun” had gone up from seventeen thousand to forty thousand, but the advertising was cut off, and so the paper had to quit.

In the same way the “Akron Press” ventured to support a strike against the tire-companies, and was boycotted. The same fate befell the “Cincinnati Post,” which ventured to expose a peculiar procedure engineered by a street railway corporation. There was a limitation of twenty-five years upon public franchises, so the state legislature passed a bill, permitting fifty-year franchises. The city council of Cincinnati then passed one fifty-year franchise, after which the legislature repealed the bill permitting fifty-year franchises for anybody else!

In an article in the “Atlantic Monthly” for March, 1910, Prof. Ross explained just how tight the hold of the advertiser upon the newspaper had then become:

Thirty years ago, advertising yielded less than half of the earnings of the daily newspapers. Today it yields at least two-thirds. In the larger dailies the receipts from advertisers are several times the receipts from the readers, in some cases constituting ninety percent of the total revenues. As the newspaper expands to eight,

twelve, and sixteen pages, while the price sinks to three cents, two cents, one cent, the time comes when the advertisers support the newspaper.

And in "Pearson's," Charles Edward Russell gave the figures for the magazines. He shows that at the prices then prevailing (1914), a magazine publishing four hundred thousand copies a month would support a net loss of over sixteen hundred dollars for manufacturing costs alone, not including the cost of illustrations, articles, salaries, rent, etc. All this, plus any profit from the enterprise, must come from the advertising. So largely did magazines depend upon the advertising that some of them were practically given away in order to get circulation. One large magazine was sold wholesale at an average price of three cents, another magazine was paying out a total of five dollars for every one dollar it took in through subscriptions.

And what if the advertising did not come? Why then, of course, the magazine or newspaper went out of business. One case of this sort I happened to see from the inside, as the experience befell one of my intimate friends—Gaylord Wilshire, the first of America's heroic band of "millionaire Socialists." Wilshire came from the West with a couple of hundred thousand dollars, and established a Socialist magazine in New York. He had got the figures from experts; he must have four hundred thousand circulation, and then he would be safe. So he set out to get this circulation. He had a subscription contest, with a trip around the world for a prize. He had another with a grand piano for a prize. He gave away small fortunes; also he published the truth about American public affairs, and he published the most penetrating editorial comment then to be read in America. So he got his four hundred 294thousand subscribers. But alas, he had reckoned without his advertisers! For some strange reason the packers of hams and bacon, the manufacturers of automobiles and ready-made clothing, of toilet perfumeries and fancy cigarettes, would not pay their money to a Socialist magazine! Wilshire was close to the rocks, and decided that to publish a Socialist magazine in America a man needed a gold-mine. He bought a gold-mine, and for the last twelve or thirteen years has been wrestling with it. He has just about got it ready to pay; I wonder, will he get his Socialist paper started before we have Socialism?