

lieves to be the rapid decadence of the press, but he has a message. Like the prophet, Habakkuk, he prints it so that he who reads may run.

Headline conciseness must tell the contents of his book. Mr. Villard boldly asserts that the news of the New York "Times" can pass only the quantitative, not the qualitative test. In discussing William Randolph Hearst, he recalls Lowell's question, "Why should a man by choice go down to live in his cellar instead of mounting to those fair upper chambers which look toward the sunrise?" Of the New York "World" he says, "It remains the nearest approach to a great liberal daily which we have in America and as such its owners and editors are deserving of high praise." He sees Mr. Munsey as "a dealer in dailies — little else and little more".

He charts Boston on the newspaper map as a journalistic poor farm. "The Christian Science Monitor" of Boston, to which he gives a separate chapter, he fears is long going to be classed as "somewhat colorless", rather "dull" and "monotonous", and that it "will be without the shining edge of the sword of the Apostle". On the other hand, he finds rays of hope in the two newspaper "Suns", which shine in Baltimore, "two of the best, bravest, and widest-awake newspapers in America".

To him, the Philadelphia "Public Ledger" is a newspaper "without a soul". In a competition as to which is America's worst newspaper, he believes that the Chicago "Tribune" would be a most promising entry. In contrast to the two "Suns" of Baltimore, the Kansas City "Star", in his opinion, is "a waning luminary". The New York "Herald"—to quote the concluding phrase of the chapter on the Bennetts and their newspaper—is

PLAYING THE NEWSPAPERS

By James Melvin Lee

AN excellent lay sermon could easily be preached from the text, "The Wages of Sin is Publicity". The newspaper is no exception to the rule, whether its sins be those of commission or those of omission. "Some Newspapers and Newspapermen" by Oswald Garrison Villard is a book of newspaper sermons from the text given in the opening sentence of this paragraph.

Mr. Villard comes from a family that has always stood for the highest ideals in journalism. He may be a weeping Jeremiah over what he be-

"part 'Sun' and part 'Herald', without the great characteristics of either".

In viewing with alarm the editors of today, he points with pride to Godkin and to Garrison, the editors of yesterday.

In his first chapter, Mr. Villard remarks that I am a facile historian of journalism who has preferred not to use the ethical measuring stick. I may, then, be pardoned for asking a few ethical questions. Doubtless, Mr. Villard would condemn the practice of putting yesterday's date line on foreign correspondence that came by mail, in order to create the impression of freshness in news; but how does this practice differ from dating the preface of his book October 1, 1923 when I saw a copy on September 15, 1923?

If the New York "Times" is a capitalist class paper, what does Mr. Villard mean when he publishes in "The Nation" the assertion that the "Times" prints the best labor news in New York City? If, as he asserts, the "Times" fawns at the feet of the rich day in and day out, how does he explain the Stillman scandal on the first page of the "Times"?

If the evening edition of the Philadelphia "Public Ledger" told in nearly half a column about the indictment of the Gimbels for profiteering in certain articles of food, would Mr. Villard, as a newspaper man, say it was ethical for the morning edition the next day to sell the same news to its readers a second time? If so, how does the case differ from the silence of the New York "Evening Post", under Mr. Villard's ownership, when "Collier's Weekly" won in the libel suit brought by the Postum Cereal Company?

Would Mr. Villard like to have me give names and dates when newspapers in New York attacked the New

York "Herald" for the insertion of immoral advertisements in its personal columns? They can be furnished in spite of what is said on page 278 of the book. I could keep on asking similar questions—not in a spirit of malice but just to show how easy it is to be critical. Critics, like newspapers, make mistakes.

Yet the American press needs critics like Mr. Villard. It ought not object to pitiless publicity for itself. Just as an editorial writer may conscientiously support with his pen minor things with which he does not agree when he is in sympathy with the big things for which his paper stands, so a reviewer may endorse a book in the main though he disagrees with many of the points made in the text. Any book that makes newspaper readers more critical will elevate the standard of American journalism.

Some Newspapers and Newspapermen. By
Oswald Garrison Villard. Alfred A.
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