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EDITORIAL

We Americans hear so much about the power of a "free press," and the benefits that come from it, that we are liable, unhesitatingly, to look upon the press as conducive only of good. As freedom is better than slavery, so a free press is better than a shackled one. That magic word, "free," has been the open sesame, and in contemplation of it, we have become unmindful of the abuses and shortcomings of the press itself. That the press exerts a mighty influence, he is foolish who denies; but he is more foolish who asserts that it is always exerted for good. We have records of bad men who, having been placed in positions of trust and honor on the bench or in legislative halls, have "quit their meanness;" but history has yet to record the first instance of a newspaper man who has experienced a change of heart under similar conditions.

It is useless to deny that the modern newspaper wilfully and maliciously misrepresents facts in order to disgrace an enemy, help a friend, or carry the day for its party. The truth is sometimes told in indifferent cases; probably because man is naturally a lazy animal, and a little more exertion is usually required to lie than to tell the truth. In cases involving friends or enemies of the papers, one can only read papers of opposite views and strike an average, on the supposition that the prevaricators of the respective papers are of about equal brilliancy and talent; he will, by this means, come very close to the truth. In the case of political candidates, the regard of the average newspaper for truth is enforced only by the statute governing libel. In all cases involving politics, the most bitter attacks, the most scan-