

CHAPTER XXVII

THE DIVISION OF A PAPER

The system of the editorial departments of newspapers, metropolitan or provincial, is the same throughout the country. There are even some peculiarities in Japanese journalism as compared with the press of Europe or America.

Every paper consists of eight important divisions, namely, *sei-bu* or management department headed by a management editor, *seiji-bu* or political department under a political editor, *shakai-bu* or society department under an editor, *keizai-bu* or finance and economic department, *gaikoku-tsushin-bu* or cable department, *chihoh-bu* or provincial editions department, *gakugei-bu* or literary department and proof readers section.

These departments are presided over by the editor-in-chief or director of a paper. In Japanese journalism, a management editor as head of the management or editing department ranks with the editors of other departments, not higher as is the case in America. The position of the editor of the so-called society department is unique, being a combination of the partial functions of news editor and city editor. All the news minus politics, diplomacy and finance, and mostly relating to social movements, social occurrences, murder cases, law suits, marriages, railway and other accidents, fires and so on, comes under the administration of the editor of the society department. This 'society' department has its own page. It having been the third page, when most newspapers consisted of four pages only, the reporters belonging to this department were called "third page men". This term had rather a

meaning of contempt, chiefly for the reason that they were underpaid and uncultured in those days. They were simply watchers or gossip writers. No other columns have seen such remarkable changes during the last ten years as this special page. University men made their way into this department and came to view social events from a higher standpoint when the press grew a great deal after the close of the Russo-Japanese War. More men from colleges entered the department and better changes naturally resulted. The scope of the news for this department was greatly enlarged. Labour movements and other such social problems came to be handled by the 'society' editor. This elevation of the 'society' columns was achieved by none but Mr. Norinobu Matsuchi, now general manager of the news department of the Tokyo *Nichi-Nichi*, when he was the 'society' editor of the *Nichi-Nichi* and editing the columns with a principle. Until that time, the page lacked any principle and reporters lacked ideals.

The expansion of the 'society' columns to a broader basis compared with the day when they were limited to reports of murder stories, made it necessary to form various press clubs in almost all departments of the Central Government. The first club formed by 'society' reporters was in the War Office in 1915.

Besides these departments, such papers as the Tokyo *Nichi-Nichi* and the *Asahi*, have a special department for sending news to their Osaka papers, mostly by

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means of the telephone service. The Osaka Mainichi and the Osaka Asahi have also the same department to receive the Tokyo news and send the news of western Japan to their Tokyo papers. That department is called renraku-bu or communications department. The telephone service between the offices in Tokyo and Osaka is connected all day. Short-hand writers are at either end of the wire and exchange more news than otherwise would be possible.

All news has a human element. This element is, however, entirely absent in the reporting of the political and diplomatic news now handled by the political department and the finance and economic news in that column. The 'society' editor aims at the make-up effect of this element which is warmly welcomed by readers. At present, the reporting in all columns except the 'society' page is cut and dry and is in communicate style. It is, therefore, inaccessible to the average home reader. The news handled in these columns is not a whit explanatory or interpretative. A certain bill, say a bill on universal manhood suffrage, if handled in these columns, is just printed as it is, lacking any explanation, however important it may be. Only those who know the question themselves can understand such news accurately by reading it as reported in these columns. Any great incident or political change is now reported to old wives, maid servants, or school girls through the 'society' columns, although it is reported elsewhere in text-book style. There are many even among the intellectuals who first open the 'society' page every morning in expectation of finding the human element in the news it contains.

In order to adjust this duplica-

tion of reporting or the confusion of system, a movement has been started for unification or reformation. It aims at the control of a paper by the 'society' editor or the limitation of its scope to the police news. It plans to unify a paper under a managing editor.

Formerly a paper was divided into two sections, hard and light. By the hard section is meant a department for political, diplomatic and financial news or serious matter, while the light section dealt with human interest features. The 'society' department is the heritage of the light section. The light section supplied news of an amusing nature or of humour or sensationalism.

This two-division system has been abolished but there still exists a department, called the 'society' section, which stands in dependency of others or covers all the spheres of the news department.

The movement for reform was recently raised by certain 'society' editors whose influence was growing, and the fact tells what course this change, if effected at that time, might have taken. It met strong opposition from other departments of papers and failed to be realized. Quite lately a similar movement cropped up, but rather caused by the hard section editors. The Tokyo Asahi claims that it has adopted the new system, which is now called a unified management in this country, but in reality no shade of the change is visible.

The make-up of Japanese papers is different from that of English or American papers. Japanese papers give no heed to symmetry as American papers do, nor have such simple heads as English papers. In the point that they like big headlines, Japanese papers resemble American

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sheets, but their make-up rather resembles French papers. Japanese sheets avoid symmetry and seek changing and unbalanced pages. They have no front page and place important news in different pages, although the tendency now-a-days is towards setting up what is called a front page to assemble all important news in its page. They avoid symmetry, not by a disorderly, hit-or-miss arrangement of headlines, but by a carefully worked-out scheme of display that guides the eye to one spot. It is not the custom of Japanese papers to begin an important story from the top of a column, but they spread stories and scatter headlines in a kaleidoscopically changing mass each day.

Grant Milnor Hyde says in his work, *Newspaper Editing*, "The old-time American newspaper featured its editorials and gave them at least a page, but now editorials have generally lost much of their prestige and in many newspapers are being maintained largely as an empty custom." In Japanese journalism, too, editorials held an important position in the beginning of the Meiji era and editorial writers thought that they would lead the common people. However, they are now losing in importance and giving way to news columns. In this respect, the Japanese press resembles that of America and is quite different from English or French papers. Papers in London or Paris have their editorials on an important page, while the average American paper uses a page near the centre of the issue for its editorials. Japanese papers are printed from right to left and columns are divided horizontally. Editorials are placed on the top column in the third page. In the editorial page, news of secondary importance, mostly political or foreign news, is printed. The style of editorials is now easy, compared to by-

gone days when editorial writers used difficult Chinese expressions and considered it an elegant style. This old Johnsonianism is gone and editorial writers try to make their leaders as widely read as possible. It was only about 1919 that Japanese papers came to use our every day Japanese instead of the literary style. This was a remarkable change in the press world. Editorials were the last to be written in the spoken language, as it was feared by some old timers that in that way they might lose their elegance and imposingness. Simultaneously with this change of style, editorials began to alter their object. Formerly they tried to lead society but now they intend to explain a certain question or present a problem to the round table of the world, although they still express the editorial views on them. Papers are now news-gatherers and news carriers rather than organs of opinion. But papers are unconsciously moulding public opinion by editorial comment or the publication of signed articles written by university professors or other specialists.

The complication of the nature of important problems of the day or the mixup of capital representation in a certain paper naturally makes editorial writers hesitate to go on commenting on the news when it just comes in. In this connection, the courageousness of Mr. Delane of "The Times" as editor must be recalled. Sir Edward Cook says in his work, *Delane of The Times*, published by Constable & Company, London:

"The ordinary member of Parliamentary, even in some cases the political leader, is under no compulsion to declare himself on the instant; he can bide his time, taking counsel first with his friends, or waiting, it may be, to see which way the cat will jump. I recall an ingenious look of

political memoirs in which a Liberal member of Parliament describes his perturbation of mind at the Home Rule kite, and records his prudent resolve 'to make no declaration of policy.' Very different is the case of the editor. The news comes in, perhaps, an hour or two only before some appreciation of it must be published; for in the days of Victorian journalism no self-respecting editor allowed his paper to appear without a leading article on the chief news of the morning or the evening. If the editor be timid, or time-serving, or unready, he will in such case consider himself caught at a terrible disadvantage. To say nothing is to abdicate; but he knows not what to say, and perhaps says words of no meaning, or wraps himself in studied ambiguity, or sits in supposed safety on the fence. To an editor such as was Delane this kind of occasion comes as a signal advantage; it is an occasion which gives zest to his calling."

One of the characteristics of the Japanese press is parliamentary reports to which it pays greater attention than any foreign press. In England or America reports of parliamentary speeches are now slightly treated, while in the Diet season the entire press in this country contains no news other than parliamentary reports, except when any railway or steamship accidents happen or murder cases are reported or the death of some important persons is announced. Mr. R. A. Scott-James says in his work, *The Influence of the Press*.

"But let us try to examine, in one or two features prominent in the newspapers, just what kind of changes

have been brought about by the appeal to the populace. I confine my attention in this chapter to the English papers. Perhaps the most conspicuous change of all is that which led to the cutting down of reports of Parliamentary and other political speeches. That is evidently a loss both to the party politician and to the leisured man interested in party politics. But is it, after all, so great a loss to the community?"

However, I notice that some changes are also happening in the Japanese press and it is expected that the day will come in the near future when the press will be loathe to give first page prestige to all parliamentary reports. One reason for the emphasis of parliamentary news in the Japanese press is the fact that in this country the Diet session lasts only three months in the year.

So far as the literary pages are concerned, Japanese papers are like the continental system of Europe, the favourable side of which is the maintenance of a very high literary standard. Journalists wield a great power as in France or Italy, in the realm of music, literature, art or the drama. Almost all big papers have literary pages and give a chance to new men as well as popular writers. Recently Tokyo papers esteem book reviews more than before and devote more columns to it. The tendency now is the creation of a literary department in the news organization.

In the beginning of journalism papers had only two columns on one page, then four columns and thus more columns came to be used. At present one page is divided into twelve columns. This is compared with eight columns in the average paper in America and England.