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JOURNALISTIC ETHICS.

WALTER WELLMAN WRITES OF THE CODE OF THE PROFESSION.

It is Unwritten, but Every Self-Respecting Experienced Newspaper Man Knows It and Follows It—Some Instances of Good and Bad Journalism.

WASHINGTON, May 15.—Is there such a thing as newspaper ethics? This is a question which a series of events have brought to the front in Washington. First, a number of the ancient and proper senators thought the newspaper men had no right to send out accounts of the proceedings of the senate in executive session, and they had an investigation which cost a good deal of money and resulted in a fine old farce.

According to the dispatch the statesman in question, who was a member of the funeral committee on the part of the house, staggered into the chamber, fell into a seat, sat there in a dazed condition, staggered out of the chamber when the ceremonies were concluded, fell in passing down the steps, and fell again at the railway station in attempting to board the train.

Here we have the best of answers to the question and conclusive proof that there is such a thing as newspaper ethics. Journalism is a distinct profession, as is the profession of law or medicine. It ought to have its unwritten code of morals and practice. Its members are brought into intimate relationship with individuals daily in connection with important matters, and often with matters of delicacy as affecting reputation and peace of mind.

Here in Washington, however, where journalism is at its highest state of development in America, and that means in the world, I am happy to say that the ethics of the profession, this unwritten law, is constantly becoming better understood, and year after year is better respected.

Journalism as seen at Washington has its ethics, but I do not feel competent to tell what that code of ethics is. Probably no two working newspaper men would describe it alike. But there are certain cardinal features of it known to us all, and of these we may speak.

If we were to tell what we know and make it a business to find out the things which we now only suspect, plenty of gray heads now held high would be humbled. Even women of the fairest fame would suffer. Luckily these are not legitimate subjects of newspaper writing.

press deals forbearingly with them. Had it been more lenient with Riddleberger he might have met a more happy fate. But he was picturesque. The press seized upon his first escapade, painted it in lurid colors, gave him a reputation which at that time he did not deserve, and he fell under the weight of obloquy thus thrust upon him.

Newspaper men at Washington, as elsewhere, must keep confidences. This is one of the unwritten laws which is well understood and almost universally respected. Public men are not afraid to trust the writers. For instance, I called one recent evening on the speaker of the house. Conversation arose incidentally about some public men and measures, and the speaker talked very frankly, as is his wont.

All conversations not understood from the circumstances or by express agreement to be for type are private. It is in applying this rule that one of the chief sources of trouble arises. The newspaper man is often puzzled to know what was intended for publication and what was not. That was the bone of contention in the Cleveland article in New York city.

Eavesdropping is also tabooed. The self-respecting journalist of these times will not hide himself away in closets, or glue his ear to keyholes. Rare stories are told of the manner in which big news has been obtained by these means, but most of these tales are of the old days.

This matter of newspaper ethics is sometimes very intricate and difficult to understand. The public may not be able to understand why a journalist, who would condemn listening at the key hole of a committee room door, could hire an employe of the government printing office to steal a copy of the president's message for him, but I can understand that.

A Pacific coast correspondent borrowed the copy of a member of the ways and means committee to write a paragraph from, and copied the whole bill with a force of six typewriters. That, in my judgment, was fair journalism. So was the scheme set up by a couple of bright correspondents to get an advance copy of the Mills tariff bill when the public mind was filled with curiosity concerning that measure.

"I have left you the wrong package. This is the one that belongs to Mr. Mills," and grabbing the bundle from the servant's hands beat a hasty retreat, as if trying to overtake the wagon, which by this time would be rolling down the street.

The scheme did not work, for the simple reason that the printing office could not print the bills, and hence could not deliver them into the hands of the unsuspecting servant girl. It was a pretty plan, and I am sorry it did not work, for it was good journalism.

AN INFANT IN CUSTODY.

Why Pretty Little Nellie Rudd is a Prisoner.

Nellie Rudd is 3 years old, and a pretty, innocent little child, yet she is an inmate of the Will county jail, at Joliet, Ill., and must remain in custody of the sheriff for some time to come.



NELLIE RUDD.

Arsdale, superintendent of a Chicago foundry's home. He in turn transferred his charge to the Rudds, who have raised it thus far and have grown much attached to the winsome little thing. Nellie's father recently died and left \$1,500 to the mother for the benefit of the child.

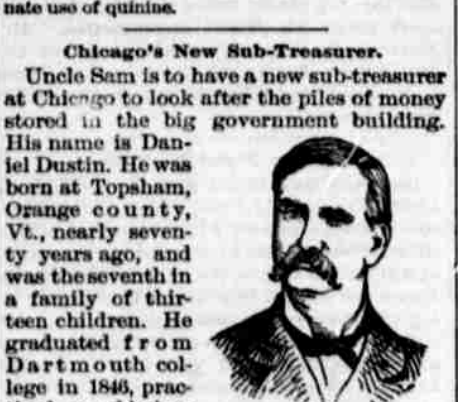
The foster parents with officers followed the woman to Chicago, thence to Mokena and Utica and back to the poor house, where the child was recovered. The claimants then sought the courts. Nellie lay asleep in Mrs. Rudd's arms when the court ordered her into the possession of the sheriff pending the trial.

"Hoodoo" is a word that is generally thought to have its origin in the African term "voodoo." At any rate, no matter what its genesis, the expression implies the possession of malefic powers.

As soon as any of our young animals get written up they die. Look at our gruff. And when the grizzly bears were born we said not a word about them in the public. One we left with his mother and the other I took and began to raise on a bottle.

A Physician's Estimate of Quinine. Dr. William B. Clarke, of Indianapolis, Ind., well known as an alienist and authority on all matters relative to insanity, recently prepared a paper which he entitled "A Study of Suicide."

Chicago's New Sub-Treasurer. Uncle Sam is to have a new sub-treasurer at Chicago to look after the piles of money stored in the big government building.



GEN. DANIEL DUSTIN.

Military Training of Dogs. The French have found a new use for their dogs. They are being trained to act as sentinels.

A Change in Floral Fashion. Old-fashioned flowers are coming into favor again with the residents of the big cities. Orchids and rare roses now have rivals in the daisy, "bachelors' buttons," "hen and chickens," the columbine, larkspur and hollyhock.

"Morally imbecile" is now said to be the correct phrase for describing men and women who are criminal or vicious.

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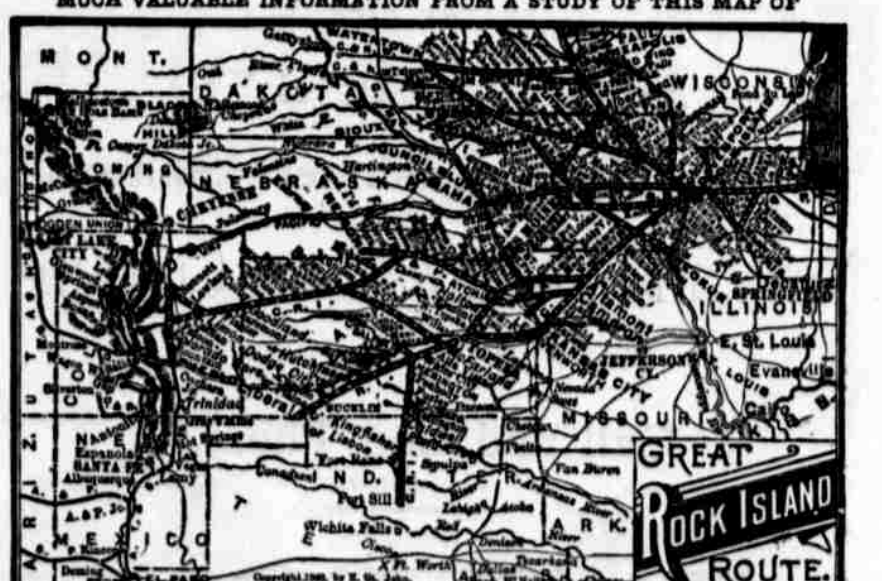
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