

MASTERS *of*  
COPYWRITING

*A Course on The Principles and  
PRACTICE of COPY WRITING*

NEW YORK, USA

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## *I Am the Printing Press*

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I am the printing press, born of the mother earth. My heart is of steel, my limbs are of iron, and my fingers are of brass.

I sing the songs of the world, the oratorios of history, the symphonies of all time.

I am the voice of to-day, the herald of to-morrow. I weave into the warp of the past the woof of the future. I tell the stories of peace and war alike.

I make the human heart beat with passion or tenderness. I stir the pulse of nations. I make brave men do braver deeds.

I inspire the midnight toiler, weary at his loom, to lift his head again and gaze, with fearlessness, into the vast beyond, seeking the consolation of a hope eternal.

When I speak, a myriad people listen to my voice. The Saxon, the Latin, the Celt, the Hun, the Slav, the Hindu, all comprehend me.

I am the tireless clarion of the news. I cry your joys and sorrows every hour. I fill the dullard's mind with thoughts uplifting. I am light, knowledge, power. I epitomize the conquests of mind over matter.

I am the record of all things mankind has achieved. My offspring comes to you in the candle's glow, amid the dim lamps of poverty, the splendor of riches; at sunrise, at high noon, and in the waning evening.

I am the laughter and tears of the world, and I shall never die until all things return to the immutable dust.

I am the printing press.

**ROBERT H. DAVIS.**

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## *Preface*

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THE list of authors of the present volume includes men and women who incontestably are or have been in the front rank of their profession; whose work is or has been very conspicuously successful; whose record of service in advertising is long, notable or distinguished and whose claim to be included is self-evident in their contributions. By good fortune, there are included the writings on copy of several outstanding men of acknowledged genius in advertising, who are now dead. One of these, George L. Dyer, has left almost no other written record of his point of view, except in the splendidly successful advertising of his clients. The selection, therefore, the editor believes, is notably representative of American masters of advertising copy.

It is advisable to note here that the authors of the chapters have been permitted to paragraph or sub-head their material in their own way, without attempt at making style uniform. This, the editor believes, is a courtesy inherent in the subject and the plan.

The matter of reproduction of examples of advertisements has, by common consent, been omitted, for the simple reason that, like hats, advertisements go out of style in appearance, and this book is meant to focus attention not on external form, but on the principles of copy.

It may be anticipated that in future editions of this book other contributors will be included, for the problems of advertising are now greater than ever. The editor

cherishes the hope that the readers will agree with him that the book is not only practically helpful in the study of copy, but is also historically important, as it collects and conserves the writings of the men who have made history in advertising writing.

**THE PUBLISHER.**

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**INTRODUCTION**  
*The Story of Advertising Writing*  
**By J. George Frederick**

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**P**ERMIT yourself, if you will, to be transported for a swift sight-seeing ride, backward over the dead centuries. The reward will be an adequate perspective on advertising which we moderns tend to regard as rather a present-day invention.

Presto! We are back 25,000 years, among the silent woods and hills of France, in the caves (recently discovered) of stone-age men. Being shades, we enter the rocky hallway unobserved, past the fires around which squat short, hairy men. By the flaring light of these fires we see on the walls many crude carvings, and we move along toward the first advertising workshop. A caveman stands at the wall hammering at the rock, making a bas-relief which will advertise his hunting prowess to his fellow-hunters. He has finished the picture and is cutting the headline of the ad, using some strange symbols—the forerunners, possibly, of language, set in Caslon type!

In another instant, we are at Babylon, 3500 B. C., noting a diligent personage in a high headdress manipulating a kind of stylus upon a little pat of red soft clay. He is working with speed and neatness, making cuneiform letters with an ease and grace startlingly similar to that of the man in a modern department store, lettering a window sign with a lettering pen. Finishing the writing,



the Babylonian gently sets his clay tablet into an oven and bakes it. On the morrow he will send a runner with it to some distant points along the Euphrates. It contains a statement of what cattle and feed his employer (I almost said his client) has for sale, and at what prices. He is the first hired advertising man. I have in my possession this very clay tablet or its prototype.

Again we spread wings and let a dozen or two of centuries slip under our feet, and we are in Thebes, Egypt, about 1100 B. C. An austere Egyptian aristocrat is dictating to his *amanuensis* a statement that he will offer a reward for the return of a valuable slave who has run away. The *amanuensis* is writing this “ad” upon papyrus. It will probably be hung up in public. You can see the original in the British Museum to-day. Papyrus is the first dim hint of the newsprint and the other members of the paper family upon which millions of “ads” are to be printed 3,000 years later.

Gently we let time glide us forward until we find ourselves in Greece and Rome. Both these great peoples, from whom we have borrowed so much else that has ennobled and enriched our heritage, were very familiar indeed with advertising. There must have been something of a profession of advertising then, for the walls of Pompeii and Herculaneum, which are visible to-day, were crowded full of announcements painted in black and red. The things advertised were plays, exhibitions, gladiatorial shows, salt- and fresh-water baths. Bills termed *libelli* were the media of news of sales of estates, lost and found articles, absconded debtors, etc. Police regulations were given to the public via such advertisements; and some were permanently cut in stone and terra cotta relief, set in pilasters decorating the front of public buildings.

Even the ancient Greeks had the crier—a most im

portant person indeed, who generally was an officer of the state or municipal government. He went about crying his news like any good advertising man dictating his ads—with this difference: he was accompanied by a musician! The flamboyant advertising adjective was probably born with him, for he is reputed to have used much hyperbole and rhetorical flourish. He must have had good advertising results or he would not have been continued so long.

We now fly over a dark void of many centuries; for with the decay of Roman civilization Europe sank to an illiterate level, to a long period of retrogression. Still, advertising being a *fundamental* human necessity, it did not disappear like other things of civilization; it merely receded to the mode of the ancient Greeks—the crier just described. These public criers of the Middle Ages were actually an organized body of advertising men, functionaries of the state, as in old Greece. They had a peculiar, standardized call, of which one is reminded when one hears even a modern law court called to order with the words: “Oyez, oyez!” When this call—this ad—fell upon the ears of the public, people rushed from out of their homes to hear. The criers had exclusive right to news of auctions and other sales. News of weddings, christenings, funerals, royal decrees, offerings of merchandise fell from their lips. Later individual merchants employed individual criers.

Even in the eighteenth century, the noise of criers in the streets was a fair parallel to our noise of autos and fire engines and Coney Island. It was a pandemonium of “Buy, Buy, Buy”; “Rally up, ladies”; “What d’ye lack?”

Later came the English medieval guilds and the huge City Companies who used the equivalent of the modern poster. The Weavers’, the Mercers’, Glovers’, Gold-

smiths', or Haberdashers' Guilds vied with each other to devise elaborate signs, which were suspended from shops, elevated on posts, and even made into archways. An Act of Parliament in 1762 limited the signs, and then more artistry was used. Even such famous artists as Hogarth, Holbein, Correggio and others painted signs. The era of advertising writing and advertising art was begun!

But already that greatest of civilized tools, the printing press, had been acquiring facilities for taking over the raucous job of the criers. William Caxton brought the first printing press to England in 1477. He started to print his signs ("handbills"; from the Latin *si signis*, "if anybody," with which words the handbills usually began). The advertising possibilities of these handbills were quickly evident, and soon taverns, town halls, *walls* and even cathedrals were posted with them; advertising books, plays, boxing shows, merchandise, etc.

Then came newspapers and periodicals, starting with Nathaniel Butter's *Weekly Newes* in London, in 1632. They were mainly what we would to-day call "house organs" for politicians, parties and persons, but written with delicious venom and spleen. Butter was the first publisher in the world to print an ad, but the first publication to get *paid* for it was *Mist's Weekly Journal*. The first publisher who realized the future of advertising was Sir Robert L'Estrange, who had three publications, one boldly proclaiming itself the especial carrier of ads—the *Mercury, or Advertisements Concerning Trade* (1668).

*The London Gazette* (1666) carried the following announcement:

An advertisement being daily prest to the Publication of Books, Medicines and other things not properly the business of a Paper of Intelligence. This is to notifie once for all, that we will not

charge the Gazette with advertisements, unless they be matters of State, but that a paper of Advertisements will be forthwith printed apart, and recommended to the Publick by another hand.

It is perfectly evident from the above that disdain was the prevalent attitude to advertisements. This is perhaps reflected in the fact that from 1712 all the way to 1853, the Crown levied a tax on advertisements.

However, with the first daily paper, the *Daily Courant*, London (1762), advertising became a matter-of-fact and important part of daily life in the sense that we know it to-day.

And with this development came also, naturally, the advertising writer, even the advertising agent. The coffee houses were the haunts of the *literati*, and the habitat of the advertising man in those days—again naturally—was the coffee house. Thus even in those pioneering days, as now, advertising was intertwined with the literary and the artistic life of the people. Dr. Johnson himself did not consider it beneath him to write advertising copy. The coffee houses functioned as the offices of advertising agents, who collected “advertorial copy” and passed it to the periodicals. Such coffee houses as The Star in St. Paul’s churchyard, Suttle’s Coffee House in Finch Lane and a coffee house in Ave Maria Lane were hangouts for ad men, doing business over the bar, writing ads *on* the bar or on the tables.

What was advertising copy like in those days? Here is an example from the *Publick Advertiser*, May 19, 1657, entitled “The Virtue of Coffee”:

In Bartholomew Lane, on the backside of the Old Exchange, the drink called Coffee, which is a very wholesom and Physical drink, having many excellent vertues, closes the Orifice of the Stomach,

fortifies the heat within, helpeth Digestion, quickeneth the Spirits, maketh the heart lightsom, is good against Eye-Sores, Coughs or Colds, Rheums, Consumptions, Headache, Dropsie, Gout, Scurvy, King's Evil, and many others, is to be sold both in the morning and at three of the clock in the afternoon.

Addison's famous *Spectator*, whose literary reputation lingers to this day, carried a typical small ad in 1711:

Mrs. Attway states that she will sell a quantity of good silk gowns, a parcel of rich brocades, venetian and thread satins, tissues and damasks—great pennyworths bought of people that have failed.

The advertising need and urge have been shown here in historical perspective over the long centuries of humanity's past. This need and instinct have been implicit in human nature and human life, as literature itself testifies. The anecdote of Alcibiades who had determined to become famous will illustrate. He knew he had to make people "talk," so he bought the most famous dog in the community and cut off his tail! Then the public "talked," and Alcibiades was a name known to all! We have also Bob Sawyer in Dickens' *Pickwick Papers*, who, to build his reputation as a doctor, plotted with his boy to call him from church in the middle of the service with all possible commotion, in order to impress the people with his busy practise. We would know these things to-day as trick press agency, outside the pale of good advertising.

\* \* \* \* \*

The American colonies in the earlier days, being at that period rather an exact duplicate of England, in custom and practise, had much the same advertising history, even to the town criers.

Advertising in America, outside of criers and handbills, was naturally dependent upon periodicals, and it was 1704 before an American weekly was founded (*The Boston News Letter*), which forty years later could boast of having only 300 subscribers! It was 1778 before the first daily newspaper (*The Pennsylvania Packet*) appeared. The first magazine appeared in 1741, in Philadelphia—oddly enough two rivals were born three days apart. Of these one was published by Benjamin Franklin, who claimed that his rival, Bradford, had stolen his idea from the announcement advertisement. But alas, only three numbers of the rival's magazine ever appeared, and only six numbers of Franklin's *General Magazine or Historical Chronicle*. Before the end of the century, however, forty or more magazines were started, and many newspapers.

Advertising in these periodicals modeled itself definitely along English lines, and we now see how perfect a reflex of the life and habits of the people the advertisements of a period can be. The "ads" of that period are like peeps into the windows of the families of the day. The *New York Journal* (which few people realize was published that early) contained in 1766 this ad, rather brutally calling to mind the great distance we have traveled in humanitarian principles:

To be sold, for no fault, a very good wench, 22 years old, with a child 18 months old. Enquire of the printer.

Men wrote their own advertisements in those days; even men like Washington and Jefferson. (It is sometimes overlooked that both these men possessed and operated various business enterprises.)

It is hard, in discussing advertising in America, not to give attention to Benjamin Franklin, for he was an ad-

vertising writer by instinct and inclination, and is bound up inseparably with the development of printing, publishing and advertising in America. He began to print in 1728. His *Pennsylvania Gazette* came into existence in 1729. In 1741 he published his *General Magazine* which had a short life, but not too short to print one and only one advertisement, which, it would appear, was *the first American advertisement*. Here it is:

There is a F E R R Y kept over Potomack (by the Subfcriber) being the Poft Road and much the nigheft way from Annapolis to Williamfburg, where all Gentlemen may depend on a ready Paffage in a good new Boat with able Hands. Richard Brett, Deputy-Poft-Mafter at Potomack.

For a century after this American advertising, as elsewhere, made practically no progress, being confined to classified ads of a local, provincial kind.

The advertising situation at about the Civil War period was the farthest conceivable distance from the present-day status. Not the faintest inkling seems to have penetrated anybody's mind as to what was coming. The establishment of the big dailies (New York *Sun*, 1833; New York *Herald*, 1835; New York *Tribune*, 1841; Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, 1836) did not develop much advertising. Few used the columns of these large city dailies, today carrying millions of lines of display—far much beyond the classified ads of the routine variety.

It was Robert Bonner, who was the Hearst or the Curtis of his day with his New York *Ledger*—a man with the advertising instinct sticking out all over him—who first stirred up the display advertising idea in a really modern sense. He startled people by taking entire page ads to say in large letters: "Fanny Fern writes only for the *Ledger*." He got amazing results, for a signifi

cant reason—he had the advertising stage all to himself, and the law of contrast gave him 100% advantage. “I get all the money I can lay my hands on and throw it out to the newspaper,” he said, “and before I get back to my office there it all is again, and a lot more with it !” Bonner’s instinct for publicity was like Barnum’s; he was a great showman. His paper, which Godkin satirically said was filled with “tales of The Demon Cabman, The Maiden’s Revenge” and other “low and coarse” material, got Edward Everett to write for it—Everett, ex-president of Harvard, ex-ambassador, exquisite stylist and scholar! It made a sensation.

Now for the paradox: although Bonner used advertising with great success, *nobody else did*; and his *Ledger*, which was the *Cosmopolitan* or the *Saturday Evening Post* of the day, *never carried a single ad*! There were no business houses which considered its space valuable. The magazines of the period were so completely without advertising patronage that George P. Rowell, founder of *Printers’ Ink*, once became the owner of the outside cover page of *Our Young Folks* for a year, but even he could not dispose of it, so he used it himself.

The truth is, advertising was looked down upon, not only by the public, but by business men. Not only was it unvalued; it was actually an object of contempt. It is amusing to-day to note the airs put on by *The Chicago Magazine*, for instance, before the Civil War. It frankly announced that its editorial plans were “to daguerreotype leading citizens in nearby towns” (a little graft game we know how to smile at to-day); yet it was able to say in the same issue, “we respond to the wish of a contemporary that we might be able to dispense with advertising, but at present the law of necessity must overrule the law of taste.” If Chicago felt that way, it may be imagined how Boston and Philadelphia felt.



*Scribner's Magazine* "broke the ice," about 1870. In 1868 *Harper's Magazine* was still refusing advertisements; in fact, even in the early seventies an offer of \$18,000 for the last page of *Harper's* for a year for a Howe Sewing Machine ad was refused. It was not until 1882 that *Harper's* yielded.

*Scribner's* in 1870 went out after advertising—the first magazine to make the innovation. It was only a year after George P. Rowell had begun—in 1869—to publish the first directory of newspapers and periodicals, and had set himself up as an advertising agent.

It is significant that the average span of life in the U. S. in 1870, when magazines first accepted advertising, was only 45 years, whereas to-day it is 58. Who could deny that the astounding spread, since 1870, of ideas of sanitation and health, even to the rural districts, has been accomplished very largely through the advertising of sanitary and health-building merchandise, and the ideas printed and widely disseminated in the periodicals made possible by advertising patronage?

The rapidity of growth of advertising is seen in the fact that twelve years after *Harper's* had opened its pages to advertising, it was carrying 144 pages, at a page rate of \$250, or \$36,000. The six leading monthlies of December, 1894, according to a computation once made by F. W. Ayer, earned \$180,000 worth of advertising. To-day the December issues of the six leading periodicals carry several millions of dollars worth of business.

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The period of American advertising, such as it was, from the Civil War almost to the end of the last century, was dominated largely by patent medicine advertisers. The only association of advertising men and advertisers was headed by and operated mainly in the in-

terest of the outstanding patent medicines of the day. I well remember a blizzard day in February, even as late as 1903, when I attended the convention of “national advertisers” at Delmonico’s in New York—a hostelry now no more. This convention was the only national group of ad men existing. Scarcely fifty people were present, and if I remember aright, Dr. Pierce presided. Yet even at the moment S. S. McClure was approaching the heyday of his success with *McClure’s Magazine*, and the general magazine field was soon to attain its far wider importance in the advertising world. At that pivotal point there was only a handful of manufacturers who advertised consistently. The acceptance of advertising as a matter-of-fact tool of industry was still ten years off. The movement to clean up advertising pages and outlaw the nostrums, which for almost a century had been crippling the prestige of advertising, was only a feeble voice in the wilderness.

Advertising copy in the nineties was a matter of slogans, jingles, pictures, testimonial letters, appeals to fear, and the bare featuring of name and crude trademark. “Use Pear’s Soap” as an example of complete copy for an ad was still many firms’ idea of good advertising. Dependence by the patent medicine men was upon newspaper advertisements, bought by a sharp bargaining process at very low rates on contract; sign space upon fence and barn signs, and upon almanacs which were calculated to alarm you about your liver while you were looking up a date. I had worked in a newspaper composing room in those days, and some of the old “typos” regularly bought the patent medicine advertised in the copy they set up, so well did the advertiser calculate his copy appeal!

Meantime, for some years, George P. Rowell, owner and editor of *Printer’s Ink*, had been serving as a mouth-

piece and a focal point for the nascent profession of advertising, his pages carrying articles by the men who were then thinking out the problems of advertising. His policy of wide, free distribution of *Printer's Ink* resulted in planting the advertising idea in many places all over the country, and there began to take shape a body of modernized ideas on advertising writing.

At that time the liveliest advertising men, from a progressive copy-writing point of view, were the department store advertising managers. Some of these, like Powers of John Wanamaker's, were far-seeing and highly skilful, with a background of high-grade journalism. They wrote about many kinds of merchandise in a manner quite unknown before. They really described, adequately and with imagination, the goods they were selling. Few, if any, manufacturers were doing this in their general advertising, being wedded to economy of space and the idea of very few words and little argument.

Under the impetus of the Powers "school" of retail advertising copy writers, whose ideas and ads were frequently set forth in Rowell's *Printer's Ink*, the enlarged conception of copy's place in good advertising grew apace. The editor of this Volume was one of this group—which included James H. Collins—of early writers in *Printer's Ink*, before Mr. Rowell died. Very soon, the new copy ideas invaded the general advertising field. Charles Austin Bates in New York, N. W. Ayer in Philadelphia and Lord & Thomas in Chicago, were the live advertising agencies applying modern ideas in copy. Bates began to publish a magazine, *Current Advertising*, with Leroy Fairman ridiculing the old-style copy. Lord & Thomas in Chicago published *Judicious Advertising*. Both magazines became propagandists of better copy ideas. A. D. Lasker, then a very young man, was made head of the Lord & Thomas agency, and he soon began a very de

terminated, aggressive campaign to revolutionize ideas in copy in the manufacturing field, by means of a phrase, “reason why” copy. John Kennedy and the editor of this book, as well as several others, were brought to Chicago to be leaders in this campaign, which is acknowledged to have been vital in the history of advertising. This “reason why” idea of copy was an epoch-making rebellion in copy writing from old standards, analogous to Martin Luther’s protestant rebellion in religion; it aimed at an appeal to reason and intelligence rather than the time-honored assumption that the public was a mass of dumb, driven sheep, who could be swayed with mere picture-and-catch-word.

This ten-year fight to establish the “reason why” ideas in copy was finally won, because all intelligent men in advertising joined hands with it; though, naturally, at the same time the original extreme position of its promulgators was modified. The editor of this volume well remembers the bitter debates of that period over copy, and remembers also his errors in emphasizing too much sheer reason and logic and over-long copy in advertising. The important accomplishment, aided by wide-awake advertising men everywhere, was the coming of greater flexibility and life into advertising, more sincerity, more information, more fact, more literature. Advertising changed from a museum of inert waxworks into a wonderful stage of living players who gave the public thrills and real values. Words had come into their own; copy was supreme. The manufacturers of standard high-grade merchandise began to use advertising as a vital sales tool—a natural consequence, because advertising brought returns.

The historic fact is, furthermore, that American periodicals from that day forth blossomed also into life and wider usefulness. The “*McClure’s*” and “*Everybody’s*,”

magazines of important civic services to the country, spawned and grew upon the support of advertising. The live, able newspapers of the country, the splendid trade and general periodicals serving their groups for greater education, took on the hue of health because of the twin service of advertising value which to this day makes it at least a matter of debate whether the advertising pages are not of equal service to subscribers, *purely as reading matter*, as the editorial pages themselves. Certainly the *Dry Goods Economist*, *The Iron Age*, *The Engineering News*, etc., would be very definitely less useful without their advertising, which are current technical news bulletins in themselves. Advertising copy became *worth reading*, began to furnish information, to bear a real relation to life, and to affect and stimulate thought, just as editorial pages are supposed to do.

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With the modernization of ideas about advertising copy and the consequent phenomenal increase in advertising came another problem, *that of irresponsible, objectionable advertising*. Sentiment against patent medicine advertising had been forming slowly—Edward Bok of the *Ladies Home Journal* leading the fight,—and one by one magazines rejected the nostrums living off the ignorance and fears of the public. The idea gained currency that such advertising was decreasing the pulling power of sound commodity advertising; that public confidence in legitimate concerns was being injured by seeing their advertising side by side with fraudulent, false advertising. The better type of newspapers, such as the *New York Times* and others, set up standards, and soon the entire advertising profession was centering attention on the subject. The advertising clubs movement which had resulted in a national organization (at first a mere junket-

ing group) took up the cry and began a crusade with almost religious fervor. For ten years this fight waged, vigilance committees being organized to take action, and legislative efforts undertaken to secure passage of the *Printer's Ink* model statute against fraudulent and misleading advertising. To-day practically all states have adequate laws, and there exists a large and well-organized machine, composed of the Better Business Bureaus, for the work not only of stamping out fraudulent advertising, but of offering constructive guidance in disputed or dubious matters of advertising representation.

Meantime the technique of copy grew in vision and outlook as more and more money was used in application of the advertising method. Advertising became less a *mere* matter of copy and media and more a coordination of practical sales-management and the closer analysis of conditions of distribution and consumption. "Arm chair" copy-writing gave way to market survey-built copy. Intuitive insight into the public mind began to be supplemented by research-backed judgments of consumer-reactions. Particularly so after a period of five or six years of rather unsatisfactory flirting with the science of psychology as a guide to copy. A body of very valuable knowledge was turned up by the interest in psychology as it relates to advertising, especially the contribution of Prof. H. L. Hollingsworth of Columbia University, and Walter Dill Scott, now President of Northwestern University. But the application of psychological knowledge was limited to those who could grasp the subject, and still further to those with minds able to apply its broad generalizations practically and wisely. The need was so much greater for knowledge of practical economic factors in the field that more attention began to be paid to research, a factor now bulking very large and permanently in matters of copy preparation.

But it is true that advertising writing, like any other form of writing, must always, in the main, be instinctive and imaginative; very close to facts at the base, but tempered and planned with use of all the arts and sciences. Literary art, psychological science, sociological insight, biological understanding, philosophical acumen, as well as the unlabeled and uncharted matter of knowledge of life and people,—all these enter into copy-writing. An almost gnomic wisdom about the human being,—his weaknesses, his perversities, his strengths and his habits,—are necessary in the copy writer, *par excellence*. It is, therefore, small wonder that among advertising writers are found men and women whose writing is as acceptable to the public in the form of articles and fiction as in the form of advertising, since writing of every kind must be based on interest, artistic perception and creative capacity.

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Words, printed thoughts, are at the very zenith of power to-day. Even in ancient civilizations, Greek and Roman, it was chiefly orators, poets and writers who made men act. Oratory has dimmed in power only because of its physical limitations (which radio now has to some degree removed). The printed word, through the genius of the automatic printing press, has now an audience of stupendous size, scope, flexibility and trained attention. It is literally the cement which connects the myriad bricks of humanity together in the structure we call civilization. A blackness comparable to night would settle down upon humanity if its printed word facilities were suddenly to become extinct. It would be a kind of mental death. A taste of it has been experienced by the intellectuals of Russia, who for a while remained almost completely without books, without paper and pencils,

without periodicals, without scientific monographs or even mail communication.

The men with the prestige of genius, like Shaw, Wells, Conrad and others; the men who by ownership of periodicals of wide circulation, like Curtis, Hearst, or the late Lord Northcliffe; the men who because of their importance to humanity, like Lloyd George or the late Woodrow Wilson, and men who pay for space to say what they wish, like Campbell, Wrigley, Armour;—all of these are *word masters* on a great scale and affect deeply the lives of millions. To call one a writer and the other an advertiser; one a statesman and the other a seller of merchandise, is, after all, a very faint distinction without a fundamental difference. Each and all of them have aims, some practical, some ideal, which it is their mission to sell to the public; and whether for statesmanship of the highest order or for the business of providing soup and automobiles in large quantities at low prices, *their principal task is the influencing of the minds of people in large numbers*. This is a profession inherently of the highest importance to society. The measure of all public men, as well as of business concerns, is the extent to which they can carry public opinion and responsive action with them for their ideas, and the extent to which these ideas increase the wealth and happiness of society. The advertiser need no more be afraid of this test than the statesman.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Copy* is the soul of advertising. Picture and type may appeal to instincts, to the senses, but copy has no other entry-way into the reader except through his or her intelligence. And yet copy is more potent perhaps than type or picture to reach, if desired, either instincts or senses, for language has power to create an infinitely greater variety of images, symbols and associations than



any other medium of communication. *Copy* is, therefore, a supreme consideration.

Thanks to the higher ethical standards which have been evolved among the crafts of advertisers, publishers, newspapers and advertising writers—working as they must, to some degree, in unison—the integrity of the printed word is jealously guarded. There are no higher standards in statesmanship or journalism than those which prevail in advertising; and no profession, not even the medical profession, is so alert and maintains such extensive machinery for the elimination of misleading statements and the prosecution of fraudulent representation in print. The advertising profession is to-day on a parity, in ethics, with the journalistic profession as a whole; and it may be said with truth that it has actually been a powerful force in elevating the standards of journalism and periodical publishing.

Why? Because of the broadly considered interests of advertisers who have attained their universal distribution, lower price and greater public service through newspapers and magazines. They are intensely concerned about the status with the public of periodicals, the purveyors of the printed word. Reader interest must be at its maximum—the printed word must hold the reader's confidence as well as interest. The advertising word cannot be regarded as separate from the editorial word in its requirement of integrity, restraint and freedom from misrepresentation.

The circulations of periodicals running into the millions are frankly to-day the result of coalition of interest of advertiser and publisher, but on legitimate grounds of broadening the appeal of the printed word, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The success of this purely commercial coalition, it must not be forgotten, has also had immense public significance. The end mutually

sought—that of more power to the printed word—is important to *every* aim of civilization. It was to be expected, therefore, that advertising and publicity men would be of great importance to England and America during the war.

The advertising man, in a very real sense, is a publicist, and as long as it is the aim of the highest statesmanship in a society predominantly economic, to increase the per capita wealth and comfort and happiness of human beings, the advertising writer will be of practical importance. He is a technician in popular education, with the full gamut of type, picture, color and large circulation, local or national, to use toward his ends. He can flash letters of fire forty feet high upon the night in the view of 700,000 people in the “White Light” district of Broadway; he can indeed “sky-write” words upon the very blue of the heavens. He can put an argument for his product in the newspaper at the breakfast tables of most of the comfortable families in all the cities of the country inside of twenty-four hours. He can now even flash across the continent an illustrated ad via radio. He can put a message in a single periodical which reaches practically every village and town in the whole of the United States and Canada—the readers ranging from a cow-puncher in a Montana log cabin to the millionaire at his library table in Tarrytown. He can, through special and technical periodicals, talk to any group or type of people, from hair-dressers and undertakers to motion picture actresses. He can make the very rail fences along the farm roads speak to the passers-by; he can mass the one thousand and one methods of advertising into a concentrated volume of appeal which will make people absorb his thought as though through the air they breathe, and as naturally. He can localize his message as he pleases so that it may strategically develop weak market spots. Yet with all

this mammoth technique, no advertiser can hope to prosper for long if he has no fundamental good to offer the public; if he offends taste egregiously, if he cheats and skimps.

\* \* \* \* \*

The tool of advertising is a prodigious one—so great that it constantly takes more gold than formerly to occupy the position of the greatest advertiser. Six million dollars annual advertising expenditure buys William Wrigley an advertising predominance in 1924; in 1904 it would have bought a riotous superfluity of advertising, for at that time a million dollars a year was a stupendous, almost unprecedented expenditure. To-day it is but a small drop in the \$1,200,000,000 annual advertising expenditure in the United States.

It is important to show here, by means of figures, the growth of advertising, as an index to its industrial importance and productivity. In 1880 there probably was not more than \$30,000,000 expended in advertising of all kinds. In 1890 I estimate that it rose to \$80,000,000; in 1900, to \$200,000,000; in 1910, to \$600,000,000; in 1920, to \$850,000,000, and in 1925 to \$1,200,000,000. This represents a rate of growth few, if any, industries could show; and synchronizes perfectly with our general industrial development, except that in the years 1900 to 1910 a particularly phenomenal growth took place; largely, I believe, because our conceptions of advertising copy changed in a revolutionary way during that decade. However, the growth between 1914 and 1924 was also great. In 1914 the volume of magazine advertising was \$26,000,000, while in 1924 it had risen to \$110,000,000.

Because of this prodigious extent of advertising, one matter is to-day of great fundamental importance,—that of educating the American public to understand the economic function of advertising. Such education is essen

tial not only for the consumers, but also for the retailers, since a research in a western state has disclosed that 75% of retailers are, as yet, unconvinced of the value of advertising. These less progressive retailers—whose information on any subject is limited—are, in many instances, for selfish reasons telling the public that advertised goods cost more, in order that they may persuade customers to buy goods of low quality and irresponsible manufacture, with a high percentage of profit to retailers. The public sees evidences of large advertising expenditure, but is not aware of the rearrangement of selling method which advertising represents, with a resulting lower unit sales cost on an increased volume not possible to secure, except through advertising.

On top of this, we have the propaganda of radicals, malcontents, social theorists and the half-educated, who deliberately argue that advertising is “an economic waste”; that it “plays on human weakness”; that the public should be shielded from the “wiles” of the advertising writer.

Such a thesis deserves to be analyzed, for advertising writers, like any modern professional men, wish to feel certain that they are rendering a public service; that their work is fundamentally sound.

Years ago a brilliant New Yorker, William M. Ivins, aided and abetted by some choice spirits of the time, schemed out a plan “to test human credulity.” The famous Madame Blavatsky was the result—a fictitious, invented personality. The public was found to be gullible, all right; but gullible as Barnum had found it gullible; that is, for the things it desired and enjoyed, and fairly quick to discover when it was being “bunked.”

In 1924 the new President of the New York Stock Exchange said that “the American investing public was the most gullible in the world.” In view of the three to five

billion dollars which it squanders annually on fake stocks, or optimistic, highly “chancy” stocks, this is perhaps not an overstatement. This sum represents a good rate of interest on the total national annual income of sixty-five billion dollars; and represents about 10% interest on the total volume of purchases (thirty-five billion dollars) at all retail stores! In the face of such facts, we may reasonably admit as a fact that the American public is *highly responsive*; let us even say that it is “susceptible.” Yet in all truth, with all its errors of judgment, now disappearing, it is a princely, fortunate foible, this American “susceptibility!” It has made the country; it has speeded up the wheels of progress, and it is largely responsible for the \$3,000 per capita wealth of the people of these United States! Millions more are beating enviously at our gates, longing to robe themselves in this ermine mantle of susceptibility! Some even pay their last dollar to be smuggled across the border into our Elysium of Gullibility!

But, irony aside, it is important to look more closely at the point of view of those who seize upon this admitted fact of American susceptibility as a means of indicting advertising. This point of view pictures the American public as a timid, innocent mouse facing a very complicated, deadly trap. It believes you can really sell lunar green cheese if you hire the right advertising cleverness, write the subtle “ad.” You step up and pay your money and lo! the poor public is delivered into your lap. This same school of thought argues also that the advertisers are debauching the public, making bootblacks want Packards, and nursemaids yearn for chaise lounges and pipe organs. The accusation is that advertising is moral ruin to many; and fosters false character standards.

*Is it really a crime, or is it a benefit, to stir up a new want in the breast of a human being? If we induce*

Mary Jane to wear nothing but silk stockings, are we doing her a service or an injury? Beside this question the ancient raging controversies over the question whether woman had a soul or how many saints could dance on the point of a needle are mere nursery squabbles. It is really a lovely and an educative debate. The conclusion— we of common sense know—is obvious; but the considerations you run into on the way toward it are fascinatingly stimulative.

Take the statement of a college professor some time ago that the public is a mere puppet at the end of the advertising writer's string—that it is untrained and, therefore, has no chance in the hands of the trained business people of the country, who systematically, recklessly, insidiously and diabolically labor not only to make people spend all their money, but actually to plunge them into debt.

If endeavoring to sell silk stockings to any woman not possessed of a substantial bank account is a modern way of being a Barbary Coast buccaneer, then we should at least designate a black flag for such buccaneers to fly lest we mistake them for missionaries. If woman's propensity to put her money in stockings is a menace to the country, by all means let us divest her of such pedal sinfulness! But first it is only fair to make quite sure it is sinfulness and not beneficence.

To be strictly logical the holders of the view that advertising is a play on weakness must agree to shield people from the wiles of advertising lest they become extravagant. (You hear occasionally of a man who keeps the Sunday papers from his wife, because if she doesn't see the ads she won't go down town on Monday and "blow in so much!") In other words, the theory is, the less people know the fewer things they want. Advertising weakens character by temptation, is the argument.

*The contrary, however, is true: advertising tends, of psychological necessity, to strengthen character.* The lumberjack, coming to town after a winter's enforced absence from merchandise (where it might be supposed that he acquired increased power of resistance to it), is notoriously the weakest of all prey to purchasing indiscretion. He rarely has any money left after such a visit. His case is typical of all human beings under like circumstances. Everybody supposes that Mary Jane will spend less money if she does not see so many pretty things. Of course, she will not spend if, like the lumberjack shut up in his camp, she is given no opportunity. But it is pretty certain that she will not be happy—and what is an unhappy Mary Jane worth to anybody? Unless she is compelled to be a hermitess, she will more than make up for lost time when she gets her opportunity. The mail-order catalog is the proof of how isolated people will express themselves through merchandise, no matter at what disadvantage. Every mail-order house can tell of pathetic letters from women without money, who have supped luxuriously at the fount of merchandise through the mail-order catalogs—which are admittedly the greatest aggregations of good advertising copy extant—and who sent along wonderfully selected *imaginary* orders. (Once when short of rations in the wilds, I, too, had great satisfaction making up a menu fit for a king from a dilapidated but well-written grocery catalog.) Any woman anywhere can spend ten thousand imaginary dollars far more glibly than she can earn one hundred real dollars. One-third of the country's annual family purchases, by the way, are now made without seeing the merchandise first.

The cure for weakness of character is certainly not to reduce either the making or showing or talking of merchandise, but is like the cure for inability to swim—put the subject into plenty of water and teach him intelligent

self-propulsion in it. The more at home he gets to be in plenty of water, the less he is likely to drown.

The truth is that to-day there is far more thoughtful buying and far greater familiarity with merchandise, because of greater exposure to advertising and weaker susceptibility of character. There are few Simple Simons and Docile Doras, because an environment replete with all imaginable merchandise *has compelled a toughening and sophistication of mental and even moral fiber*. Mary Jane can now actually walk past several hundred tempting offers of merchandise, which good judgment indicates she should not buy, to one time that she succumbs to allurements. Think of the miles of marvelous shop windows we have to-day; brilliantly lighted, gorgeously decorated! Think of the automobile which brings even farm women far more frequently in contact with store windows! Think of the huge quantities of advertising now put before people! There has been a forced development, in consequence, of the faculties of judgment and restraint—also of the use of logic and fitness in making purchases—brought about largely by the ever-presence of advertising and the merchandise-laden environment. On the other hand, this merchandise-laden environment has had another extremely important economic effect—*it has provided quicker recognition and adoption of a valuable piece of merchandise*, even though it revolutionized to a considerable degree habits of living, standards and methods, involving greater efficiency, increased health and other benefits. It is not always recalled that a trademark is just as handy a mark by which to identify and *avoid* certain *unsatisfactory* merchandise, as it is to identify and seek *satisfactory* merchandise.

Merchandise is an indispensable servant of human nature, but a poor master; and the presence of such enormous varieties of goods compels the weakness or the



strength of human character to come forth. It is no crime to stimulate wants, *but it is crime to misrepresent their value*; and this crime is being made harder every year. Gullibility is a factor that apparently resides ineradicably in human nature; but at the same time the proof that advertising does not feed on human gullibility lies in the fact that a child can buy Uneeda Biscuits or any of five hundred good standard articles as safely and as cheaply as your most veteran haggler.

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In an age of increased sensitiveness to social responsibility, it is worth while for an advertising writer to ask, *What is an advertising writer?*—a creator, a waster, a parasite, or a constructive economist? He will be a better advertising man, more soundly grounded in his profession if he faces this question clear-mindedly and without buncombe. Particularly so, since advertising has been and still is a selected point of attack on business by many people, including many professedly intelligent classes, writers, a few economists, and a not inconsiderable part of the public itself. Although some circles in advertising feel that such antagonism should be ignored, and aver that “advertising needs no defense,” still the truth remains that there is current an astonishing amount of misconception and misinformation about advertising.

In a volume like this, and in an introductory review of the advertising idea such as this constitutes, it would, in the author’s opinion, be a mistake not to deal with it, at least in outline.

One of the boldest expressions of the criticism of advertising as a factor in economics is to the effect that the cost of advertising is paid by the public. Those who hold this view argue that advertising should be restricted to minimum by the public need, but even they admit that

no sane economist would advocate its complete abolishment. While making an obviously unsuccessful attack on the assertion of advertising men that advertising aids mass production which, in turn, produces lower prices, they must at the same time concede that the cheapest goods are the most widely advertised.

*Of course*, the public pays the cost of advertising, as it has always paid the cost of all selling. The constantly overlooked fact is that selling expenditure of older days *was unseen*; it represented salesmen's expense and other high cost methods of selling. Sales cost per unit of merchandise was far greater in older days than now. To-day the public *sees the sales expenditure*, in the form of publicly displayed, spectacular advertising. Because advertising comprises a considerable grand total in volume and bulks large in public consciousness, it is mistakenly regarded as being an *additional* burden of selling cost, whereas, in truth, it is only an *altered and more visible*, but on the other hand, *lower selling cost*. If what is now spent for advertising were spent for salesmen, circulars to the trade, and old-time sales methods, nobody would be noticing it, or considering anything to be amiss—yet it would bulk to tremendously greater proportions in the attempt to accomplish the same results that advertising produces in the present era.

The real documents in the case are the facts, open for all to see and verify, namely, that, as in the shoe, hosiery or men's clothing industries, for instance, the rate of commission paid to salesmen by *houses which do no advertising* is from 7 to 10 or 12%; whereas the commission paid salesmen by *houses which advertise*, is from 2½ to 7%. With all this difference in commission rates, salesmen prefer to sell, even at the lower rate, the goods of the house which advertises, because they can sell a greater quantity with the same effort.

It is now a standard industrial policy in America for a concern *actually to anticipate* the reduction in cost which can be accomplished by mass production through the use of advertising, and to sell goods at so low a price as to represent a loss for a period of time, in full knowledge that good advertising will in time develop sales to the point of profit. While it is true that there are still some advertisers whose prices are higher than strict business economics call for, such advertisers merely leave unguarded an entry way for competition, and in the end are pushed aside. It has happened many times.

This brings us to what is the *really* vital relation of advertising writing to economics:

*Advertising is the only efficient tool available to accomplish the much-needed purpose of raising the buying power and consumption standards of the world to the level of the rapidly mounting capacity for production.* Just how serious a problem in world politics as well as in domestic prosperity this is, may be gathered from statements sometimes made that the endeavor to reach and maintain a high standard of living is now and ever has been the principal cause of wars between tribes and nations. Yet the equal truth is that nations and peoples always have, always should and always will struggle to elevate their standards of living. Critics of advertising fail to point out that wars usually result not from peaceful production and consumption efforts, but from predatory efforts at *seizure* of other peoples' goods and wealth. The modern principle is that of *increased productivity and consumption* keeping pace with each other through the use of advertising, so as to make a nation less dependent on predatory struggle with other peoples. The high standards and comparatively peaceful career of the United States is the example *par excellence*.

The famous English economist, John A. Hobson, made

a very clear statement of the great need now all over the world for increasing living standards up to the level of production capacity:

There is a universal belief in a limited market, the apparent inability of the business classes to sell at any profitable margin all the goods which can be made by the machinery and labor which they control. In other words, although production only exists to supply the needs of consumers, *the rate of consumption habitually lags behind the rate of possible production*, so that much actual and much more potential producing power is wasted. *Production in the great industries normally tends to outrun consumption*. It is more difficult to sell than to buy. In other words, efficient demand is not quick enough, or full enough, to respond to increased productivity.

This is why the theory of pitting productivity against better distribution, as a remedy for poverty and discontent is fallacious. *Better distribution is essential to higher productivity*. That is why wage cuts, as means of lowering “costs,” are bad economy. For only by a more equal and equitable distribution of the product can we get either of two conditions that make higher productivity a feasible policy.

*Better distribution alone can insure the regular rise of stable standards of consumption to correspond with and keep pace with every increase of output.*

Secretary of State Charles E. Hughes and John Hays Hammond have also in speeches emphasized the need of raising the world's standards of consumption.

The fact is, that by advertising, *and by advertising alone*, can distribution and consumption be increased, its cost lowered, and all levels of the population educated in better standards of living. The remarkably even standards prevailing in the United States—the highest stand

ards in the world and in history—are a natural outcome of the far greater advertising activity here, Great Britain being about 30%, and the rest of the world 80% behind America in advertising expenditures. Altogether few people appreciate the fact that the United States is metropolitanized almost from edge to edge. The farmer's family, near Garden City, Kansas, has living standards astonishingly like those of families in the large cities. They have electricity, radio, ready-made clothes, the same foods; they read the same books, bathe in the same kind of bath-tubs, follow the same fashions, see the same movies, listen to the same jazz music, are obsessed with the same fads (like cross-word puzzles), and buy from the same chain stores almost identically the same merchandise.

Before cynically condemning this as mere "standardization," one has only to contrast the peasants of France with the metropolitan families of Paris. There is an abysmal difference between them, for the peasants still cling to ideas, practises and standards centuries old. Their wants are very few, their consumption of merchandise per family astonishingly low, and their standards distinctly below the modern par necessary for health, sanitation and growth, to say nothing of comfort and enjoyment. America's consumption standards have been shaped and developed by advertising as though with a gigantic tool having an enormous leverage; and it is this tool which must be relied upon for further distribution of goods in the U. S. as well as in foreign countries.

The modern advertising writer is interweaving the story of advertising writing more and more with the story of the era of American industrial coming-of-age, not only in respect to its part in making quantity production possible, but also in respect to humanizing industry and aligning it with public service and public conscience.



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**W**ORDS are the working tools of the advertising craft. They are not things to be picked up and handled by those who have not learned the trade.

Unskilled hands that would shun the surgeon's scalpel or the carver's spoon-gouge sometimes make bold to seize these tools of advertising and ply them with abandon. As a result, advertising is frequently scarred and blemished, when it might have revealed the beauty and symmetry of finished craftsmanship.

**T. HARRY THOMPSON.**

## I

### *Advertising Copy and the Writer*

FRANK IRVING FLETCHER (famous New York writer of retail advertising for leading specialty shops) describes himself characteristically thus:

Born 1883, in Yorkshire, England. Baptized in the Episcopal Church and complete in all his members. Drifted into advertising in 1911 and has regretted it every working minute since. Owes what little progress he has made to the malignity of advertising agencies and the tropic growth of incompetence due to the present system of agency compensation. Has no friends in the advertising business, as he prefers to put his money on the horses.



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## I

### *Advertising Copy and the Writer \**

By F. Irving Fletcher

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MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN: In a Brooklyn paper recently a Turkish Bath featured the following announcement: "Separate Department for Ladies except Saturday and Sunday Nights." And I want to say for myself that I am available for business at almost any hour except 9.45 a.m., the hour assigned for this address. This is midnight for me, for it is my habit to write at night. Moreover, I don't like talking at conventions. The last one I talked at was held in the McAlpin Hotel about three years ago and inside of two days I received three anonymous letters containing varying degrees of vilification. So I cut out speechmaking. I would rather write and be paid for it than talk and be flayed for it. Some people are so inured to the obscurity of a back seat that they resent anybody who aspires to a front pew. Yet it is manifestly unfair to regard any speaker as arrogating to himself the airs of an oracle when as a matter of fact he would rather be relieved of the ordeal than go through with it.

But if a speaker be at a disadvantage, it is nothing to the traditional troubles that have for twenty centuries afflicted those who write for a living. It is still pretty

\* (A "speech" before the assembled coterie of advertising experts, evolved by Mr. Fletcher, with typical whimsicality and charm, from an actual address some years ago at the Pennsylvania Hotel, New York City.)

generally accepted that an artist or a writer is without honor in business, and we ourselves are largely responsible for it, for, however good we may be at selling other people's wares, we still remain one of the most inefficient professions at selling our own. Now a poet may be an anachronism in a department store, but a good advertising man is at least as important as the shipping clerk. He must, however, be an advertising man and not a poet. Too many of us still wear long hair in our minds and that is something which even the Terminal Barber Shops are incompetent to cure. What I wanted to say is, that we shall have a much more robust and remunerative profession when we learn to sell copy and art and ideas like steel rails, instead of conducting ourselves like supplicants for alms. The medieval idea of procuring a patron still persists among some of us, when all that an advertising writer or an advertising artist needs to sell his wares is to borrow the methods of those he wants to sell them to. It is not necessary for any advertising man to approach an employer in the same fashion that he says his prayers.

But I don't want to be charged with the impropriety of trying to raise wages. I am really not discussing that phase of the matter at all. A division on this issue would suffice to show that many of *you* are getting more than you are worth, while many of *us* are still underpaid! But after all, money isn't everything in life—only about 98%. What is uppermost in my mind is not our inability to sell ourselves, which is bad enough, but our inability to sell our ideas to those who buy our services. In nearly every instance that has come under my observation in the past five years, the relationship between the advertiser and the advertising man has been wrong. The average advertising job has two phases. First, the advertising man gets the job and then his employer proceeds

to take it away from him. I once, and only once, had an experience of this kind myself. He was a remote relative of the head of the house and his ability was also relative and remote. It should be added, in extenuation, that his congenital malignity had recently been aggravated by the hysteria of a belated honeymoon. At any rate, he decided to prepare a Christmas advertisement, for which he stole the sampler idea of a prominent candy concern and then dragged in the Deity to sell Grand Rapids furniture and linoleums. Some people think they want an advertising man when all that they really want is an audience.

There is, of course, a vast difference between being suppliant and being pliant. A tactful man can concede a comma and achieve a page. It is just as foolish and fatal for an advertising man to be overly stubborn as it is for him to surrender his individuality. Some months ago the advertising man for a client of mine sent me a booklet he had written and asked me to go over it. I deleted three paragraphs, but did not add or change a line of the remainder. It is always easy to improve another man's work. But the revision did seem to be desirable. I sent it back and received a very peevish letter objecting to such liberal cutting. So I called him on the telephone and said: "Did you ever see Hamlet ?" He said: "Yes, what about it ?" I said: "Well, every time they play Hamlet they cut half of it out. And if Shakespeare can stand it, so can you." Still another of our weaknesses is sensitiveness to criticism from those who cannot or do not write themselves. It is absurd to contend that those who cannot produce an advertisement are incompetent to condemn it. You might just as well say that a man has no right to condemn an omelette because he cannot lay eggs. Criticism, if it is at all intelligent, is an invaluable aid in avoiding it! And a wise man

really prefers it, for by catering to criticism he secures credit now and may escape censure later.

Now, you are doubtless wondering what all this has to do with Individuality in Advertising. My contention is, that it has everything to do with it. We cannot achieve individuality in advertising until a man first achieves it for himself, that is, assuming that he has any to begin with. Granted that you and I have some ability in our work, two things remain by which that ability can bear fruit. One is that we shall learn both how to create ideas and how to defend them, and the other is, that the only way an employer can develop a good advertising man is to let him alone. There are scores of good advertising men who, through their own pusillanimity, or intolerance higher up, or both, never get a chance to show what they can do. And there are scores of great advertisers continually scanning the horizon for new talent, and overlooking what lies at hand in their own advertising departments. There is an Eastern legend of a man who sold his house to go in search of buried treasure, and the treasure was found in the garden by the man who bought the house.

To come to Individuality in Advertising itself, that is, in the finished product, this is such a large assignment and is susceptible of so many interpretations, depending upon the thing to be advertised, that it is hardly a subject that can be bound by hard and fast rules. But nobody can scan the general run of advertising without feeling that much of it needs fresh air. There is too much talk about space and not enough thought about spaciousness. One cure for this is brevity which I will come to in a minute; and the other is, the need of a little different point of view as to white space. The common conception of white space is that it is a waste of money, whereas it is a genuine investment. It is the first and chief means

of giving dignity and character to a layout. That advertisement is quickest to arrest the eye which furnishes a rest for the eye, and there is nothing so restful and inviting, to employ a figure from an old English writer, as a rivulet of prose meandering through a wilderness of margin.

Now, the advertiser says: "That is very pretty, but you are spending my money." The answer is that white space does not involve money, but brevity. There is a French proverb which says: "The surest way to be dull is to say it all." It has also been observed that no souls are saved after fifteen minutes. See how the bubble of length is punctured with a phrase! Take still another example: *Youth is a blunder—manhood a struggle—old age a regret*. There we have a scenario of life in eleven words, embracing the vicissitudes of existence from cradle to crepe, from diapers to death. Brevity really is not expensive to use, though it is expensive to buy because it is difficult to produce. The reformation can come from within, not from without. Everybody sees more of a woman when she is in an evening gown than when she wears a tailored suit. Though the distinction isn't so marked as it used to be. The need is to declaim less and to display more. And the less you say the more you need to say it effectively. And that means that it should be told with originality. People who condemn cleverness in advertising are those incompetent to produce it. Which means that it is often condemned. White space and appropriate art and typography are after all only the clothes of an advertisement which make for individuality in appearance. They are the frills and the furbelows, but the copy is the voice of the institution, which, indeed, if it have clarity, felicity, and strength, will, like Bacon's reference to virtue, look best plain set.

## II

### *The Advertising Writer Who Is Bigger Than His Ad*

GEORGE LEWIS DYER. Born in Muscatine, Iowa, on October 9, 1869. As a boy was taken to Joliet, Ill., where he was educated in public schools and worked in his father's store. It was there that his native genius laid the foundation for his penetrating knowledge of people and of merchandise. About 1890 moved to Chicago, became Advertising Manager for *The Fair*, later developed an advertising service bureau, and about 1893 joined Hart, Schaffner & Marx as Advertising Manager, where he created the art of modern clothing advertising. Joined Kirschbaum, Philadelphia, about 1902. In 1907 formed the Arnold & Dyer Agency with Clarence K. Arnold. At Arnold's death in 1909, the firm became The George L. Dyer Company, and in 1910 concentrated its staff and work in its New York office. Died June 24, 1921, when his interest in the company was taken over by a group of men who had been associated with him in carrying on the business.

The chapter presented here is the only writing by him which has been discovered. It was rescued from oblivion through the courtesy of John Lee Mahin.



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## II

### *The Advertising Writer Who Is Bigger Than His Ad*

**By George L. Dyer**

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I ASKED an attorney the other day why a certain New York lawyer was so uniformly successful.

“I’ll tell you,” he replied. “It’s because he is always bigger than his case.”

Copy is a matter of extreme importance. It is so very important that it requires a broad man to prepare it. He should be “bigger than his case.”

It is for this breadth of understanding and grasp of business conditions that I contend. An advertising writer should be bigger than his ad. Not, perhaps, to begin with; but he should not be content until he is master of it, till he can walk all around his proposition, go all over it and through it.

To be a good advertising man is to be a good deal more than that term is popularly supposed to imply. However, it is not necessary to go to work in a shoe shop in order to handle shoe advertising successfully. There was a man who tried that once, and by the time he had learned the business he was as little fitted to advertise it as the head of the firm or the intelligent factory foreman. A sure way to lose receptivity and to kill initiative is to become saturated with the technicalities of the trade.

The advertising man must think along broad lines. He must not lose his sense of the relation of his concern to



the world. That is something the proprietors and managers themselves can never gauge. He should get out and away from business and mix with people; then come back and see his proposition in a new light.

The advertising department is the human side of a business organization.

When a man makes only a part of a thing, he doesn't exercise the creative faculties. It is no longer a question of mind, but of manual dexterity. He loses his initiative. He depends more and more on others to do his thinking for him.

The so-called advertising "expert" is often a writer of advertising and nothing else. The smaller and narrower he grows the more arrogant he becomes and the busier he is. He is peculiarly subject to the disease George Ade has defined as "Enlargiense of the Coco."

It is fortunate if he is a general writer. Usually he is still further specialized as a booklet writer, a display writer, a writer of reading notices, etc.

For all their pride of copy, the majority of men who write choppy, disconnected sentences for display announcements are incapable of turning out an interesting or readable article for a newspaper or magazine.

Give such a man as I have described the advertising responsibility of a business enterprise, and he gets into a corner and writes copy. He cannot give any of his time to special representatives or business men who call to see him and who would keep him in touch with the general field and broaden his horizon.

He is too busy making buttonholes to understand the tailoring of the suit.

It would seem that advertising has progressed more in other directions than in the preparation of copy. Advertisers, at least some of them, have learned how to

follow up inquiries; how to buy space; how to nurse their investment; how to work special territory; to reorganize their business in conformity with their publicity; to work their sales department in harmony with their advertising. They are beginning to understand the moral effect of advertising on an industry. They are learning that "the best way to improve a business is to write about it."

Looking backward we realize that we have traveled a long way, but, all in all, our advancement is not such as to make us self-satisfied. A man should be judged, not by his achievement alone, but by the relation his achievement bears to his opportunity. The same is true of a business. The old advertiser did not have as hard a competition for the eye of the reader. He was in no danger of being swallowed up by the volume of advertising or obliterated by the strength of the copy next to his. There is everything to-day to stimulate individuality. The very life of the announcement depends upon it. The price of space has increased enormously. Interest in advertising is widespread and yet we find business men encountering the same old stumbling blocks and pitfalls.

One coming fresh to the advertising problem to-day must surely benefit by the experience of those who have gone before. But each man is inclined to think his business a peculiar one. It may be suggested that the busy merchant or manufacturer is too close to his work to reason well about it; that he is too much absorbed in himself and the narrow world of his trade to gauge public sentiment or know how to appeal to the mass of his fellows. But whatever the shortcomings of other men and other races, the American business man is prepared to undertake all things with equal success and without previous education or special training. The only

reason he does not paint his own pictures, design his own house, conduct his own case in court or treat his own influenza is because his time is valuable, his mind is burdened with weighty things, and the doctor or lawyer, with proper coaching, can carry out his ideas almost as well as he could do it himself.

There is no denying the fact that intelligent advertising is still the exception or that most of the large users of space go at it blindly, trying first one plan and then another until they chance upon a campaign that makes a hit. They have great general faith in publicity as a “good gamble,” but evidently little conception of it as an exact science. They do not yet understand it as a force to be directed with economy and precision. Most of them that stay at it long enough flounder into success but at an expense that is quite unnecessary.

It is remarkable what has been done, what is still being done—without brains, without taste—by the sheer force of crude publicity, the brutal paying out of money for space. Better results could often be had for much less money. But some business men and most boards of directors would rather pay for space than for brains; it is more tangible, they understand it better.

It is a step forward, I suppose, that these men have learned to buy space; perhaps some day they will learn how to *fill* it; how to nurse an appropriation and take full advantage of the investment.

Manufacturers of food products are among the largest users of publicity in all its forms: newspapers, magazines, street cars, outdoor display, sample distribution, premium schemes and store demonstrations.

There is no doubt that the food business in recent years has contributed largely to the volume as well as the progress of advertising; but if, without referring to

any of the periodicals, we try to set down a list of the various foods and something that has characterized the publicity of each one, we realize from our confused ideas that the work is more notable for its extent than for its individuality.

The general impression is one of a rather high standard of mediocrity with a leaning toward engraving-house illustration and what my friend Beauley of Chicago calls "Steamboat Renaissance."

There is a happy irrelevancy in much of this work; the thought evidently being to separate the picture and the text by as wide a chasm as may be bridged by the reader's imagination.

We are shown waving fields of grain and told how, by a special arrangement with providence, heaven's sunbeams are caught and imprisoned in Mr. Jones' Breakfast Grits.

The chef has been overworked for years. The idea is not bad, as suggesting the preparation of food for the table, but it is usually difficult to tell what is being cooked. He might be frying eggs, for all any one can find to the contrary.

The old Quaker of Quaker Oats is well conceived and, by dint of repetition, has come to be a familiar friend. The recent "smile that won't come off" is too evidently an imitation of the "Sunny Jim" optimism.

I have always questioned the practical selling power of the humorous grotesque in advertising. An appeal to the public's sense of the ridiculous is not the best way to get its money, except on the vaudeville stage.

To make a joke of an advertised article is to cheapen it and at least postpone the serious consideration that must precede a sale. Even those induced to try it lack confidence and ask for it in an apologetic manner.

I believe thoroughly in optimism as a necessary quality in salesmanship; whether over the counter, on the road, or by means of the printing-press. Cheerfulness and buoyancy inspire confidence in the buyer and open the avenues of receptivity. Optimism is one thing and the antics of a clown another.

If the way to man's heart is through his stomach, the food people are neglecting a great opportunity when they do not appeal directly to the reader's eye and appetite by means of good copy.

Some of the best and sanest work has been done for Shredded Wheat Biscuit in their illustrations of dainty and appetizing dishes prepared from their product. This appeals directly to the palate and suggests new recipes to the housewife.

In many ways the strongest and most interesting work ever done for a cereal product is the advertising of the Postum Cereal Company—Grape Nuts and Cereal Coffee. It has an insistent note of personality,—the priceless quality in advertising. There is character back of every line of it.

A class of advertisers try to reach their goal by indirection. They assume that any subject is of more interest than the facts about the goods they have to sell.

For instance, a man wishes to advertise shoes. He prints a little romance telling how the heroine wins a husband by the grace of her advertised footwear. Then they go to live with the old folks and save enough money on the family shoes to pay off the mortgage on the farm.

To a man in need of a new derby or the woman who wishes to buy gloves nothing is of such vital moment as the printed facts about the required article. The most interesting news in the world is news of the things we desire to buy. It affects us personally. It reaches our

vanity, our taste, our sense of luxury, our desire for happiness, and it touches our pocketbook.

Tell the story of your goods believing that it is the most interesting thing in the world. Then perhaps you can make it so.

Don't try to sneak the facts about your business into the public consciousness by a surreptitious hypodermic injection. Come out with them face to face. Tell the people what you've got, why you can serve them, what it costs and ask for their trade.

Advertising is news.

It will be a great day for advertising when men see it in a large way and stop taking a part of it for the whole. When they understand that the vital parts of advertising are the things that go with it and that advertising is a moral force and not a mechanical toy.

Rule twisting and type sticking and stamp licking and space measuring all have their place and their value. I do not depreciate them when I say that they should not be permitted to obscure the view.

Mechanical details have a great fascination for most minds, especially the mathematical American mind. The average business imagination does not rise much higher than it can travel in a passenger elevator.

An increasing number of men refuse to believe in all but the things they can touch and see, and it is perhaps natural they should dwell upon the material, obvious aspects of the subject and miss the soul in the machine.

Advertisers pay for space, buy cuts and copy, set the wheels in motion and stand by to see them run. If the things desired do not promptly happen it is plainly the fault of the agent or publisher, and they begin to tear things to pieces like a child that wrecks a toy because he lacks the intelligence to make it work.

It may seem that I dwell with tiresome iteration upon this phase of the subject. But there is not a week in the year when some business man does not get me in a corner and pour out his woes—thousands of dollars spent and no adequate results. Best media, good copy perhaps, and replies—but no effect on the business. Selling expenses only increased by the addition of the advertising appropriation. Salesmen squeezing the house and sacrificing everything to their customers. High anticipations, great fun and excitement at first, but the novelty is wearing off.

What shall he do? Discharge his advertising man? Change his agent and quit the publishers? A friend has told him to spend his money in the street cars.

Then follows a long cross-examination as to the general conduct of the business. The man grows reticent and suspicious at deep, researching questions he considers utterly irrelevant. He listens absently and says, “Now to get back to advertising.” When he is told that all this *is* the advertising, he does not comprehend.

A man in an allied line told me the other day that he was conducting a campaign by using all of my literature, worked over for his business. When I said that I considered the best part of my value was in work which he did not see, he was at a loss whether to distrust me or to resent being cheated out of his just dues.

We need less tinkering in advertising and more use of the merchandising brain which builds copy on the wellengineered steel framework of field facts.





### III

#### *Human Appeals in Copy*

**BRUCE BARTON.** Popular writer and advertising agent, New York. Born Tennessee 1886. Editor *Home Herald*, *Housekeeper* and *Every Week*. Assistant sales-manager P. F. Collier & Son, and now president Barton, Durstine & Osborn. Writer for many well known magazines. Author of *It's a Good Old World*, *What Shall It Profit a Man*, *The Man Nobody Knows*, e

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### III

#### *Human Appeals in Copy*

**By Bruce Barton**

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MY first contact with what might be called “human interest in advertising copy was when I was twelve years old. I read an advertisement headed, “You, too, can become a locomotive engineer.” I clipped a coupon. As it promised, I received the literature, and, as was not promised, I received an urbane and persuasive representative who fixed me more than ever in the determination to follow that fascinating walk of life.

My second contact was when I was assistant general sales-manager of a large concern selling books. We had been running advertisements on our leader, which was Dr. Eliot’s set of books.

The advertising was very well written. It was full pages on the value of owning fine books and on the splendor of having them in your library and the satisfaction of reading them. I used to protest to the people who prepared the advertising. I said, “I realize I am young and underpaid and have not very good ideas about these things. I don’t like to criticize, but these advertisements *do not bring coupons.*”

One day I was sitting there in my office, and someone came in and said, “There is a quarter-page vacant in our magazine and you can have it at a low rate to advertise your books if you will get copy to us right away.” I

leafed the books through and came to a picture of Marie Antoinette. I wrote something like this:

This is Marie Antoinette riding to her death.

Have you ever read her tragic story?

In all literature there are only a few great tragedies, great poems and great essays, biographies, etc.

If you know those, you are well read, and if you don't know them, you are not.

#### *Eight Times As Many Coupons From Humanized Copy*

It was short and simple. But this is the interesting fact. Marie riding to her death on that quarter of a page pulled eight times as many coupons as we had ever got from one of these fine, full pages on the glory and splendor of owning fine books.

It was my first vivid lesson that a little touch of human interest, a little of the common tragedy or hope or love or success or affection that runs through all our lives will outpull what may be technically a very much better advertisement, but which lacks that human touch which makes the whole world kin.

#### *Writers Must Be Human First*

If anybody should ask me how he can get more human touch into his copy or equip himself to become a human interest writer of copy, I don't think I could answer. I might say two rather obvious things: First of all, it has been said, "If you would have friends, you must show yourself friendly," and I might say, "If you would write human interest copy, you have to work quite consistently at the job of being a human being." I mean you have to share the emotions, the experiences, the problems and

hopes that are the common lot of the people to whom you write.

I once had to talk before a university class about writing short stories. I was editing a magazine at that time. I said, "If a writer is going to be successful he should share the common experiences of the people for whom he writes. Writers should get married; writers should have children; if they are unfortunate enough to have wealthy parents, they ought to refuse to have any help from their parents; they should pay for a home, take out insurance, have disappointments, struggles, hopes, ambitions, fears, take on the mold and character of the people whom they address, and, living their lives, be able to interpret to them their own thoughts." That is pretty obvious, but it seems to me essential. In our offices, we are somewhat removed from the struggles and experiences of common life, and we must work to keep our contacts keen and fresh. That, I think, is the first thing.

### *Know Spirits of Other Ages*

The second thing, which is equally obvious, is that the little age in which we live is merely a drop in the great river of eternity, and we can very much extend our contacts if we admit to the circle of our friendships the great spirits that have lived in other times.

I got to reading biographies when I was in high school and have continued ever since. For those of us who are writing and seeking to influence human minds, there is a wealth of help in this contact with the great human beings of other ages.

They have a funny story in our office to the effect that when we take a man in to write advertising copy, I give him a copy of the New Testament. That is untrue (factually and by implication)—factually, because I

never gave anybody a New Testament, and by implication because it implies that I have a pious soul, which is not true. No man can have a pious soul who has spent his life dealing with printers.

*Parables Exemplify Three Principles of Good Copy*

I think that three of the best principles of copy writing are exemplified perfectly in the New Testament parables.

*First—Brevity*

There is hardly a single wasted word in them. Brevity in our business is a precious jewel.

About sixty years ago two men spoke at Gettysburg; one man spoke for two hours. I suppose there is not any one who could quote a single word of that oration. The other man spoke about three hundred words, and that address has become a part of the school training of almost every child. There have been thousands of prayers in the world, but the only one a great many people ever learned is sixty-seven words long. There have been many poems written, but probably the greatest poem, the one that has impressed the largest number of people, the Twenty-third Psalm, is only one hundred and seventeen words long. So the parables were short and human and that is why they have lived.

*Second—Simplicity*

In the second place, they were simple. Consider their phraseology for a minute. "A certain man had two sons"; "A man built his house upon the sand"; "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho"; etc. No three-syllable words; practically all one-syllable words. Tom Paine once said that no religion could be

true if it had anything in it that would offend the sensibilities of a little child. I think it might be said, no advertisement is great that has anything that can't be understood by a child of intelligence. Certainly all the great things in life are one-syllable things—child, home, wife, fear, faith, love, God. The greater the thought we have to express, the more likely we are to find simple words.

### *Third—Sincerity*

The third thing about the parables—those great human interest advertisements—is, of course, their genuineness. Emerson said, “What you are speaks so loudly that people can't hear what you say.” Of course, one of the greatest principles of effective writing is to believe yourself what you are trying to make others believe.

Somebody asked me in that same course I was giving at the University, “What do you think is the first requirement for success in advertising?” I said, “Good health.” That is nothing to laugh about. I can't conceive how a dyspeptic could write good mince-meat copy or a man with rheumatism could write about the joy of riding over mountain roads in an automobile. You have to have good human equipment to enjoy the things you are trying to sell or you can't make other people enjoy them. I believe the public has a sixth sense of detecting insincerity, and we run a tremendous risk if we try to make other people believe in something we don't believe in. Somehow our sin will find us out.

### *Business Is Emphasizing Ideals*

I think that in our lifetime we are going to see three very interesting advertising developments in three very great fields of human interest. In the first place, in busi

ness. I believe that, without lessening at all the emphasis on products, business is going to give more and more emphasis to its ideals. Here is a very interesting story. Napoleon after he was beaten at Waterloo went to Paris. He was standing in his palace, the windows were open, and a few of his old supporters were around him—a pathetic remnant of those who once hailed him. Outside, the people in the streets cried out his name and called upon him to form them into a new army and march once more against his foes. Napoleon heard them in amazement. He turned to his followers and said, “Why should they cheer me? What have I ever done for them? I found them poor, I leave them poor.”

That is the tragic epitaph of almost every demagogue from the days of the Pharaohs down—the epitaph of the self-appointed and self-proclaimed friends of the people, who fill the people with promises and leave them nothing. Contrasted with those noisy and self-proclaimed friends of the people, what is the record of modern business? It does not find the people poor and leave them poor. The General Electric Company and the Western Electric Company find the people in darkness and leave them in light; the American Radiator finds them cold and leaves them warm; International Harvester finds them bending over their sickles the way their grandfathers did and leaves them riding triumphantly over their fields. The automobile companies find a man shackled to his front porch and with no horizon beyond his own door yard and they broaden his horizon and make him in travel the equal of a king.

I say business is the real friend of the people, and the time is coming more and more when big business must in its advertising show its friendliness. I don't want to enlarge on that. You can do that for yourselves. As that spirit in advertising develops it is going to have an

immeasurable influence upon the ideals and practises of business itself. For a man who drinks too much to sign a pledge when he is absolutely alone, is a very different thing from standing up before a room full of people and signing it. The first is a personal and individual matter and may not stick, but the other enlists the whole community as a witness and strengthens by that much the vigor of his own resolve. Similarly it is one thing for a company to say, "We will conduct our affairs the best we can." That is different from a business coming out in full pages and daring to proclaim the ideals and service for which it stands. That has a tremendous effect on the men who pay for it and on the men who work for the men who pay for it.

There is a very big concern for which I am privileged to prepare advertising. One of the officers said, "I think you are going too far. Here you have an advertisement that tells what a wonderful company we are, and one of our dealers just brought it in and showed it to me and said, 'I see you pay \$7,500 to tell what a wonderful company you are, and I want to say that has not been my experience with you at all.' " The officer said, "Don't you think we should tone this stuff down ?" I said to him, "Don't ask us to tone that down. That advertising ought always to be out in front and not lagging behind. It ought to be something for you to live up to. Don't you ask us to come back and march with you. Go and make that company the kind of company we are telling people it is."

### *Business the Operation of Divine Purpose*

We advertising men understand, and the business men for whom we work are more and more understanding, that the millennium, if it is ever coming, is coming



through the larger service of business, because business is nothing more nor less than the machinery Almighty God has set up for feeding, housing and transporting the human race. As that understanding comes into the offices of our great institutions, advertising is going to take on a finer note than it has had before.

The second development which I expect is this: I believe we are going to live to see the doctors, the American medical associations, as national advertisers. I was dining one night in New York with the president of a bank and a prominent physician. It was at a time when they were closing up the "bucket shops." I said to the banker, "You are partly responsible for those bucket shops," and I said to the doctor, "Of course, you are partly responsible for the quacks." They looked rather aggrieved and I continued, "The greatest educational force in modern life is advertising; and any profession or trade that abandons that great force to the use of the charlatans and quacks in its own ranks is absolutely deficient in its sense of public duty."

I had an interesting talk with a country doctor and I wrote a piece that appeared anonymously as coming from a country doctor. I said to this country doctor, "There are five of you doctors in town; how much do you make?" He said, "Two are starving, and the other three are just barely getting along." I said, "Is there any cooperation among you? You are in this noble enterprise of high ideals, ministering to the community. I suppose you work together?"

He said, "Not on your life. I hardly dare to take a vacation, because I am afraid the other doctors will steal my customers." I said, "If you would join together, spend a little money every week in advertising, if you would sell this community on the necessity of having an annual or semi-annual examination, if you would sell the

community on the importance of having proper dental care in the schools and having regular health supervision of children in the schools, you would all make more money and the community would be immeasurably in your debt.”

I believe that is going to come. We are going to see the medical forces of this country become national and local advertisers, to the financial benefit of themselves and to the health benefit of the whole country.

And finally—this is my third hobby—I think we are going to see the church as a national advertiser. I hope no one will be shocked by that; certainly no one will be who has ever read the New Testament, because Jesus was, of course, the greatest of all advertisers. He spoke in the Synagogue occasionally because that was where the people were, but He did most of His speaking in the market place.

#### *Publications the Modern Market Place*

I said that one day to a group of Methodist preachers. They said, “Do you mean we should go out and preach on the streets?” I said, “Not at all.” There is no modern market place comparable with the market place of the ancient cities. If a man stood in the market place of Jerusalem he touched all Jerusalem, because everybody went there some time through the day. You could stand at Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue from now until you die and you would not touch a percentage of the people of New York. The modern market place is the *New York Times*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, the *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, etc. They are the national market where thousands of merchants who have things to sell, meet millions of customers who want to buy, and there is the place where somehow or other the voice of religion

ought to make itself heard. It seems perfectly certain to me, as I read the New Testament, that Jesus, who was so exceedingly unorthodox in His own day, if He were here to-day, would raise His voice amid the thousands of voices proclaiming the merits of shoes, breads, cigarettes and motor cars, and say, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" or "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

## IV

### *The Underlying Principles of Good Copy*

**THEODORE F. MACMANUS.** Born in Buffalo, New York. Started as office boy at fifteen. Became city editor of a newspaper at sixteen; managing editor at nineteen. He then became advertising manager of a department store, determined to learn the feared and hated intricacies of business. About to sign a contract a few years later for a large honorarium, he asked to be released, saying he felt sure his usefulness was declining, though it seemed to be at its fullest. Borrowing \$500, he opened an office and went into the advertising business. In 1917 was offered retainer in six figures to divide his time between Chicago and Detroit, which he refused. In 1919 offered another six-figure guarantee per year for three years for handling one advertising account. Declined, because it involved giving up account with which he had lived from its inception.

Became long ago acknowledged as leader of one of the two schools of American advertising.

Mr. MacManus organized *MacManus Incorporated* in 1916.

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## IV

### *The Underlying Principles of Good Copy*

**By Theodore F. MacManus, LL.D.**

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**T**HE closest approach to finality of formula that can be attained in the preparation of advertising copy is, in my opinion, the development of a reasonably sound underlying principle.

The application of the principle is, in the very nature of things, bound to vary with the nature of the purpose to be accomplished.

There is always the danger that an able advertising man enamored of the felicity of his own style, will endeavor to erect that style into a philosophy—claiming infallibility of result wherever and whenever it is applied.

To maintain that certain clevernesses of approach, attack, and argument, will inevitably influence all human minds in equal or approximate measure, is, it seems to me, hazarding an undemonstrable assumption.

It is a fact, however, that if advertising copy has attained any degree of definiteness whatever, it has been in those instances in which at least an attempt was made to reduce the process of molding minds in the mass to something approaching a formula.

#### *Two Types of Advertising Copy*

Speaking loosely, there have been and are in America only two types of copy analysis and prospectus which by

any stretch of the imagination can be dignified by the name of definite philosophies.

One of these two schools of advertising thought assumes in the mass-mind an almost invariable response to certain adroit and plausible appeals.

The other holds the mass-mind in somewhat higher esteem but assumes a similar responsiveness to appeals of a substantial and more or less virtuous character.

Putting it crudely and bluntly, the first is a clever and semi-scientific application of the thesis that all men are fools, while the second maintains that while men may be fools and sinners, they are everlastingly on the search for that which is good.

Needless to say, both formulas have registered great successes because each is at least founded on a half-truth.

### *The Human Mind the Key to the Copy Angle*

The very fact, however, that it is the human mind, in the last essence, which must be subjected to dissection before a formula can be evolved, indicates the hazard involved in any individual attempt to erect a formula even distantly assuming infallibility.

The truth of the matter is, that any such attempt smacks of vanity and, therefore, of narrowness, and in some cases has its origin in a pure spirit of charlatanism.

Nevertheless, definiteness, precision, system and reasonable assurance of results are the great desideratums in advertising, and the pursuit of them should never be abandoned.

It is perfectly true that there are certain definite human impulses, motives and reactions which can reasonably be counted upon either in the individual or in the mass.

It is likewise perfectly true that men and women do

respond almost automatically to certain homely assaults upon their sensibilities.

They respond also to the appeals of cupidity and cunning, and they are no doubt influenced by the over-emphasis which is an integral part of the first of the two copy formulas described above.

*Truth Is Dramatic and Interesting*

My own contention is that the appeal of the ancient verities is the more powerful, and that a business which successfully exerts it is more solidly and substantially built than any other possibly can be.

It is a truism—and yet an important business fact—that we all hate the villain and love the hero, that we prefer virtue to vice and goodness to that which is meretricious.

This, it seems to me, should be the grand central animating thought in any effort to conquer a market.

It is perfectly true that a market can be won for a good product by playing on the other and more ignoble susceptibilities of the human mind and heart. But it has always appeared to me to be a waste of time and effort to offer that which is good by way of the circuitous route of being smart, or sharp, or clever, or adroit, when the other road is so much more direct.

No matter who or what I am, if I can persuade any considerable group that I am honest and that my honesty is practically expressed in my business and in my product, I am in a fair way to build a substantial clientele.

To find ways and means of inducing this tremendous confidence in people's minds is quite another story, but to me at least, it is the one great thing to be achieved in business, beside which all others pale into insignificance.

*Better to Suggest Than to Assert*

That is why I remarked in the opening paragraph that experience suggested to me that the closest approach possible in advertising to a positive formula is the development of a sound underlying principle.

Surely the principle referred to is sound, since it is based on known facts in human nature; and surely also its corollary—that all men are subject to suggestion—is equally sound.

Working with these two root-thoughts in mind, it is possible to attain a surprising degree of sequence and system in advertising, from which an amazing volume of valuable confidence accrues.

An appeal to the universal desire for goodness—which in business is merely another name for value—a simple and, if you please, apparently artless, way of phrasing that appeal—and if the market be national, a patience and persistence in advertising appearance which does not look to a single announcement to work a miracle,—these seem to me, after many years of experience, the safest and soundest of guides in defining and preparing advertising copy.

Naturally, the special circumstances surrounding a case continually tempt one to depart from the root-principle.

*Copy More Important Than Size of Space*

If the study of sales is not kept continuously thoughtful and sincere, and based upon a knowledge not merely of men's minds but of markets and essential economic facts, there comes the temptation, for instance, to conquer by sheer size and frequency of domination.

It can be done; it has been done repeatedly; and is being done,—at a high and heavy cost perhaps, but a cost



apparently warranted in some cases by the volume of profit and the scope of the market.

To fly from this extreme to the opposite position of pretending to subject every announcement to the foot-rule of results in tenths-of-one-per cent is almost as vicious as the other.

### *A Direct Check Not Always Possible*

A check on the advertising and the sales of certain sorts of products is easily possible; in other instances almost impossible. Moreover, the more niggardly manner of charting costs and results applied in certain instances might completely ignore a value accruing from advertising infinitely greater than cent-per-cent cost and return.

It was once said of a certain long-continued program of advertising, that it put *something* into a certain motor car which was not built in the factory, and that that something has made the motor car property the most valuable of its class in the world.

That was and is literally true. And yet by the cent-per-cent system of demanding that every advertisement deliver on the spot, that program was altogether deficient and unscientific.

That *something* was reputation. The public knew but little regarding the details of the car and cared less. People did, however, know about the manufacturers. They were convinced of their honesty and sincerity. People bought the car because they trusted the manufacturers. And they trusted the manufacturers because of the suggestive copy in the advertising.

A number of years ago, I had the temerity to say to a great corporation that if a given formula or program was faithfully followed, I was prepared to promise that this

great business would pass out of the price class into the quality class.

I named the company which it would oust from first position in the quality class and said that, if we all worked together, the transition would be complete within eighteen months.

It was complete in less than a year—the business did pass out of the price class into the quality class, and the other business was ousted from its preferential position.

In this instance again, public opinion was led and influenced by suggestive copy, which had for its purpose the creation of favorable public opinion. Within a year, the advertiser had the reputation for honesty, quality and sincerity, and naturally the public gave his product the preference.

*Copy Should Build Reputation,—for Reputation Alone  
Sells Goods Steadily*

I have predicated all my own work on the basic truth that people *are* susceptible to suggestion. We live, move and have our being in a swirl of suggestion, from morning till night, and from the age of reason to the edge of the grave.

One suggestion accepted by one person becomes his or her personal opinion.

This personal opinion, accepted by a group of people, becomes the thing known as public opinion.

A favorable public opinion concerning a man or a manufactured product becomes the thing known as reputation.

Good reputation, in turn, is a thing that sells goods.

I maintain that it is no more difficult to convey a suggestion to a multiplicity of minds than it is to one mind.

If that much is granted, or if I can prove that it has been accomplished, we have established a very simple

premise which carries in its train very astonishing results.

If it is true that by printed propaganda, a favorable and friendly opinion can be generated in a multiplicity of minds, then it is equally true that we have found a hothouse in which a good reputation can be generated, as it were, over night.

In other words, the thing for which men in the past have been willing to slave and toil for a lifetime, they can now set out to achieve with semi-scientific accuracy and assurance of success, in periods of months instead of years.

### *The Real Copy Problem*

The most difficult of all requirements is a simplicity and artlessness of expression which will render it reasonably certain that the suggestion when received will be accepted without resistance or resentment.

The real suggestion to convey is that the man manufacturing the product is an honest man, and that the product is an honest product, *to be preferred above all others.*

### *Skill of Expression Needed*

Just as it is exceedingly difficult for a man to choose words which will convince a group of strangers of his honesty, so does it require an exceptional degree of skill in expression to convey the same suggestion in regard to a manufacturer and his product.

No matter how difficult it may be, however, if it is possible of achievement, even by the expenditure of an infinite amount of effort and skill, it is, as I have said, a result almost priceless in value.

It is priceless because the thing that really determines the life or death of such products as we have in mind—in the long run—is public opinion.

If a multiplicity of people can, by suggestion, be induced to approach the purchase of a product with a conviction of its honesty and goodness, they approach it with a preference and a predisposition in its favor.

No state of mind which personal salesmanship can arouse in them is comparable—in its effect on the decision—with this *self-induced opinion*, formed as the result of the suggestions contained in the advertising copy.

*First Necessary to Determine What Thought Is to Be  
Floated*

The first necessity is that the advertising writer and the manufacturer should know and agree upon the thought that it is desired to generate in the public mind.

The second is that those thoughts should be true thoughts, and reasonable thoughts, which constitute in themselves a reason why the product should be preferred.

The big point of all this is that the root-idea or principle as expressed in the advertising not only influence and guide the public, but actually become the all-controlling policy of the advertiser and his organization.

It comes, in time, to regulate their manufacturing and selling conduct.

It influences and establishes their policies; regulates their correspondence; determines the degree of profit and the rate of discount; and affects the quality of their manufacturing.

For it must be remembered that the manufacturer himself reads the advertising and tries to live up to it by making his product and his service worthy of the thoughts the advertising expresses.

*How Advertising Copy Influences Salesmanship*

Advertising copy of the basic character that I have in mind is, of course, in no sense a mere selling expedient.

Its object is to make sales quickly, of course, but not to sacrifice the institution for the sake of the immediate sale.

Always the copy writer of this type must have in mind the idea that he must win confidence, establish good-will of a permanent character.

Confidence in an institution is, after all, the only basis for buying the product.

It is the only basis for permanent success.

If it is built up rightly and soundly by the advertising writer, it will even tide the institution over a depression.

It will lead the public even to forgive a temporarily poor product.

It will do this because the copy is human—because it won friendships.

It inspires loyalty. Establishes confidence. Wins friendship. And all of us make allowances for friends, so long as we are convinced of their sincerity.

Over-emphasis, a too-obvious striving for effect, is dangerous.

These are used, of course. You see them in copy every day.

But their success is more apparent than real.

In fact, the very success carries the germ of failure in it, because every sale made on such a basis leaves a bad taste and alienates the purchaser's good-will.

We can all of us point to some glittering advertising successes, which shortly become business failures, as the result of wrong advertising copy.

### *Sound Copy the Basis of Permanent Success*

I do not know of a single instance in which, when intelligently used, advertising copy has not made it possible for the advertiser to "cash in" a higher price, and a greater profit, than would have been possible without it.

The man who heads a business for which constructive advertising copy has built a public friendship is master of his public, though it is his public which has made him.

They are subject to his product and his prices, because they are subject to their own conviction concerning the goodness of that product.

The head of such a business, again, is master of his selling process, because the strength and dignity of his position makes his product desired, and the right to sell it a highly valued and most valuable franchise.

He is at least partly safeguarded against one of the great wastes of modern merchandising—the mediocrity and inertia which mark the greater proportion of most salesmanship.

For the customer, predisposed in favor of a product by his own mental processes, *helps make a sale to himself* and fills up the gaps and flaws in the salesman's technique from his own thoughts.

Thus you see advertising copy of this type tries not to move a job-lot of goods, but to foster a friendship, a confidence and desire which lead the purchaser to *buy* the product.

Therefore, it controls the market for that product, because it controls the thoughts which impel people to give the product the preference.

### *Advertising Should Formulate Opinion*

The first duty of advertising, of course, is to get itself read.

And, when read, it must leave something with the reader,—must help him formulate a predetermined opinion as to the goodness of the product.

So all advertising that is worthy of the name must be prepared with the definite idea of producing a definite

state of mind in millions of people, in a definite period of time.

If you do that, you won't have to strain after sales,— for the public will buy. And because people buy as the result of their own convictions, they will continue to buy so long as the manufacturer continues to foster that goodwill.

Many companies have applied these fundamentals. Many have not.

The volume of good-will controlled by the first group is in proportion to the thoroughness with which the principle has been applied.

Have you ever figured why it is that some companies which were successful a comparatively few years ago, or some products which were sold everywhere, are now no longer heard of?

The answer always is, "They lost their public."

And they can come back only by winning their public again.

### *How to Write Advertising Copy*

Think of your copy in terms of one individual.

Think of one man or one woman.

Think of a man sitting on the bank of a creek fishing for bull-heads.

Think of the woman knitting or rocking, or busily bustling about a store.

Think of that man's thoughts.

Think of that woman's thoughts.

Think of the remembrance of the product you are writing about flashing through their minds.

Think of that momentary flash followed by a warm feeling of approval.

It comes—it goes—but it has registered.

That friendly thought is stored away in the brain cells.

It will rise to the surface when occasion arises.

There is a predisposition there in favor of the product—a preference which may even amount to a prejudice.

When you have gotten thus far, set your own mind at work.

Ask yourself if it is possible to create such a state of mind in the individual.

The answer is unmistakably and emphatically—yes, it is.

How is it done?

By suggestion.

By endless and interesting iteration.

Because people are human beings.

Because they live, move and have their being under the influence of suggestion.

Seldom are those suggestions systematic or scientific.

The copy writer's job is to determine the basic thought that he wishes to implant, and then to ring the changes on that thought until he literally creates a state of public conviction.

What to write depends on the product, the institution, economic conditions, markets.

The copy must be true and human and sincere.

It must be reasonable, suggestive and interesting.

The people will read it and accept it.

They will even quote words and phrases from the advertising while telling you they do not read advertising.

And they are sincere when they say it because suggestive advertising implants thoughts not by force but by infiltration.

Its sole aim is to make a buyer think a predetermined thought, because what a man thinks he will do.

That attitude of mind finally settles down into that priceless thing called reputation.



And, while reputation may be intangible, it is real,— solid, concrete, definite and worth millions of real money.

To create reputation is finally the only aim of advertising copy.

Sales will then grow steadily as more people buy.

## V

*Emotion and Style in Advertising Copy*

**JAMES WALLEN.** Born in Green Bay, Wisconsin, January 8, 1885. Essays in *Green Bay Gazette*, correspondence for *Milwaukee Sentinel*, cream puffs for theatrical offerings were the first writings for which James Wallen was paid fees. From Wisconsin, Mr. Wallen journeyed to Philadelphia to join Percival K. Frowert Advertising Agency; later became closely associated with Elbert Hubbard in the capacity of secretary and advertising manager of *The Philistine* and *The Fra*. Mr. Wallen's study is now in Fieldston, New York City. His chief interest is narrative advertising, that is, copy which has theme and sequence. Author: *Cleveland's Golden Story* for Win. Taylor Sons & Co. of Cleveland; *Things that Live Forever* for The Art Metal Construction Company of Jamestown; *On the Fair Fingers of All Time* for H. W. Beattie & Sons of Cleveland and a biography of Harry T. Ramsdell of Buffalo, *The Hilltops of Fifty Years*.

## V

*Emotion and Style in Advertising Copy*

By James Wallen

**I**T was a little known philosopher, Roannez, who stated a great truth in tabloid, "Reasons come afterward, but at first a thing pleases or shocks me without my knowing the reason."

A few years ago I listened to possibly the first presentation by Charles W. Mears, of the argument that advertising copy should be composed primarily of emotion and not logic. This was during the era of "reason why" copy, and, therefore, Mr. Mears did a very daring, though useful, thing. He contended that emotion has a more universal appeal than sheer logic. In this Mr. Mears is supported by one of the world's greatest novelists. Bulwer Lytton wrote: "Emotion, whether of ridicule, anger or sorrow, whether raised at a puppet show, a funeral or battle, is your grandest of levelers."

A brilliant but anonymous writer in the *Atlantic Monthly* likens the advertising writer to the poet and makes out his case. But to my mind, the advertising writer of the future will partake of the qualities of the novelist. Few advertising writers may attain the grace of Richard Le Gallienne, prose poet, but many will be able to approximate the style of, say, Rex Beach.

In this discussion, I am not going to treat of the obviously essential emotion in the advertising of fire extinguishers, skid chains, revolvers and disinfectants, but of

the feeling and sentiment in every-day wearing apparel, furniture and food.

Promise is the essence of advertising. To my mind, the greatest advertisement ever written is the 23rd Psalm of David. My first claim is that it is the most satisfying. My second consists of the fact that with this psalm you convince yourself, and to sell one-self is a great deal more difficult than to convince the other fellow. I take it that you know the 23rd Psalm:

The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

This psalm is all promise. It is undiluted emotion. It gives no reasons why, and yet, as Henry Beecher said, "it has charmed more griefs to rest than all of the phi-

losophy of the world.” Most of the great consolations of the human heart do not particularize.

Let us remember that man does not live by the bread of reason alone. He lives partly by the inspirational word. We speak of pictures as a power. They are not nearly as potent as a few words of consolation that have gone down the ages. “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” The mere affirmation couched in the language of faith without a shred of explanation suffices all of the needs of the average heart and mind. Now, here is the great secret of emotional writing. There is reason back of it, but the machinery is not revealed. The author finds that his thought is logical—that it analyzes, so he presents it. It is not necessary to print the formula on the glass of wine nor count the molecules in the pearl. I am conscious of reasoning about emotion now and, in so doing, I open myself more to debate than if I wrote a song instead of a lecture.

In advertising copy, we went through several stages from the card style to “reason why,” from “reason why” to more or less exact description. Now the emotional appeal seems to be in high favor. It seems to me that it will remain, for, as Victor Hugo said, “emotion is always new.” There will be no need of changing, for we have struck the well of human feeling which never runs dry.

Our fascinating but unknown friend of the *Atlantic Monthly* says: “In selling tea, we are not concerned with ugly, shriveled leaves which color hot water a yellowish brown, but with a cozy fire, the silver tea set, the memory of a lovely woman, a thousand rich and beautiful experiences, haunting pictures of Japanese hillsides and sunshine.” Remember that emotion is not ever violent. It does not always pulse with passion nor burn with fervor. It has the haunting quality of romance and may

be induced by a mere word, the master of English may intensify the feeling that underlies an entire sentence.

I would refer you for example and guidance to the writers of novels rather than of advertising of the present for examples as to what advertising will be in the future. If you are called upon to prepare copy for a hotel, read Arnold Bennett's praise of the American hotel.

The great American hotel is a wondrous haven for the European who in Europe has only tasted comfort in his dreams. The calm orderliness of the bed-room floors, the adequacy of wardrobes and lamps, the reckless profusion of clean linen, that charming notice which one finds under one's door in the morning, 'You were called at seven-thirty, and answered,' the fundamental principle that a bedroom without a bath-room is not a bed-room, the magic laundry which returns your effects duly starched in eight hours, the bells which are answered immediately, the thickness of the walls, the radiator in the elevator-shaft, the celestial invention of the floor-clerk,—I could catalogue the civilizing features of the American hotel for pages. But the great American hotel is a classic, and to praise it may seem inept.

Now, what are the words that make this passage alluring? "Haven," "reckless profusion," "magic laundry," "celestial invention," "classic" are words charged more with emotion than logic. Ask any hotel proprietor, for instance, if he does allow a "reckless profusion of clean linen."

Read John Galsworthy's description of a pair of boots in his story, "Quality."

Besides, they were too beautiful—the pair of pumps, so inexpressibly slim, the patent leathers with cloth tops, making water come into one's mouth, the tall brown riding boots with marvelous sooty glow, as if, though new, they had been worn a hundred years. Those pairs could only have been made by one who saw before him the Soul of the boots,—so truly were they prototypes incarnating the very spirit of all foot-gear.

Here again some rather illogical groupings of words give vitality to the description—"inexpressibly slim," "marvelous sooty glow."

No writer on interior decoration listing facts, measurements and details could so comprehensibly describe a room as Frank Swinnerton, with a few simple but eloquent phrases, has done with the dining salon of a yacht in his novel, *Nocturne*.

It seemed, partly because the ceiling was low, to be very spacious; the walls and ceiling were of a kind of dusky amber hue; a golden brown was everywhere the prevailing tint. The tiny curtains, the long settees into which one sank, the chairs, the shades of the mellow lights—all were of some variety of this delicate golden brown. In the middle of the cabin stood a square table; and on the table, arrayed on an exquisitely white tablecloth, was laid a wondrous meal. The table was laid for two; candles with amber shades made silver shine and glasses glitter. Upon a fruit stand were peaches and nectarines; upon a tray she saw decanters; little dishes crowding the table bore mysterious things to eat such as Jenny had never before seen. Upon a side table stood other dishes, a tray bearing coffee cups and ingredients for the provision of coffee, curious silver boxes. Everywhere she saw

flowers similar to those which had been in the motor car. Under her feet was a carpet so thick that she felt her shoes must be hidden in its pile. And over all was this air of quiet expectancy which suggested that everything awaited her coming.

This passage emphasizes one of the truest elements in advertising appeal. One does not sell an upholstered chair but really the depression made by the body as you settle into the chair. It is the effect, not the medium, we are selling. The contributor to the *Atlantic Monthly* says that you do not sell a man the tea, but the magic spell which is brewed nowhere else but in a tea-pot.

What do you buy when you go to an antique dealer and acquire a decrepit old chair? Not the sensation of comfort which you secure with the upholstered chair, but an even less material, element—that of tradition, of bygone association and historical legend.

Personally, I have found the appeals to sentiment, ambition, a sense of luxury, more compelling than reams of logic and pointed argument. The most effective advertisement in inquiries and interest in a series which I wrote for Berkey and Gay ran as follows:

Mary Lamb wrote to her friend Barbara Betham, saying that her famous brother Charles could not write in a room not properly furnished.

So with loving care she plenished a little study to his liking. This is but one of the historic examples of the influence of furnishings on mind and soul.

It is the mission of Berkey and Gay to make beautiful, restful and gently inspirational furniture accessible to the many.

Once you become the proud possessor of a piece bearing the shop-mark of Berkey and Gay, you will understand the abiding sentiment and truth in the phrase—  
'furniture for your children's heirlooms.'



In the skilled advertising writer there is much of the historian, a good bit of the biographer, some of the scientist, an alloy of the philosopher, and more than an atom of the economist. In short, he is an editorial writer crossed by a tendency to produce a wholesome story.

The skilled advertising writer, even though he is keen on readability, consorts on good terms with truth. On this point I quote you Clayton Hamilton with regard to where the novelist stands in relation to truth.

It is only in the vocabulary of very careless thinkers that the words "truth" and "fiction" are regarded as antithetic. A genuine antithesis subsists between the words "fact" and "fiction," but fact and truth are not synonymous.

The novelist forsakes the realm of fact in order that he may better tell the truth, and lures the reader away from actualities in order to present him with realities.

I think I can illustrate Mr. Hamilton's point graphically: A mattress is a very definite piece of furniture to the average mind. The makers of the Sealy call their mattress, "a pillow for the body." It requires a lift of the mind from actuality to visualize what this mattress really is.

For popular interest and affection, I will stake soft, winsome Mary Pickford against all of the Dr. Mary Walkers in the world, useful as these women may be. Mary Pickford represents emotion intelligently directed. Mary Walker was intellect without the graces or arts.

Even as Mr. Mears has proved, motor cars, things of steel, rubber, leather and other unyielding materials, may be sold through the sense of luxury and refinement. When it is necessary to show in an advertising illustration the interior of a foundry, an artist like Everett Shinn

puts the wonderful miracle of industry into the picture rather than the hardships of labor as George Bellows might do. Persuasion is born of pleasant association.

An advertisement should affect the reader with some of the glowing zest that the works of Fabre, the naturalist, brought to Maurice Maeterlinck. If we inject just a trifle of this intense interest into our copy, the trite question of whether copy shall be brief or lengthy will not be raised.

We take up at random one of these bulky volumes and naturally expect to find first of all the very learned and rather dry lists of names, the very fastidious and exceedingly quaint specifications of those huge, dusty graveyards of which all the entomological treatises that we have read so far seem almost wholly to consist. We, therefore, open the book without zest and without unreasonable expectations; and forthwith, from between the open leaves, there rises and unfolds itself, without hesitation, without interruption and almost without remission to the end of the four thousand pages, the most extraordinary or tragic fairy plays that it is possible for the imagination, not to create or conceive, but to admit and to acclimatize within itself.

And by the way, the most effective passage in Maeterlinck's "Chrysanthemums" is that in which he makes their blooming coincide with a human movement.

They are, indeed, the most universal, the most diverse of flowers; but their diversity and surprises are, so to speak, concerted, like those of fashion, in I know not what arbitrary Edens. At the same moment, even as with silks, laces, jewels, and curls, a mysterious voice gives the password in time and space; and docile as the most beautiful women,

simultaneously, in every country, in every latitude, the flowers obey the sacred decree.

Now just a word of warning on humanizing copy. Next to being half-baked, the most serious thing that can happen to a roast is to be over-done. Someone has warned, "Don't get humaner than life," like some of the underwear advertisements which exhibit all of the members of a family in the drawing room in negligee. Or the ads of a certain silverware in which language is used that only two people could possibly understand, the secret code of a single pair of lovers. Do not partake of the qualities of Joe Mitchell Chapple's "Heart Throbs," for while mellow may mean ripe, it may also imply a further stage in the life of the choicest verbal pippin.

Do not strain too far for effect. George H. Daniels, the famous General Passenger Agent of the New York Central Railroad, used to employ the simile, "Like the dreams of fair women or the cars on the Twentieth Century Limited." I suppose that Mr. Daniels' only aim was to provoke a smile.

There is a certain type of merriment which is fatal to your advertisement. There was a girl who pleaded in the divorce court that she had taught the complainant in the case "not to use bay rum." This reform was her major argument for consideration. Doubtless she had rendered a great service, but she could not alter the judge's decision for she had made him laugh right heartily. There are products and media which lend themselves to humor, but they are few, and caution is wisdom.

Let me quote you a practical rule laid down by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch to the students of Cambridge University:

Whenever you feel an impulse to perpetrate a piece of exceptionally fine writing, obey it—whole-

heartedly—and delete it before sending your manuscript to press. Murder your Darlings.

There are just five points that I desire to urge:

First: That emotion or feeling is a most vital feature in advertising copy.

Second: That to secure it use the methods of the novelist; study the ways of the fictioneer.

Third: Reserve is the guardian of true emotion. As Elbert Hubbard has said: “Pack your pauses with emotion.” Pauses are simply a leaving out. In being emotional also be reasonable. For common-sense is the mentor of sentiment.

Fourth: Base your romance on facts. Know everything the shop, the store and the books can tell you about your wares. Create an atmosphere of authenticity. Surround your products with the aura of greatness.

Fifth: Memorize the 23rd Psalm for the good of your art as well as your heart.

### *The Copy Style*

And now as regards copy style.

The perfect symbol of the epigram is the dewdrop. It has clarity, compression and isolation; it is transient, yet permanent; it is repeated a thousand times, thus proving its essential truth. And in such a verbal dewdrop, John Galsworthy has defined style: “What is style, in its true and purest sense, save fidelity to idea and mood and perfect balance in the clothing of them?” This definition applies with exactitude to advertising copy. The advertisement must be faithful to its central idea and be without flaw in the dressing and presentation of its theme. Whether the advertisement be in the minor chord or in

the grand manner, it is needful that it hold to its *motif* from initial letter to the last period.

This, then, is the first requirement of style in an advertisement, but style implies some other meanings, as well. In fact, J. Middleton Murry draws three distinct definitions of the word style as applied to writing: "Style as a personal peculiarity; style as technique of expression; style as the highest achievement of literature." The difficulty attending these definitions is that they melt one into the other.

When we speak of a certain writer's style, we likely mean his peculiar characteristics. John Corbin once reminded an actress who imitated Mrs. Fiske that the gyrations of the sibyl are not the secret of the sibyl's inspiration. I think that these personal qualities are almost wholly a matter of inborn genius and should not concern one who is endeavoring to help others attain style in writing. One seems to have personal style or not. Originality is the rarest gem and cannot be simulated.

Artistically, I am sure, there is no such thing as imitation. There is only parody. When writing advertising literature, profit by the example of others, but do not copy their peculiarities of style and construction. If you are a writer, a craftsman with words, you will have a style of your own.

The imitations which make Cecilia Loftus famous are other characters seen through the camera of Miss Loftus. When the clever Cecilia imitates Mrs. Patrick Campbell, it is her interpretation of the other actress just as definitely as a photograph of a subject by Alfred Stieglitz represents his own ideas of the model which will differ radically from those of Pine MacDonald. Take, for example, Louis Untermeyer's "Parodies of Poets." They are neither imitations nor burlesque, as he himself has said.

During the years in which I was advertising manager for Elbert Hubbard's publications I never attempted to follow the style of *The Fra*, though there were many copy writers under my direction, who did consciously and laboriously try to imitate the Sage of East Aurora. They succeeded in being imitations only, unconvincing and as full of poses as a Greenwich Village model. Everyone who has tried to put on the mantle of *The Fra*, as a writer, has succeeded only in getting lost in its folds.

There are words and arrangements of words which are native to one individual and foreign to another. In the discussion and vivisection of words, let us carry in mind this very vital fact. There are elements of the expression of thought for which you have an affinity and others with which you have only a speaking acquaintance.

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch says that all literature is personal and, therefore, various. One must learn all that he can of the best writers. Saturate yourself with their manners, then escape from them, go into the open and write out of your own heart and mind.

Most people express themselves to-day in ready-to-use phrases. The writer must, of all people, avoid this fault. He must be a maker, rather than a mere retailer of phrases. The best way to test originality in a writer is to study his comments on a subject with which you are familiar and see if the author engages your interest. Then, in the same fashion, read the work of another writer on the same subject. This will give you a scale by which you can judge what you might possibly do with the same subject, influenced, perhaps, by other writers but still at variance with them as your own personality invests the topic.

Originality is as elusive as a wood fawn; to endeavor to chart this phase of style is like trying to measure a certain bird's song. There are, however, a few points

about style as technique and style as manner, which deserve discussion from an academic point of view. And even here Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch imagines that his pupils say about his lectures that “at the final doorway to the secret he turned his back and left us. Accuracy, propriety, perspicuity,—these we may achieve. But where has he helped us to write with beauty, charm and distinction; where has he given us rules for what is called style, having attained which an author may count himself set up in business?” And Sir Arthur’s answer to his own question is, that style, for example, is not, cannot be extraneous ornament, and he quotes Cardinal Newman who says that “style is a thinking out into language.” We are to conclude that when one has expressed fully that which is in his mind he has achieved style.

Most people are truly inarticulate; the very thing that they cannot do is to put into language what they have in their minds. It was Cardinal Newman who told how the Oriental lover engages a professional writer to express his emotions for him. “The man of words duly instructed, dips his pen of desire in the ink of devotedness and proceeds to spread it over the page of desolation.” This is exactly the position in which the advertising writer finds himself. He is speaking for someone other than himself. He is playing the Cyrano de Bergerac to the business Christian, with the public in the character of Roxane. If he were speaking for himself, the task might be easier. Having taken on the character of someone else, it is doubly difficult to achieve style.

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch seems almost willing to leave style in writing on the plane of good manners. While I think that good manners are important in writing advertising, I feel that we should have something finer than good manners. We should have an impressive manner. We are even urged to write advertising as we talk. To

my mind this would be most unfortunate,—a most humiliating concession. If most men would write as they talk, their letters would not be admissible to the United States mails. I contend that there is a conversational manner, a telephone manner, a platform manner and certainly a writing manner.

I recall four advertisements from which I received a sense of style and fitness—"fidelity to the idea and mood and perfect balance in the clothing of them." These advertisements were: "Time and Chance," by Elbert Hubbard, an exhortation for the Equitable Life; that famed "I Am the Printing Press," written by Robert H. Davis; Frank Irving Fletcher's "On the Wings of Morning" for Harrod's of London; Bruce Barton's "The Years That the Locusts Have Eaten," for the Alexander Hamilton Institute. These advertisements had the fervor of oratory, and it is a peculiar coincidence that they all savored of Biblical literature as if the writers had dipped their pens in the incense of the great Hebrew poets. No one can, however, deny that the Bible has commanded some influence in this world.

If I had, however, to lay claim to having evolved a major advertisement, I would be willing to rest my laurels on the double page entitled "The Black Pearl of Furs, Being the Saga of the Silver Fox," which appeared in Hearst's *International*. I have evidence that this form of advertisement, in addition to making good reading, does produce returns.

The advertising writer is a special pleader, and some of the quality of exhortation must be in his work. I am sure that style comes more spontaneously when one is filled to overflowing with his subject. The reason that Bourke Cochrane was persuasive as an orator was because he had more of his subject in him than he could hold. When the mind is surcharged with a subject, it



becomes electric. When Daniel Webster made his deathless reply to Hayne, the accumulation of the knowledge of the years came to his assistance. 'Webster said of his oration: "The air around me seemed to be full of arguments; I had only to reach out and pull down a thunderbolt and hurl it at him." Robert Louis Stevenson stated with clarity the only scheme by which a man may write without effort:

When truth flows from a man, fittingly clothed in style and without conscious effort, it is because the effort has been made and the work practically completed before he sat down to write. It is only out of fullness of thinking that expression drops perfect like a ripe fruit; and when Thoreau wrote so nonchalantly at his desk, it was because he had been vigorously active during his walk. For neither clearness, compression, nor beauty of language, come to any living creature till after a busy and a prolonged acquaintance with the subject on hand. Easy writers are those who, like Walter Scott, choose to remain contented with a less degree of perfection than is legitimately within the compass of their powers.

The French formula for writing love letters—"Begin without knowing what you are going to say, and end without knowing what you have said"—cannot be applied to the writing of advertising.

John P. Altgeld, the Illinois statesman who was one of America's most moving orators, once spoke of the requirement of accuracy in all artistic effort: "Art does not admit of random touches. It demands entire accuracy. In music the singer is not permitted to be guided by his feelings in dropping or adding notes; the laws of harmony must be followed, and like fidelity is demanded in speech."

The threatening danger in the lack of preparation is the committing of the sin of formlessness. Unless you have a plan, you are apt to wander all over your subject, like a colt in a meadow, without direction. Your accumulation of data may prove your undoing unless you methodically arrange the stuff according to its sequence and importance.

One of the most helpful of teachers is the Abbe Bautain, Vicar-General of the Sorbonne, who has written earnestly of the necessity for method in writing and speaking:

The preparation of the plan of a discourse implies, before anything else, a knowledge of the things which you have to speak; but a general knowledge is not enough; you may have a great quantity of materials, of documents and of information in your memory, and not be aware how to bring them to bear. It sometimes even happens that those who know most, or have most matter in their heads, are incapable of rightly conveying it. The overabundance of acquisition and words crushes the mind, and stifles it, just as the head is paralyzed by a too great determination of blood, or a lamp is extinguished by an excess of oil.

You will note that the Abbe Bautain treats of this “overabundance of acquisition.” He tells you exactly why it is too heavy a load to carry. It is just knowledge badly distributed.

When material is properly arranged, it becomes pliable rather than unwieldy. It becomes better clay. It admits of higher craftsmanship. Lord Tennyson contended that “an artist should get his workmanship as good as he can, and make his work as perfect as possible.

A small vessel, built on fine lines, is likely to float further down the stream of time than a big craft.”

I cannot emphasize too earnestly that when one has a poverty of ideas on a subject he cannot attain a great style. If one has a wealth of information he is free to take what he needs at the time of writing to express his idea and to leave the rest for another day. Because you have found a mine of data, there is no reason why you should garnish your copy with all of its gold. Restraint and reserve are the writer’s means of thrift.

Eden Phillpotts has observed, “Nothing without a skeleton can endure. Some art is alive; some art is fossil; but everything that has lasted, was built on a skeleton of form and modeled with the steel of stern selective power.” Because you are called upon to write short copy is no reason why you should not have a heavy van-load of information. This enables you to select the best for your brief presentation.

The talk of an idle hour about being too near a subject to write about it, receives no sympathy from me. The speaker in such a case has merely neglected to formulate his understanding into usable shape. He needs what Professor Shaw calls “a cream separator for the brain.” The successful attitude toward a business or a product implies about the same qualities that make a happy marriage—a familiarity that breeds not contempt but romance. Not everything you hear, see or read is grist for your copy mill—there is a lot of chaff. The result depends entirely upon the miller.

The study of words is an important aid in the accomplishment of an authentic style. However, the ownership of a copious vocabulary does not mean a writing style. You might empty before me a cask of gems and I would not be able to arrange even a few of them into an artistic pendant. Which words are slow and which are

fast in conveying ideas; words which humanize; those which form the North Pole and those which form the South Pole of your picture must be recognized on the instant of writing.

I remember an announcement by Selznick Pictures which described Norma Talmadge as “the lady of tremendous contrasts.” “Buttercups and orchids; spring water and champagne; tropical midnight and mountain sunrise; thrushes and peacocks; storm clouds and sunshine.” This is skilful juggling, displaying the child of the field and the flower of an exotic civilization in chromatic compositions of words. It is not high art, but it is loftier than the flights of most advertising writers.

Copy style implies that one can determine the style of copy to be utilized in a certain advertisement at will. There are a great many things that set the style of an advertisement. The first, of course, is the character of the product to be advertised; the environment in which the product is to be used; the media in which it is to be advertised. The copy then must be faithful to these three elements. What Galsworthy defines in such exquisite English is known in advertising circles by a brassier expression—”slant.” To bring Galsworthy down to the terms which we use every day, an advertisement must be loyal to its slant.

Mr. Murry has said that all style is artificial in the sense that all good style is achieved by artisans. We should all endeavor to become good artisans. The outstanding virtue is consistency—keeping to the Galsworthy formula. It was Galvin McNabb, a San Francisco attorney, who in a famous case warned the opposing counsel against “carrying a valentine into a cathedral.” I am not willing to grant that all advertisements are mere valentines. ‘We advertising writers are privileged to compose a new chapter of civilization. It is a great responsibility to mold the daily lives of millions of our fellow men, and I am persuaded that we are second only to statesmen and editors in power for good.



