The progressive spirit which characterizes our country is perhaps due more than anything else to the work of the printing press. Its influence has given the form to our civilization, and it is shaping the destiny of our people according to the character of its teachings and the principles it evolves. Especially in times when our country has been in a state of agitation, passing a period of transition, its powerful work has been realized by the way in which it has formed and given unity to public sentiment, given information of circumstances and kept the onward march toward the development of the customs of state into higher and better forms.

The press has made diversity of knowledge possible. It has rendered immortal and free to all the great thoughts of master minds and the valuable researches and discoveries of men of science. Its productions have assumed many uses and offices. and with the development of its facilities of work its importance can hardly be realized. The American people could as well do without the most staple article of their food as they could do without the press and its products.

The great amount of our regular and periodical literature shows the proportions its work has assumed. The press has been the stimulant which has caused the production of the numerous books which are found so abundantly throughout our land and of which we feel so justly proud.

But perhaps the most important of all the products of the press is the newspaper. It is certainly the most extensive and penetrating in its influence, and has grown to be a very important factor in all human affairs. It comes to us in frequent editions and informs the people of coming events or warns them of probable danger. It forms a convenient communication between different parts of the country, thus being of inestimable value to the business world, giving the state of the markets and the demand for certain products in given localities and the abundant supply of products in other localities. It discusses questions of national importance thus giving the people knowledge of the political issues of the day and of the condition of the nation so that people can better comprehend their situation, and when called to act upon

things outside of their own sphere, or when called upon to perform the elective franchise they can do so intelligently. It supplies satisfaction by giving the general news of the community, the state and the world, and furnishes amusement of a high and enobling character.

To men who wish to maintain influence and character it is a check on fraud and crime by its convenient and effectual power of exposure. This publicity makes the whole people inspectors of all that concerns them, brings every deed to the bar of public criticism and renders them subject to that powerful lash public opinion.

But in some respects the American newspaper of today is severely criticised. The most serious charge perhaps is the fact that many papers are not reliable. Also occasionally a journal lowers its tone by holding up to public inspection matters that belong to private life. Party bias and the heated political contests lure them on to the abuse of their power and privilege by misstatements and the spiteful abuse of their opponents.

These defects though serious are not

a fault of all newspapers, and though prevalent are not so perfidious as to destroy the use and influence of this class of our literature. The fault rests not alone with the men who conduct the newspapers, but also with the people who support them. By their history and the circumstances which have attended their development some excuse may be given for their peculiar traits.

In America the opportunities have been such as to enable a very rapid progress. Here the editor is always in contact with something new. He has always been in a struggle with nature and in competition with his fellow men, made more eager and sharp than elsewhere by the possibilities. He is always in a hurry, very alert, and always looking for something to take hold of. What he wants, he wants immediately, and he wants it compact, strong and to the point. Perhaps he would rather gratify an immediate sensation than wait for the satisfaction of deliberate judgment. His readers know that what they read may not be true, but it is clever and shows enterprise. If it is not true no matter, it

will be contradicted tomorrow, and that is something to look forward to, to be amused with. It is undeniable that American people like personalities, and therefore the newspapers produce for them what they prefer. Though the indecent gossip of private affairs cannot be found as a fault of newspapers of most foreign countries, yet the moral tone of our people is far above that of the people in the same foreign countries.

Our newspapers have faults but they accompany almost every agency for good in a like proportion, and their work is none the less important. In the future it will rid itself of the smartness and flippancy with which it is at present disfigured. It will grow back to where its name will indicate its single function. Its writers will be selected for their learning, careful literary training, and fairness of judgment. Political parties will remain a subject of newspaper discussion, but men will learn that it pays to be honest and fair in politics, as well as everything else.

Take it all in all there is no other profession or branch of human industry that can compete with the power of the press in the extent and importance of its influence. It assumes and facilitates all kinds of teaching, and extends it to any distance, and can be heard and felt at any time. It has opened the field of a new art, and given a tone to fine expression of language, and given a finish to romance. Men paint pictures in words more eloquently than artists can color on canvas. Romance can be more thrilling and thorough on page than reality. Arguments more intricately folded and plaited can be delivered by written form than can be conveyed by word of mouth, and thus it is that by the press the highest and greatest good can be and is accomplished.

Geo. V. Johnson.