



"Give Light and the People Will Find Their Own Way"—Dante

As Great Writer in Century Magazine Sees YOUR Newspaper

WHY are the Scripps-Howard newspapers? Silas Bent, well-known writer, asks this question and undertakes to answer it, in the November issue of the Century Magazine, on the news-stands today. Some of his findings are extremely interesting.

He starts his story with Roy W. Howard, an Indianapolis product, "former newsboy, now chairman of the Scripps-Howard papers and part owner of the news agency," sitting beside President Coolidge at the dinner celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the United Press, and hearing the latter organization described as "a world power, influential beyond the dream of any of its founders."

He tells of the growth of the United Press from a staff of twelve persons, including the office boy, into a service of seventeen languages, for newspapers in thirty-eight countries, with twenty-eight foreign and thirty-six American bureaus, using more than 100,000 miles of leased wire and presenting its dispatches to 20,000,000 American readers.

Then, taking up his question, he says:

"The original why of the Scripps-Howard papers and of the United Press hovered as an unseen presence behind the speaker at the banquet. It was Edward W. Scripps, who with \$10,000 borrowed from an elder brother, founded the newspaper from which sprang the present twenty-six, stretching from coast to coast; it was he who formulated for them the aspiration and principles which, now that he is dead, still mold their policies.

"As an Illinois farm boy, sitting atop a rail fence, he had observed that his fellows worked long and hard for very little, and seldom rose above a persistent drudgery; he had noted, too, that they were ignored and inarticulate.

"Thus the idea came to him of a newspaper for the under dog.

"When, in 1870, he founded the 'Penny Press' (now the Cleveland Press), he told Bob Paine, its editor, that no man with pull or power or money was to be treated better than any other man. This was a keynote."

There follows the story of how the owner soon afterward got himself arrested for reckless driving and found the full account in his own paper and of how the editor, instead of getting fired, got his salary raised.

"There was another incident of those trying early days which had its significance. A young advertising man, by holding out collections embezzled \$4,000. It was a great deal of money to the struggling paper. The business manager wired Scripps proudly that he would lose nothing; a mortgage had been taken on the home of the delinquent's mother. 'You will not prosecute,' came the angry reply, 'you will cancel the mortgage at once. You will put \$4,000 in your profit and loss account due to damned poor management.'"

66 E. W. SCRIPPS wrote little for his papers. He swam with his men, played penny-ante with them, bossed them, quarreled with them and listened

to them, and so by an intimate process he instilled in them his own definite ideas of the why of a newspaper. 'Fire the liar,' was a favorite dictum. There was long-suffering patience for the blunders of youth, but short shrift for the deceiver. 'A newspaper,' Scripps wrote once, 'is a thing of growth, and properly conducted, is everlasting. It is neither a fake nor a snap for a day or two, nor a scheme to bunco money out of fools' pockets. A reputation for honesty, and ability to give good service for money is more necessary than a reputation for virtue in women.'"

THE belief of E. W. Scripps that high wages would not cripple industry, but would heighten prosperity through increased purchasing power, is explained.

"That theory, derided at first, led many persons to denounce the Scripps papers as labor agitators. Now it is a watchword of industrial captains, and has the public approval of Mr. Coolidge. The Scripps-McRae papers, however, and the Scripps-Howard papers afterward were economically partisan, and they were regarded by their conservative neighbors as rather rowdy. If the word Bolshevism had been invented then, they would have been called Bolshevik. They had a Stephen Decatur attitude toward the union; they were for it, right or wrong. As organized labor grew stronger, and the practices of the capitalist group altered for the better, the Scripps-Howard papers modified their policy. The Cleveland paper uncovered corruption in the building trades union, for example, and helped send two men to the penitentiary. The kind of partisanship that had brought a charge of radicalism in an early day, lacked motivation, once the worker was strong enough to stand on his own feet."

66 SHARE the prejudice of most newspaper men against consolidations, mergers and chains," says Bent. "That independence and competition are a prerequisite to a courageous press seems axiomatic. How can a paper under absentee ownership, pledged to contribute its share to the profits of an organization, and subservient to an editorial voice in another city, serve its own community competently?"

This leads him to relate the growth of the Scripps-Howard group in the past year, the purchase of the New York Telegram, the mergers in Memphis and Knoxville and the stirring events in Denver following the purchase of the Rocky Mountain News and the Denver Times. Of this now classic newspaper battle, he says:

"The Scripps-Howard papers do not customarily resort to circulation methods of this sort. But they happened at the time to be in Rome. They fought fire with fire. Elsewhere they have relied, as a rule, on the United Press, the Newspaper Enterprise Association features and the Washington news supplied by the Scripps-Howard Newspaper Alliance, supported by a lively local staff and a forthright editorial

policy. Nor are they merely 'news merchants.' let us see what some of them have done elsewhere.

"In Knoxville, Tenn., by a vigorous campaign against a wasteful and inefficient municipal government, the 'News' succeeded in setting up a city manager plan and enlisting in it not only the support but the service of substantial business men.

"In Evansville, Ind., the 'Press' has divorced the city government from the Ku-Klux Klan, has cleaned up the gambling joints, and there, too, has undertaken to substitute a business-like city manager administration for bossism.

66 IN Indianapolis the fight for a city manager, in which The Times triumphed by a vote of 5 to 1, was but a minor engagement in a greater battle against the Klan."

Bent tells at length of the part played by The Indianapolis Times in cleaning up Indiana.

"The outcome of this fight attracted national attention," he says. "It was a conspicuous example, I take it, of the constructive uses to which 'crusading' newspapers can be put. At a time when the daily press is coming more and more to declare that the exposure of corrupt officials is none of its business, instances of this sort stand out as beacons. It is true that Stephenson might never have smuggled out his message if there had not been another fighting newspaper in Vincennes; it is true that the struggle might have failed but for the assistance, as time went on, of the Indiana press generally. But the fact remains that the tenacity and bravery of the Scripps-Howard paper were mainly responsible."

INSTANCES of this sort might be multiplied. Those I have sketched are not the most remarkable; they were chosen because taken together they present a fair picture. The Scripps-Howard papers seldom quarrel with individuals; they are not condescending or flippant editorially; they are not solemn or sanctimonious; they do not spatter competitors with mud, and they are never too busy for a hearty scrap.

"They are happy warriors.

"In a long newspaper experience, I have never heard of one of them who got into a fight which wasn't a good fight, in a good cause. The instances I have cited show, I think, that these papers have skill, courage and power. They show that not all the American press is indolent and flabby, as is often charged."

The relation of the local editor to the general organization is thus explained by Bent:

"In national policy the papers of this chain are a unit. In wet New York and dry Knoxville they advocate modification of the Volstead act. They did this long before they acquired a New York city newspaper. Editorials on national and international affairs are sent over leased wires from Washington and from New York, but there is no requirement that

any paper shall use every or any editorial. And in local affairs the editor has free play. He decides for himself what his policy shall be as it affects his own community. He alone is responsible for the consequence. The chain thus represents a kind of confederacy, with local autonomy."

SUMMING up his interesting discussion, the writer says:

"At the beginning of 1927 there were more than 1,200 editors, reporters, copyreaders, advertising men, compositors and other employees as stockholders in Scripps-Howard investment companies. They owned shares with an approximate value of \$5,000,000 and an actual value of half as much again.

"The United Press and the Newspaper Enterprise Association (the feature service) are operated quite independent of the papers, and the editor-in-chief of the 'chain' has no jurisdiction over them.

"The Scripps-Howard investment companies are pools of stock in various newspapers of the chain, so grouped as to guard against decline in dividends when a single newspaper finds itself in financial difficulties. The plan is that such losses shall be more than offset by the success of other papers in the group.

"The investment companies do not influence the local policies of the papers, each of which has its distinct list of directors. They serve merely as a device to give employees a stable form of investment, and a share in the profits of the organization.

"The Scripps-Howard papers have improved the standards and the news service in the afternoon field, beyond question; they have supplanted bulletins with compact news coverage, and their competitors have been compelled to follow suit in many instances. They enter with greatest joy that community where other newspapers are lax, and they have vitalized the press in more towns than one.

IN the Scripps-Howard group we have this picture: The dominating influence is editorial, as it should be, and the business office is subordinate; such private interests as might call for the coloring of news are eliminated; financial stability and independence are secured by reductions in the cost of management and editorial content; there is local autonomy and a fighting spirit. These are a heritage from old man Scripps. And it is plain that under the present management the legacy is not being dissipated.

"In the four years, 1920-1924, the chain increased its business 150 per cent, and its circulation since 1920 has risen from 800,000 to more than 2,500,000. Plain speaking and hard hitting have cost dearly in particular places and at particular times, but in the long run they have made headway.

"Accuracy in news, liberalism without fanaticism and tolerance and independence in day-to-day journalism, appear to pay dividends."

THE INDIANAPOLIS TIMES is proud of the fact that it is a member of the great group of newspapers so frankly discussed by Silas Bent in the foregoing.

Wherever there is a Scripps-Howard newspaper there is cleaner government than there would be without that newspaper. The taxpayer gets more for his money than he would get otherwise for Scripps-Howard newspapers charge themselves with the responsibility of fighting in behalf of the public the battle that no individual is enduring enough to fight alone—the battle against public waste; the battle against corruption; the battle against malfeasance and nonfeasance.

The Indianapolis Times stands before you today battle-scarred, but triumphant. Its voice alone in the last few months has been the only voice that was strong enough to be heard above the babble of the political market place where designing men have sought to hawk public rights.

We invite YOU to become a member of the rapidly growing family that, every day, reads

The Indianapolis Times

A Scripps-Howard Newspaper

DON'T miss the opening installments of "The Story of Civilization," written for Scripps-Howard Newspapers, by Dr. Will Durant, noted author of "The Story of Philosophy." Publication will begin soon in The Times.

IF you are not a regular Indianapolis Times subscriber, call the Circulation Department, Main 3500, and ask that your neighborhood carrier boy be instructed to leave The Times at your home every day.