

Berlin Office:
W., Potsdamer
Strasse 10/11.
Telephone:
VI 1079.

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A., Struve
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GOVERNMENT BY NEWSPAPER.

The publication of the life of Delane, the greatest editor of the *Times* and perhaps the greatest of all editors, will do much to throw a light on the enormous influence of journalism on political events, although it is far from being the case that every journal or every responsible journalist has the same scope of opportunity. Delane, it has been remarked, gave himself to journalism as Turner gave himself to art—with all his heart and soul and strength. His position in London was similar to the position occupied by de Blowitz in Paris, except that Delane was free from the latter's Disraelian eccentricities. The policy of the *Times* has always been rather to follow than to guide public opinion, and Delane's methods certainly indicate that policy very clearly. But now that the *Times* has more than once appeared to totter on the brink of fallibility and seems to be more and more drawn into the general ruck of newspapers, the triumphs of Delane suggest some inquiry into the principles of news-reading, no less than of news-getting or news-making.

Over newspapers thoughtful men appear to be divided into two camps—those who cherish an ideal of newspaper perfection and those who submit to the actual state of affairs. Now acquiescence may spring from two motives, at least; satisfaction or indifference. Let us take a view broad enough to comprehend the idealist, the enthusiast of the existing, and the indifferent person who must have a newspaper whether it is good or bad.

In relation to Government the press is critical and destructive mainly, auxiliary and constructive in a lesser degree. The reasons are obvious enough: first, the newspaper is a private concern (I am, of course, dealing with the English press); it is not officially inspired, in the direct sense, it is not officially subsidised; secondly, the change of parties would make a fixed policy of construction impracticable; thirdly, such rigidity of policy is opposed to the traditions and political habit of the country. Let me examine these reasons more closely.

The newspaper is a private concern. In its political intention it exists primarily as a safeguard erected by the people, as a defence against the potential abuse of their privileges by members of the Government, as the convenient mouthpiece of the electors of the country or of a district. From this position it has worked round to the position of a popular guide, existing by tacit consent as the political custodian and referee of an electoral mass, and pledged to certain principles of government which it is constantly modifying or expanding. To acclaim or to criticize the actions of its own party and to criticize or condemn the actions of its opponents does not involve a constructive independent policy on the part of any newspaper. Nor would such a policy, for many reasons, be consistent with the change of parties and governments. All political principles tend to concentrate about a personal element, and even if a purely independent outlook could be adopted, a newspaper could not pledge itself to any consistent attitude without becoming associated with some political group, both in the government and the electorate, of which it would become the organ.

Supposing it possible, however, that the two former objections were valid reasons for curtailing the liberty of the press, an independent political propaganda is opposed to the political habit of the country. Let us take the example of the Independent Labour Party. This party, it is true, existed primarily as a theoretical press party, but the last general election showed it as being rapidly absorbed into the government; and should the views of this party become common to the majority of the electorate, as they now are to the minority, it must be drawn automatically into the government circle.

It may be urged against the liberty of the press that though its ideas are ultimately absorbed into the government of the country, so great an influence outside official circles might open the way for revolutionary measures and undermine the stability of public opinion. But to this the answer must suffice that public opinion is not created but only completed by the press. The newspaper is subject to the same influences of environment and education as the main body of the electoral classes, and from these influences it can detach neither itself nor its readers. Newspapers act and react constantly on one another; and in England at any rate, where differences arise, they are between the people and the government rather than between the press and the people. The necessity of a good circulation has not a little to do with this agreeable harmony.

In the main, then, we must conclude that the proper function of a healthy press is critical and constructive. But it must not be forgotten, that, apart from its higher function as a leader of opinion, a newspaper must fulfill its eponymous function of giving news; and that here also there are possibilities of inconveniently clashing with the efficiency of government. To encourage a press lacking in interest for the ordinary man would be to make men indifferent to public affairs after a manner far removed from the democratic ideal; but it is sometimes more than a little difficult for the administration to grant particulars of information in which the public has an interest, and to which it has a sort of right. Conjecture, such as Delane employed at many a crisis, is therefore part of the stock-in-trade of journalism. The idealist who would wish to see only the bare fact can look to nothing except a press officially inspired (with most unofficial uprightness) or a skeleton of the driest matter, such as the official gazette. The relation of the administration to the press partakes somewhat of the nature of a game where it is permitted to the parties to score against each other, and a defeat is taken in as good part as one can hope for among keen competitors. Needless to say, the administration, with its admirable, defensive, secretive machinery, scores oftener; and so long as we mean a government to govern we cannot complain if it wishes to do so with as little interference as possible.

WEATHER FORECAST FOR TODAY

of the Royal Saxon Meteorological Institute.

Light airs, bright, with occasional thunder, warmer.

GENERAL NEWS.

NEWS FROM ENGLAND.

KING EDWARD IN NORWAY.

During the banquet at Christiania on Tuesday evening in honour of their Majesties of England, King Haakon drank to the health of King Edward and Queen Alexandra and the British people. It was his firm conviction, he said, that the feelings of friendship between the two countries would continue uninterrupted. In replying to the toast King Edward expressed the hope that peace would always be ensured to Norway.

A WARNING TO KING EDWARD.

Discussing the incident of the German Emperor's letter to Lord Tweedmouth, in the current number of the *Review of Reviews*, Mr. Stead remarks that "a cat may look at a king, but a Kaiser may not write to a First Lord of the Admiralty even when that First Lord happens to be a personal friend." He maintains that to tolerate private conversation between foreign monarchs and British Ministers of State, while inhibiting the exchange of correspondence between them, is an absurd paradox, since a conversation in which personal magnetism can be brought into play, and where there is no permanent record of what is said, is surely a thousand times more dangerous—if danger there be—than an exchange of letters, where there is no personal magnetism, and where the record of what has been written remains in evidence.

Mr. Stead seizes the opportunity to issue a grave warning to King Edward VII., in the latter's capacity of a "commis-voyageur of the peace." No doubts can be entertained of his Majesty's discretion, but considering the protests which many Englishmen made against the German Emperor holding any private communications with British Ministers, it becomes a serious question whether the King ought to continue his visits to foreign Ministers on his journeys on the Continent. Hitherto he has avoided creating any scandal; he has indeed gained great credit. But no one can talk to any intelligent foreigner without discovering that the King is exposing both himself and his country to no small risk of discredit by the rôle which he is now playing. In Paris, in Berlin, in Madrid, and in Rome, King Edward is popularly believed to be the real director of British foreign policy. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that foreign sovereigns and foreign Ministers, who have held long and confidential conversations with his Majesty on questions of international politics, may attach to his remarks an importance to which they are not entitled. They saw that Sir Edward Grey at the Hague Conference was a mere puppet in the hands of Sir Charles Hardinge. They see Sir Charles Hardinge as often as not in attendance upon the King. What wonder if they draw the altogether erroneous conclusion that it is the King rather than his Secretary of State whose word is most to be relied upon when they are calculating the chances of alternative policies. We hear a great deal of the Revival of Kingship nowadays, and so far it will be gladly admitted that Great Britain has profited by the beneficent activity of King

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