

# MANIFOLD ARE THE SINS OF NEWSPAPERS

**Percival Chubb Enumerates Some, Chiefly Omission, Business Office Domination and the "Dressing Up" of Scandal, of Which He Disapproves.**

By Edward Alden Jewell.

**P**ENITENCE is a human virtue—or failing. We all grow penitent at some time or other in our lives, and if thereby a superb plenary indulgence is attained it can scarcely be looked at as other than a commendable investment of emotion.

A penitential half hour with Percival Chubb, director of Ethical Culture for St. Louis! To whom other than Percival Chubb should a representative of the press go for chastisement? Possibly Dr. Felix Adler, only he has just publicly recanted certain equally public indictments brought against American newspapers, thereby insuring to your penitent a mild and half-hearted flogging at best. And certainly if you deliberately go in search of a flogging you want a flogging you will cherish long in the tablets of memory. So it is Percival Chubb. And should even Percival Chubb recant in connection with any opinion divulged through this interview, then penitence, after all, has been expended in vain.

Stripe one:  
Greatest among the sins of American newspapers must be recorded the sin of omission.

"It is true," declared Mr. Chubb, "that the things which are excluded reflect more discredit upon the press than the things included. The true life of the community is not reflected, because there is upon the one hand preponderance and upon the other hand dearth. I realize that this is the cry of the minority; but the minority which defends the culture and ethics of a community must be recognized as the community soul.

"To what extent is the cultural life of humanity expressed in the newspapers of America? Alas, the extent is slender enough. Average men look to the newspapers for life's values, and if the nobler activities of the mind are not or are with pitiful paucity recorded, what will be the calibre of the values which these average men evolve for themselves? I am not in any sense decrying the importance of news, you must understand. Only the empire of news ought to be expanded so as to embrace, and raise also to a more vital dignity, reports of those finer and subtler activities which do not invite lurid verbal investiture.

"For years I have been voicing the appeal for a broader journalistic cooperation with the arts, with education. I have contended that our schools and universities have no adequate public forum by means of which their degree of human service may be broadened and enhanced. Cultural or ethical news is es-

teemed of slight or but comparative importance by the great mass of our newspapers. It is not sensational enough. Yet it embodies the highest and best aspirations of the people."

And Mr. Chubb by no means omitted from his arraignment on the score of omission the failure of the press to open its columns to labor. There is, he declared, an open or tacit agreement among newspapers that comment of any sort upon the activities of labor parties or associations shall be held down to a minimum. Why this should be Mr. Chubb expressed himself incapable of understanding, and he added—"especially since the labor movement is the great, vital movement of the day."

From the sin of omission, and before addressing himself to the more positive or actually committed sins, the St. Lou' ethicist attacked the machinery of newspapers.

Stripe two:  
"The conflict between the business and editorial departments is deplorable. It restricts truth to a commercial base of operations, and in every way hampers honest expression. Advertisers must be catered to, and thus the stamp of the dollar is placed upon opinion, making it dishonest or biased."

And in connection with this curtailment of freedom Mr. Chubb denounced also the reduction of newspaper reporters "from personalities to hirelings."

"There ought to be more individual license," he declared. "Reporters should not be automatons, but persons. Reform in this connection would be a step toward that catholic liberation of the press which must come about



Percival Chubb, who isn't always pleased with the way newspapers are conducted.

**Sunday Papers Strike Him as a Desecration of the Sabbath and Productive of Feverish Mental Turmoil—Comic Supplements Inane and Stupid.**

If the life of a community, in its fullest sense, is to be reflected."

Stripe three:  
"I condemn that much esteemed process of 'dressing up' scandal and crime. It would seem that these things are quite bad enough, and quite sensational enough, just in themselves, to escape the necessity of glaring emphasis. And then, there is that insistent 'playing up' of 'girl stuff.' The escapades of a chorus girl and the elopements of young society constitute legitimate food for the front page galleys. If a newspaper can consistently print a girl's pictures on the front page it has achieved real glory. Here is an account of a great international issue, and here is another account of an important civic decision or crisis. Between them is the smiling face of a debutante or of the bride who wants a divorce. The juxtaposition is absurd.

"Now, then. The reader peruses the front page, which is distinguished by its insistence upon the most lurid aspects of whatever news has been available. Then he turns to two big pages of sports, heavily illustrated. Then he turns to two more pages devoted to finance. And so it goes. Culture? He will find that very slenderly treated. This, in a general way, is a picture of the American newspaper. There are exceptions. There are a few papers which appear honestly to be striving for something better. But for the most part our press is given over to these excesses."

After touching upon the endowed newspaper, stating that its influence would always be an excellent one, Mr. Chubb delivered

Stripe four:

"Let us have no more Sunday papers! They are a desecration of the Sabbath. They ought not to come out. Three or four vast Sunday editions will completely immerse a family. They will fill a house to overflowing. The day of rest and meditation is whipped into a day of feverish mental turmoil. I would like to see the Sunday papers entirely done away with."

"But," I asked, "what about the current news? Could we afford to neglect a whole day's chronicles?"

"Oh, no," he replied quickly. "We need not neglect any news. We need only hold it over to Monday morning, thus looking upon Sunday as a *diez non*. This legal non-existence is applied to Sunday in England. Why should it not be in America?"

Stripe five:  
"The comic supplement ought to be abolished. Or rather it ought to be replaced by a supplement presenting humor instead of inanity. The possibilities of this department are utterly disregarded and the young folks are surfeited with stupid gambols. Furthermore, the youth is unnecessarily educated to a chronic disrespect for age and distress and chivalry. Such comic art is not necessary. It is an evil of long standing, but one which might be eradicated without any loss of prestige to the newspapers subscribing to it."

Stripe six:  
"There ought to be no study of the newspapers in the schools, a practice of recent origin. Newspapers cannot teach school children much it will do them good to learn unless they are first reformed. Lacking culture they might have an effect similar to the present popular vocational training, which teaches pupils how to make money, but gives them no idea of how to spend it intelligently when they get it. Culture should go hand in hand with education of every sort."

There were other stripes also, though the first and main ones have been exposed. It ought to be recorded that Mr. Chubb is a kindest castigator under the sun, for all his strokes are neither mild nor half-hearted. He is sure of himself, sure of his ground, sure that he is right in every criticism. Perhaps it is this very sureness in Mr. Chubb which encourages the even charm of his rebuke. Mr. Chubb never once raised his voice above the moderate pitch prescribed for conversation of the tea table variety. The light of quiet sincerity in his eyes never became clouded by scorn or malice. He spoke like an Attic philosopher, keenly and without frenzy of elocution.

## From a South Sea Islander's Notebook

**I**T WAS noon on Broadway, and the crowds hurrying to the lunch room were gay with the white and tinted plumage of girls from shop and office and sober with the magpie colors of business men's suits, but all with the same look of blended relief and eagerness that marks the hungry worker who is on the way to his steak and potatoes. The Islander walked with them and heard the staccato notes of high tension voices talking of new business deals, of new men who were drivers or failures, of cruel "bosses" and of bosses who could be "fooled easy," of new frocks made up by sewing evenings and Sundays and going without meat for dinner, and

of cats and kings, and especially of little queens in rouge and tulle and princes disguised as callow consumers of cigarettes.

A seemingly endless procession of girls poured out of doorways to join the rush. There were thousands in dark suits, all too many in the sad black that is so serviceable, with here and there a figure distinct in something fashioned from slender purple and love of beauty. A red-haired girl, with a color like the sunny side of an August peach, wore tan with a lace collar and a string of ruddily scintillating beads that made her rosy cheeks a part of the beauty scheme. An Amazon in dark unobtrusive plaid carried her body like a splendid oak, proud and protecting, while a fat little maid, who was minus three teeth, was gay in circular ruffles and narrow skirt of

last season, but radiant with friendly interest in humanity.

The Islander drifted into a tea room on Twenty-ninth Street and sat opposite an ample and motherly person in the late twenties, who had ordered salad and tye bread with a glass of water. "Don't you hate to eat what's good for you?" sighed this very successful buyer for a department store not far away, when she caught a sociable gleam in the Islander's eye. "Do you know what I really want for my lunch? Well, it's a steak and potatoes au gratin, and hot rolls with no end of butter, and two servings of chocolate ice cream for dessert. Isn't it a shame? And my chum is a peeled beanpole, who doesn't dare use lemon juice to whiten her hands because acid is supposed to be an anti-fat."

Her eyes were looking at the problem of fat and the struggle for and against fat, and her thoughts were far away from the dainty room of the white linen and green palms when she finished her frugal meal and methodically folded her napkin and carefully stacked her dishes. A wholesome looking young man loomed in the front door and, recognizing her, came smilingly forward. Her pleased eyes dropped for an instant to the table and she regarded the orderly pile of dishes with knife and fork laid closely across, and the small straight lines of the napkin she had just discarded. She looked up again with a sweep of eyes that changed swiftly from dismay to challenge and then to happy mischief, as the young man and the Islander and a few others "placed her."

## What the Ford Expedition Taught One Woman

**Inez Milholland Boissevain Learned the Futility of Attempting Group Endeavor Without Democratic Organization and the Uselessness of Tackling the Peace Problem Unprepared.**

**I**T IS a long and sometimes perilous way to Europe and back in these times of war, but Inez Milholland Boissevain, lawyer, suffragist and soldier of democracy, recently returned with some of the human fragments of the Ford peace expedition, quite frankly admits she learned lots of things she might have missed had she stayed at home. Mrs. Boissevain resigned as a delegate when she became convinced the coercion of a despotism was replacing the freedom of the democracy she had been led to expect would govern the work of the voyagers.

First, and perhaps paramount in her view, she has seen a politician at work. The fact that this politician was a woman—Mrs. Roszika Schwimmer—made it the more interesting. Mrs. Boissevain has heard and read and made a great many speeches about politicians and their too often disingenuous ways, but never before has she been privileged to analyze one from close up. That she wasn't favorably impressed she doesn't hesitate to say.

Quite flatly, Mrs. Boissevain observes, it was the accomplishment of fixed aims Mrs. Schwimmer sought, by what means it did not matter. Principle she subordinated to method, employing distrust as a means of self-defence, and confiding to no one the things she thought she could do best herself.

"She planned when she got good and ready," says Mrs. Boissevain quite simply, "to ram things down our throats."

"She was so afraid her idea would be violated by precious fools who meant well but didn't know what they were about," she went on, "that she caused an espionage to be established over the newspaper reports that were sent out by wireless, prepared slates for elections and even drafted members of the business staff and ladies' maids to help out with the voting."

"The one great fault with the expedition, however, was its failure to establish democratic organization. Every other flaw is di-

rectly traceable to that—even the planlessness that emphasized our lack of organization of any sort, advertised the absurdities of the pacifists and threw into bold relief the impracticability of their aims as they were going at them.

"When the Scandinavian newspaper men boarded the Oscar II they talked with Mrs. Schwimmer four hours without gaining the slightest inkling of why the Ford party had come to Europe. All the way across we had held meetings on every subject but the one we should have known about, had discussed every question under the sun but the one foremost in our minds. At the end of the two weeks of the voyage no member of the party knew any more about its proposed method of accomplishing its objects than when we left New York. Mrs. Schwimmer couldn't tell the newspaper men. I spoke to them for fifteen minutes, explaining my idea of the neutral conference I supposed we had come to establish.

"Why," said Judge Ben Lindsey to me, 'I had no idea that was what we had come for.'

Governor Hanna expressed similar surprise. There we were, all on that ship for a purpose we knew not what; all eager to help for peace, but powerless to lift a finger to begin any action that might bring results."

Those who ventured a mild protest against the existing order of things brought up against the expedition's Committee of Seven. How they fared is well illustrated by this excerpt from the committee's letter to Mrs. Boissevain concerning her resignation:

"We do not feel that any good purpose can be served by discussing with you the difficulties about which you complain. So far as those difficulties were real they were incidental to the nature of the expedition. And it is clear that your understanding of the conditions has been different from our own. You think that we came together as a democratic body

possessed of certain natural and inalienable rights to organize, elect officers and committees, and generally administer and govern! We feel that we came as guests of Mr. Ford, with no more right, previous to some request from him, to organize and legislate than we should have if you personally did us the honor to invite us to your home for a week-end visit. This is how we read the invitation we re-

ceived from Mr. Ford; and, having accepted it in such a spirit, criticism of the conditions is not at all to our taste."

This was after Ford had started back to the United States and the committee had been designated to act as host in his place. The letter, signed by Louis P. Lochner as secretary of the committee, brought a spirited answer from Mrs. Boissevain.



Inez Milholland Boissevain, who, for one, came back from the Ford trip a sadder but wiser person.

**Activities of a Woman Politician Failed to Impress her Favorably, and She Was Amazed at the General Failure to Give Thought to the Great Work in Hand.**

"We have Mr. Ford's own word, as well as Mrs. Schwimmer's and Mr. Lochner's at the meeting before the election," she wrote, "that democratic organization was to be the basis of the expedition. My understanding then of the nature of the expedition coincides with that of the nature of the organization. To read into it at this late day any other interpretation seems to me little short of misrepresentation.

"Although I am not able to cooperate with you, owing to what appears to me to be your unsound method of procedure, nevertheless I believe it is possible and likely that the very unsound elements of your programme is what, together with the fundamental soundness of your idea, may carry you through to success. You bring an answer that it is not entirely logical to a situation that is not entirely logical. For there is very little that is logical about war. If we lived in a world of philosophers the *genie* of the Ford expedition would not be necessary. But then neither would war. I am unable to cooperate because I am still unable to work along lines that are temperamentally not within my range."

"What was there to be done?" Mrs. Boissevain demanded of her interviewer. "Made to feel that we were guests, we were sure not to be rude to our host by suggesting that some of the other guests get a move on and accomplish something. We could have established a neutral congress—not of the left-overs, but of the pick of the expedition—by a proper pooling of group intelligence. By study and discussion we could have remedied our deficiency in international knowledge. But there was no discussion; there was quarreling. And it was frank, out and out, every day quarreling, too; not even parliamentary."

"Now, it seems to me, instead of offering what little we had to an exhausted Europe, we have alienated the good opinion of the nations we might have helped. If the seemingly established principle of the expedition persists,

the few that are left to do the work can accomplish nothing.

"All along the course of the journey nobody took the trouble to think 'We'll pour out good will,' they said to themselves, 'and beat Europe with a kiss and a tear.' But wars aren't stopped by kisses and tears—at least not in these days. The time is ripe for a neutral conference built on a solid foundation. It might be a long time accomplishing anything, but the very influence of its existence in proper form would be of moral benefit."

Constructively, Mrs. Boissevain believes, she set forth in her letter of resignation, that the expedition was to express the group opinion of a body of more or less average Americans on the need of ending the war and the method by which it could best be done, together with the shaping of plans for the avoidance of future wars.

"I took it for granted," she said, "that the rather vague and nebulous opinion of the body of delegates would be hammered into effective shape by group action and constructive thinking throughout the voyage. The only way it is possible to get at the collective opinion which must be the basis for sound group action is by the method of democratic organization of which I spoke."

"From the beginning I talked insistently about the need for such organization if ever we were to accomplish the purpose for which we set sail. The organization was not formed until three days before the end of the voyage. When finally formed it was abortive and ineffective. Instead of being elected by popular nomination it was elected by a list of Mr. Lochner's, or somebody's, appointees, and hence reflected not the will of the group as a whole, but that of an individual or individuals.

"The expedition was a failure, but a glorious one," concluded Mrs. Boissevain, "and I wouldn't have missed it for the world."