YELLOW JOURNALISM AND ECONOMICS.

The Sensational Press Cultivates Unwholesome Public Sentiments.

From the Chicago Times-Herald.

A writer in Ganton’s Magazine, a publication devoted to economics and public affairs, exposes the disreputable methods of yellow journalism in dealing with economic matters. He says:

In the discussion of economic questions this scandalous feature of journalism rises up to appeal to the passions, prejudices, and ignorance of the laborers by constantly painting their art of a picture of what they call ‘triumphs’ of unscrupulous and unscrupulous corporations. With the growth of socialism, populism, and anti-wealth public sentiment, this class of journals has directed its most scurrilous attacks toward a few of the more successful corporations which they are unable to bleed through the advertising departments.

He then cites some recent litigation, in connection with which a yellow journal printed a most sensational interview with a Mr. George Rice, of Ohio, accompanied by a huge picture of Rice and John D. Rockefeller facing each other, and representing Rice as saying: “You know well that by the power of your great wealth you have ruined my business, and you cannot deny it.” This writer then proceeds to review the history of the case, in which he shows that for years Rice has been trying to sell an oil plant worth about $50,000 to Mr. Rockefeller for $50,000; that he has made charges before the Interstate Commerce Commission and filed suits in the courts, and that in each and every instance he has failed to establish a case.

Two incidents in the history of this case are of particular interest, showing as they do how the sensational falsehoods of the yellow press may be perpetuated. One was Rice’s sensational interview, in which he accused the railroads of oil of discrimination in favor of “the trust.” These accusations had all been embodied in a complaint to the Interstate Commerce Commission, which had rendered a decision beginning: “The net result of complaint appears to be wholly unfounded.”

The second incident is narrated in the same sensational style, and is to the effect that Rice was complained of by certain railroad companies for 25 cents a barrel for freight, while “the trust” paid but 10 cents, and that the 25 cents excess paid by Rice was turned over to the trust. The truth of this was that Rice had paid $250 excess, which, when discovered, was refunded to him.

Both of these incidents are related in extenso in Lloyd’s “Wealth Against Commonwealth,” but without any explanation that Rice’s charges were proved untrue.

This fact is recalled now to show the basis for much of the labored and scientific propaganda, and we agree with the editor of Ganton’s when he says: “If these sensational, conscienceless journals persist in flattering themselves by this unwholesome and unprincipled kind of business, we have a right to expect that the respectable journals will do something to correct this work by exposure of the fallacy and presentation of the facts in such a manner as to endeavor to neutralize the evil, as well as contribute to the growth of wholesome public opinion on industrial and social questions, the outcome of which must affect the very foundations of society.”

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