

THE INFLUENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE AMERICAN PRESS.

The nineteenth century has not been without a partial revolution in the manners and intellectual development of society. If durability and stateliness of artifice, were the characteristics of a past age, utility and symmetry are distinctly modern. If the architect formerly studied the more masculine beauty of the Doric structure, he now having added strength to beauty, traces more accurately the effeminate graces of the Corinthian. If the courier formerly dashed along the New England highway, he now yields to the advantages of electric speech.

These changes, these social revolutions are emblems of a nation's progress.

Society then to be progressive must be active. Its currents of industry are as essential to maintain its health, as the currents of the sea to maintain the purity of its waters.

Then, when we look abroad upon the great sea of American industry, we are led to inquire by what hand these currents of industry are moved, and by what power they are guided within their proper channels. Mysterious it may seem, yet deep within the realms of the social circle its works are visible to the penetrating eye.

The printing press is that hand and its influence is its power. Though weak in its influence it is already mighty in its youth. It has hurled tyranny from his throne and placed his sceptre in the hands of liberty and freedom. Bigotry and superstition have vanished like the mist. And man in both body and mind stands comparatively free from the fetters of former dogmas.

Freedom of thought only made way for freedom of speech. The one granted the other was irresistible. Every theory has now its advocates. Even the college has not mistaken the tendency of the age, but boasts of its college journalism as though

it drove the largest and most influential quill in the land.

With us this is decidedly an age of activity and the daily newspaper is its characteristic. The buyer without the latest quotations is out of the market. The politician without the latest returns is out of humor. If meat and wine satisfies the Englishman for dinner, hot bread and a morning paper satisfies the American for breakfast. At the table on the street, in the office, the contents of the paper is read, masticated and duly swallowed. When we see the necessity of accurate knowledge, when we see this mania for reading, when we contemplate the demands of the millions of readers, then only can we realize the intrinsic value of the dusty type, hurled promiscuously within its case.

If the effects of the stage are lasting, the effects of the newspaper are constant. If the stage formerly swayed the minds of a few hundreds, the press now moulds the minds of the millions.

Upon these manners and institutions, that rest in the more immediate control of the citizen, the influence of the press is evidently most effectual. If the rostrum has been the queen, the press has been an acknowledged king, that has swayed the destinies of the republic with imperial sway. For placing side by side the extreme views of monarchy and democracy, it has succeeded in the maintenance of a healthy system of republicanism. If new laws are to be enacted, if reform is to be instigated, if oppression is to be denounced and freedom extolled, it is the press, the *vox populi*, that leads the van, or guards the rear.

If a new movement is contemplated by the statesmen, if a new development of science is to be utilized, if society in general is to be relieved of its parasites, it is the periodical, the journal, the magazine, and the newspaper, each with its appeal that must reach the citizen and his home.

Thus do we see the magic influence of