

MASTERS *of*  
COPYWRITING

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

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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.

\* \* \* \* \*

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.

\* \* \* \* \*

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.

\* \* \* \* \*

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.

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*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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THE 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 that 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.

## VI

### *Some Lessons I Have Learned in Advertising*

**CLAUDE C. HOPKINS** started with Bissell Carpet Sweeper Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., and there first learned how to sell goods by letter. Went from there to become first advertising manager of Swift & Company, packers, Chicago. There, for several years, handled very large appropriation for that time. After various other adventures in advertising, joined Lord & Thomas. Was there for seventeen years and was President of Lord & Thomas for seven years. When Mr. Lasker returned from Washington and took his place as head of his agency, Mr. Hopkins started his own. Author of *Scientific Advertising*, which has been translated into numerous languages.



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## VI

### *Some Lessons I Have Learned in Advertising*

By Claude C. Hopkins

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**M**Y first lesson in advertising was learned as a boy of twelve. Mother was left a widow so we had to join in supporting the family. One thing we did was to make a silver polish. We made it in cakes, wrapped it up nicely, and I went out to sell it after school.

I found that when I met the housewife at the door and talked the polish to her I sold hardly to one home in ten. But when I got into the pantry and cleaned some of the silver I sold nine times in ten.

That taught me to let products sell themselves. Since then I have probably given away more samples and free packages than any other man. I would no more think of starting an advertising campaign without samples than I would think of selling goods on the road without samples. Or as a house-to-house canvasser.

But I later learned that giving unrequested samples often does more harm than good. It cheapens the product, brings it into disrespect. So I never give samples except on request. I give them only to those who read my story and are interested enough to write.

I often offer a full-size package, but never in a way to cheapen my product. I buy the package from the dealer and pay his price and profit. There is a vast difference in the psychology. People find it hard to pay

for a product which once was free. But buying the product and paying the price in order that one may try it impresses the recipient. The product must be excellent, else you never would do that.

My next lesson in advertising was learned at the age of twenty. I was writing ads for numerous retail dealers. Aluminum ware was just coming into vogue. I specialized on it because I felt that every home should have it, and few homes were supplied.

I found that ads inviting women to an aluminum display brought few responses and the cost was high. But when I offered a souvenir on a certain day I got quick action, and the saving in cost per visitor paid for the souvenir some twenty times over. I supplied that plan to aluminum dealers everywhere and thus made my first success in advertising. Then I applied it to other lines, and developed in that way a large retail clientele.

I have used that idea in countless lines since then. Instead of saying to women "Come any time," I set a certain hour or day or week. I print in the ad a reminder for the woman to cut out. That is so she won't forget. To insure inspection of my product I offer some gift or inducement. That reduces my cost per visitor. Thus I get prompt action and decision at minimum expense.

Later I found that I could quadruple results by not telling what the souvenir was. Curiosity is a greater pulling factor than a gift.

About the same time I learned another great lesson. That is, not to talk mechanics to a woman. I was selling carpet sweepers, but not selling very many. Under pressure from the management I was talking broom action, cyco bearings, patent dumping devices, etc.



Then I went out on the road with a sample sweeper and a bag of bran. I went into stores and showed women customers how the sweeper swept up bran. I taught dealers and their clerks to make like demonstrations, then went back to my office and taught them by mail. Then carpet sweepers began to sell.

I enlarged on the plan by offering special exhibits. I had the sweepers built in peculiar or rare woods. Or I had them built twelve woods to the dozen to make a forestry exhibit. I furnished circulars for dealers to put in their packages, inviting women to see an exhibit which would never appear again. Sales multiplied over and over. My methods brought me reputation, and I received numerous offers to enter wider fields.

Since then I have never discussed mechanics with women. I have used very little logic. I have brought them to see what my product would do in some interesting manner.

My next lesson was learned in the advertising of a vegetable shortening. I made very slow progress in merely talking that shortening against lard. I saw in a few weeks that I would lose my job before I won a profit. So I built in a department store in Chicago the largest cake in the world. It was made with this shortening. I advertised it like a circus and brought one hundred thousand women in one week to see it. I served them samples. Then I offered premiums to those who would buy that day.

The plan was a tremendous success. The shortening was placed on a profit-paying basis in one week. Then I built a like cake in the leading stores of a hundred cities and made the product a nationwide success.

That saved my job, gave me added reputation, and taught me to dramatize my subjects when I could.

My text lessons were learned in mail-order advertising. I did this on numerous lines at night. There I looked cost and result in the face, as all mail-order advertisers do. I found that any wasted space increased my cost. 'When I used a useless picture to attract attention, and that picture occupied one-third my space, it increased my cost fifty per cent. When I used a type twice larger than necessary it doubled my cost per reply.

That taught me economy of space. I found that people would read ads set in small type just as readily as in large type. They read about everything they care to read in 8-point type or smaller. Larger type brought no additional readers. Nor did any meaningless picture or display. People read ads, like everything else, because the subject is interesting to them. They judge by the headline, on news items or on ads. I have saved advertisers millions of dollars through that well-proved principle of economizing space.

Mail-order advertising also taught me that headlines differ immensely in their pulling power. A certain ad with one headline will pull ten times better than the same ad with another headline. That taught me to learn in every line what appeals pay best. It taught me to key all advertising, to compare one ad with another, just as mail-order advertisers do. And never to use an ad in wide circulation until I have tried it out.

In the twenty-five years since then I have put thousands of ads to the test. I found on one line that a certain appeal cost \$14.20 per reply. Another appeal on that same line cost 42 cents per reply. One ad on one line cost me \$17 to get a coupon for a sample. Another ad on that same line, telling almost an identical story, cost 35 cents per reply. In almost every line I have found certain lines of approach which would have made profit

impossible. And those were often the ads which everybody favored.

There lies the main reason for the success I have gained. I have never spent much money on a gamble or a guess. I have compared dozens of ads, sometimes hundreds of ads, before going into large circulation. The best-paying ads were selected. Then I constantly tested other ads in a small way to find something better still. On one line I tried out 56 series of ads, and after five years I found a way to bring results at one-fourth the cost of the best way I had found before.

I am convinced that nobody, save by some rare accident, can do effective advertising without those comparisons, based on known returns. Certainly others must make the same mistakes that I made. They must get the wrong viewpoints about as often as I did. Decades ago I would have wrecked myself and wrecked my clients had I not known my results.

My next lesson was learned in starting numerous products. I was gaining reputation. Countless people came to me with what they considered good advertising projects. I made several great mistakes by relying on my judgment and on theirs. The products were not as salable as we thought.

So I decided to attempt nothing until I had tested the project in a limited way. I set the limit on a test campaign at \$5,000, but most such campaigns cost less. Thus I found out in a few towns the cost of winning one thousand customers. Then I waited to see what those thousand would buy. Before branching out I always knew the cost per customer and the sale per customer. I let the thousands decide what the millions would do. When I did branch out I operated on a certainty.

That is why I have remained in advertising thirty-six

years so far. That is why I have been trusted with the expenditure of \$60,000,000. I limited losses. The mistakes I made cost little. The successes made fortunes without risk.

With advertising ventures and advertising men the fatalities are enormous. Nearly all the stars of advertising have perished before their prime. I believe that all of my early contemporaries are out of the field today. Many were brilliant men, but they made the mistake of working in the dark. They had no compass, so they landed on the rocks.

Another lesson I learned was the value of information. It first was taught me in a pork-and-bean campaign. It had not been very successful, but the maker of the product still believed in advertising. He was willing to venture another \$400,000 on a logical plan.

I sent investigators from house to house to measure the situation. When their reports came in we found that ninety-four per cent of the housewives were baking their own beans. Only six per cent were buying any canned beans. Yet several makers were spending large sums to win that six per cent.

I went after the home bakers, the ninety-four per cent. I cited the sixteen hours of soaking, boiling and baking required on a dish of beans. I pictured the beans in glass dishes, crisped on the top, mushy in the middle, all under-baked, all hard to digest.

Then I told them how we baked—in steam ovens, at a temperature of 245 degrees. How we baked without crisping, without breaking the beans. They came out nut-like, mealy and whole, fitted for easy digestion. I won on that line a place and a career in a great advertising agency—a career which continued for seventeen years, which brought me both fortune and fame. All be-

cause I learned the situation and multiplied the power of my appeal.

Another lesson I learned was in the days of beer advertising. All advertising brewers were then talking pure beer. They displayed the word "Pure" in big type. Finally one brewer used two pages, putting PU on one page and RE on the other, to make the "Pure" more emphatic. But it was all like dropping water on a duck.

One brewer who held fifth place asked me to take up his advertising. I went to a brewing school. Then I went through his brewery. I saw a plate-glass room where beer was cooled in filtered air. I saw the beer filtered through white pulp wood. Bottles were washed four times by machinery. Every pump and pipe was cleaned after every operation. The brewery was on the shore of Lake Michigan, but they bored down 4,500 feet to get still purer water.

I went to the laboratory and saw a mother yeast cell kept in glass. They told me that yeast had resulted from 1,200 experiments to get an ideal flavor. And that all the yeast used in that brewery was produced from that mother cell.

I was astounded. "Why," I asked, "have you never told this story?" They told me that their methods formed common brewery practice. Any rival could claim whatever they claimed about them.

But I pictured that plate glass room and told of those filters and processes. In two years that brewery jumped from fifth place to first place. Largely because I gave convincing reasons for purity and flavor.

In the early days of automobile advertising there existed a general impression that profits were too high. In a line I was advertising our chief opportunity seemed to lie in combating that impression.

Others were claiming low prices and low profits. I came out with a headline, "Our Profit is 9 Per Cent." I told the exact cost of engine, chassis, wheels, tires, etc. I cited exact costs of \$762 on a \$1,500 car, without mentioning body, top or upholstery—the things most conspicuous in a car.

The success of that campaign taught me to be exact. When we claim the best or the cheapest, people smile. That is advertising license. But when we state figures, they are either true or untrue, and people do not expect a reputable concern to lie. They accept the figures at par. Ever since then, whenever possible, I have stated my facts in figures.

In other ways I learned the fearful cost of changing people's habits. One was in a campaign on oatmeal, another on a dentrifice. I tried to induce more people to eat oats, and I found that the cost of winning new users was vastly beyond any possible returns. I tried to convert new users to the tooth brush habit. As nearly as I could figure, the cost was \$25 per convert. If all converts used our tooth paste all their lives we could scarcely get the money back.

So I quit that. I am letting others convert people to new habits. I simply try to get them, when they are converted, to use my type of product. Since I learned that lesson, I have spent millions of dollars in advertising oatmeal and tooth pastes. But I have never used one line, one word, to win people to a habit they have not as yet adopted.

I learned another lesson in connection with oatmeal. We knew that countless people failed to serve oatmeal because of the time required for cooking. So we put out a ready-cooked oatmeal called Two-Minute Oats. It was so flavory, so enticing, so easy to prepare that we

wanted to jump into national advertising without the usual limited test. But we made the test, and we quickly found that people did not like Two-Minute Oats. It was a delightful product, but it did not taste like the oatmeals people knew. We were appealing to oatmeal users, and they all had certain educated tastes. They refused our innovation.

Later came another idea for quick-cooking oats. This method did not change the flavor. The advertiser did not think the idea worth a trial. They cited the fact that we had already failed on a quick-cooking oatmeal. But I argued the difference and urged them to submit the question to two thousand women. We did that at a cost of about \$1,000—by buying a package of the new product for them. We stated the facts, told them that here was a product with a flavor like the oatmeals they knew. But it cooked in three minutes. We wanted their verdict on it. To the two thousand women who asked for a package we sent a letter stating the facts again. We said that it made no difference to us which type they preferred. We simply wanted to learn their choice. We enclosed a stamped envelope for their reply. Ninety-one per cent of those women voted for the new type, and the concern which makes it has gained a new hold on that field.

Good advertising is a matter of experience and experiment. All of us make at least ten mistakes to every success we create. Any of us, acting on judgment alone, would meet with quick disaster. This is truer now than ever. Advertising is more costly than it used to be. The competition is many times as severe. We cannot win out on a guess. We cannot hope to succeed unless we carefully test our ideas.

We cannot know enough people to measure up public opinion. We cannot anticipate the wants, the prejudices

or the idiosyncrasies which confront any new undertaking. We can learn only by experience. We must feel our way, else the best man among us will soon find a precipice which may forever destroy men's confidence in him.



## VII

### *Copy—Good, Bad, and Indifferent*

RICHARD A. FOLEY. Died in 1923. Was head of Richard A. Foley & Company, advertising agents, Philadelphia, and had a national reputation as a writer of advertising copy. He was a newspaper man for a number of years, and also a forceful speaker.



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VII  
*Copy—Good, Bad, and indifferent*  
By Richard A. Foley

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NOT only the beginner in advertising work, but the old hand, may find it worth while to consider the plain fundamentals of advertising copy and to get as far as possible away from the altruisms and “untrueisms” so plentifully besprinkling the pages of magazines and books which seek to make plain the proper and profitable ways of advertising.

There is a deal of misinformation vouchsafed beginners, and to the old practitioner—much that passes for inspiration is silly nonsense.

Perhaps with what I have in mind, the chapter might well be headed: “Common Sense in Advertising,” for although this kind of sense is supposed to be the heritage of all, it is indeed most uncommon, having become varnished over and decorated with all sorts of fantastic, grotesque and whimsical interpretations and outgivings.

If it were convenient or necessary to put into one phrase the secret of advertising copy that really attains the full measure of its purpose, that message would read:

*Be Natural and Sincere.*

Now to be *natural* and *sincere* is by no means easy of accomplishment.

The real artist is one who conveys to the auditors the

meaning of the melody which he plays, or the soul that animates the character he delineates in the play.

The great painter is not photographic, but suggestional—he makes us see not merely the visible things, but the significances which the wonderful eye of his mind has focalized.

Great literature must necessarily be sincere. The more natural its technique, the more livable and lovable it is.

True art, therefore, in advertising, consists in making the reader see for himself that which the advertiser is eager to have him see, and doing it without the appearance of eagerness.

### *Few Fixed Principles*

Advertising is such an enormous force and so widely used—and its economic history is of such recent scope—that we have few fixed principles by which to judge the value or comparative worth-whileness of any particular type of advertising. Hence, many prophets rush into print claiming wonders each for his favorite method, when, upon close analysis, it would be revealed that too often it merely represents the meretricious, the easily clever, the varnish laid thick and glossy upon a poor foundation.

Three forms of advertising seem most to call forth praise from the unthinking—the Slogan, the Versified Advertisement, and the “Stunt.” Under the latter head may be rated all sorts of bizarre presentations of more or less bright subjects, such, for example, as—“I am the Anvil,” followed by a long series of “I-am’s,” telling what an otherwise uninteresting anvil really is and does. This “I am” method in various guises has been applied to all sorts of merchandise.

Then there is the “Say Jones’ Spuds to the Grocer”

idea—the repetition of a phrase or a picture, in magazines, newspapers, billboards, street cars, to the saturation point with the expectation of *forcing* the merchandise on the community.

The slogan is probably the most overrated form of advertising cleverness. The mere smoothness of phraseology—the “aptness” of the thing—marks it as merely the work of an advertising-phrase-maker. It is representative not at all of the sincere effort of the manufacturer or the actual character of his product. In a world of slogans, a plain statement of honest fact, marked by sincerity, carries great weight.

It is as though a listener were in the midst of a company of stimulated, bright men, making epigrams, regardless. His ear would soon tire, and his brain fail to respond to the artificial stimulus. The sincere, worthwhile statements of a man of character, carrying with them the conviction that back of these statements were truth and honesty, would clear the atmosphere for the auditor and make a lasting impression.

Here and there during the last twenty years a slogan has been developed which, because of its sincerity and the thoroughness of its description, has carried weight and value.

But I am not afraid to go on record as saying that ninety-five per cent of the slogans are useless, and, if anything, harmful and are merely a habit of the advertiser or the urge of an over-wrought advertising man.

### *Why Jingles Are Artificial*

As most of us in this work-a-day world are in the habit of expressing ourselves, as did Molière’s character, in prose, even though we don’t know it, the artificiality of the jingle soon becomes apparent, and, concurrently, loses

force. Now and then there is a reason for putting over “atmosphere” in versified form. As in the case of “Velvet Joe” in the tobacco advertising, the character was evolved for the purpose of surrounding the article with a romance, a philosophy, a kindliness that constitutes probably the chief reason for the use of pipe and tobacco. And to get this across, occasionally verse was necessary. But here it was not permitted to dominate. Verse in dialect form or copy in dialect is usually a great handicap, and the character of Velvet Joe was put across with a modicum of dialect, although the impression was given that the verses were really full of the *patois*. If the copy were to be examined, it would be found that very little real dialect entered into it.

Dialect is a dangerous thing—so is verse and so are slogans, for they nearly always fall short of being *sincere* and *natural*.

Now it may be said that people who are sincere and natural too often are dull and that advertising copy based on these premises would be uninteresting and flat. However, the dull man being natural and sincere is more likely to be impressive than were he to attempt cleverness. In the latter case, he adds insincerity to dullness. But if he were to tell his story in his own simple, sincere way, it would at least have the weight of truth and earnestness.

There are a number of advertising writers who endeavor to put on surface cleverness without the solid backing of thoroughness. The biggest task any director of advertising energy has to-day is to insist that the men having the trick of writing, acquire likewise the stability of sincerity and thoroughness.

In my advertising agency experience, I have employed many writers who, while possessed of cleverness, lacked thoroughness. It has been my observation that a man who will not dig for all the details that should be remembered in writing advertising, is not likely to be perfectly sure of himself on any of them. If there are ten possible points of copy, and a man is uncertain about points 1, 7, and 9, he is likely to be wrong about any of the ten. In advertising writing, *it is necessary to know everything in order to convey anything*.

A vast amount of advertising printed to-day is purely surface stuff, and results are largely achieved by the brute force of the space, the constant reiteration of the firm name and product, and that rather intangible aroma of success which hangs about an “advertising campaign.”

### *Advantages of Being Natural*

But when a manufacturer enjoys the privilege of reaching millions of people in one printing of his announcement, it is his duty to see that the statements which appear above his name are both natural and sincere. If he has an advertising agent or writer who possesses his confidence and has the ability to carry out his work properly, then his sincerity and naturalness can be made all the more convincing and interesting.

The stories of Robert Louis Stevenson—*Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*, for example—are natural and sincere. Yet they lose none of their beauty because they are. Rather do they grow more wonderful with the reading and more fixed as gems of literature with each succeeding generation. On the other hand, the “best sellers” which pick out some little freak of existence or some peculiar sex or social entanglement and build a fearsome or a daring story around this vortex, supply the fireworks of literature, seen and forgotten quickly. The work of the real writer burns torchlike—steadily and constantly for those who would follow the right path.

Advertising involves the expenditure of so many mu

lions of dollars and upon its true direction depends the growth of so large a number of splendid business enterprises, that its wrong use, its careless use, is unpardonable.

It must not be supposed that advertising men are alone responsible for this. The fault is quite frequently with the advertisers themselves, and this makes the task of the average advertising man, from the very beginning, the more difficult, and is quite likely to lead him into wrong conclusions that will later affect his worth.

It is too commonly believed that success is a faculty in itself rather than the possible product of some one or two faculties quite individual and distinct. A man may be a great organizer, and through this develop a fine business, reach a high position, and achieve a high situation. In this particular place, he may have the direction of the expenditure of large sums of money for advertising. But is he qualified?

The genius for organization characterized both Washington and Napoleon. They had, of course, additional great abilities. Some men have one ability; others two; and some, many. Washington and Napoleon both believed in relying upon their generals. They picked out the best men they could find and then entrusted important movements to them, exercising their own ingenuity and time for further combinations and for judgment when it was most needed.

Such a man, too, was General Grant. In the planning of his campaign, he employed the forces at his command with full reliance upon their strength and availability.

On the other hand, some of the princes and generals opposed to Napoleon trusted none but themselves, and, as a result, they were most of the time in confusion. One of the great failures of the American Revolution was General Gates who trusted no one, not even Washington.

Now there are advertising managers and advertisers



who cannot trust the best generals they employ, and hence their plans of campaign oft go astray and work out poorly. There are men—and it has been my privilege to work with some of them—who have several qualities of success besides leadership—in some instances, being possessed of a thorough knowledge of human nature in the main, as well as in the individual. These men have generally very good reasons for their criticisms of advertising and their constructive suggestions. But a great many advertisers, on the other hand, assume that because they have been successful in business, they are also first-class judges of advertising and advertising phraseology and method. Being in power, they give orders, regardless, overwhelm all suggestion and carry things with a high hand. Sometimes this wins out, because of its very sincerity. But too often, we can read in expensive pages of advertising “snap judgment.”

### *How to Attain Sincerity*

How, then, is the sincere and natural to be attained?

First of all, by the avoidance of the rubber-stamp phraseology of advertising. No man looks well in the clothes of another. No advertisement sounds well clothed in the cant or professional phraseology picked from the advertising pages.

Descriptive phrases, adjectival draperies and the “Sunday-go-to-meeting” garb prepared for one product, do not very well fit another. Any one who cares to go through the magazines and newspapers will find not scores—but hundreds—of phrases, combinations of words, so called “ideas,” applied without regard either to originality or sincerity, lending to advertising a smooth, unimpressive sameness which sometimes makes the thoughtful wonder at the success of the great economic force itself.

Let us take one phrase, for example:

Discriminating men have unanimously declared in favor of Blank's safety razor. You are not doing justice to yourself unless you examine into its marvelous comfort, usefulness, etc., etc.

It seems from the advertiser's point of view, that practically all men are discriminating men, and that their article has been entirely or *unanimously* in favor with the said discriminating multitude. In advertising we learn that practically everything is the "best"; or "unequaled"; or "most"; or "the favorite." Nothing by chance is ever second in line—very few things stand upon their own merits, but must achieve by comparison, invidious or otherwise.

#### *Too Much Over-Claiming in Advertising*

Every advertiser "takes his pen in hand" with the determination of setting forth the fact that he is the prime manufacturer in everything relating to quality. There is an unblushing conceitedness and egotism about a great deal of advertising which absolutely removes it from the class of the sincere and natural.

To this sometimes is added effrontery. It need not be necessary to go into detail, because any thoughtful reader can select for himself an advertisement which affronts and displeases by its tone, sometimes approaching vulgarity.

Now a vulgar person may imagine himself to be very forceful and dominating, but his exit is usually followed by a shrug of the shoulders and a deprecating smile. They do not carry conviction. And the same with adver

tisements of this kind. To avoid this seems like a very simple matter, indeed, but this simplicity is what makes it difficult of achievement, because it hardly seems worthwhile being natural and sincere, when so much stress and importance are placed upon the “brilliant,” and the unusual—the bizarre in advertising.

Now, if the reader agrees with this premise, let us go along a little further into deduction.

First of all, let us induce in the advertiser, if we can, a sensible, frank, thoughtful mood. He has a story to tell about his product. He believes in it. If he thinks it is somewhat better than another, or than the general run, there must be a reason for this beyond the mere idea that “the wish is father to the thought.”

A lot of us wish that we were brilliant, and wonderful, and leaders of men, and that, being manufacturers, our products were unequalled in their character and value, of great use to the world and something to be proud of. But there must be something more than wishing. There must be reasons—real ones.

This is not a plea for “reason why” copy in advertising. By “reason why” copy we mean the argumentative, explanatory style of advertising which begins at the beginning and after a considerable period, winds up at the end.

There is a time and a place for the “reason why” of advertising. The public will not stand a whole lot of it, as a rule, because they have their “ups and downs” and their own affairs, and they are not to be intrigued by a long dissertation written from the standpoint of the manufacturer.

When an article is of sufficient importance and its *differentness* is easily understood or explained, “reason why” occasionally is good.

But *reason why in the product itself* is really necessary to success.

Now, having obtained, if possible, the frank, unbiased opinion and explanation of the manufacturer, we endeavor to see wherein lie the points of contact between his ideas, his product, and the public's needs, inclinations and prejudices.

*Dig Out "The Story"*

Years ago, I had experience as City Editor of a large newspaper. One of the questions we usually asked the reporter who brought in an account of any happening was: "What's story?" This meant—what was the highlight of the thing—the dominating feature of it—the most unusual or interesting thing about it? Which section or part of the story had the most interesting points of contact with the public?

If there was a fire in a three-story house—and \$500 loss, this was worth three or four lines, but if a woman threw a feather bed out of the third-story window and then carefully lowered her little children out onto the bed, saving their lives, this exhibition of maternal thought and height to which the mother spirit could rise, would be worth half a column. In this case, the fire was not the story—it was the mother's action.

Back of the career of almost every manufacturer there is a warm, vital story of achievement which, while not always of interest to the public, still colors and vitalizes his work.

To find these highlights—"to get out the story"—is the biggest thing that an advertising copy writer can do—and then to present it in a sincere, natural way, making it interesting, giving it variety of presentation, if possible, without abandoning the main theme, and avoiding all the insincerities.

In other words, cutting the cloth to the proper measure

and having a pattern suited to the subject, with thorough care in every detail.

Under “detail” we must consider art in advertising—that is, the picturizing of the product, its use, its application to the individual or the family, or the sense of satisfaction that comes from its use. A pipe and a tin of tobacco on a brass plate mean very little, but there are a hundred ways of vitalizing this subject, as will be seen at a glance in any magazine or newspaper.

See how the hosiery advertisers have conveyed the thought of lasting quality of hose, good fit, fine appearance, social correctness, high value, and other qualities, by the use of pictures.

On the other hand, pictures are frequently carried to the extreme. There is a mad riot of color in some of the magazines, and certain advertisers seem to have entered into a kind of vaudeville competition for the entertainment of readers, in which more or less eccentric art work plays a large part, to a great extent dimming the luster of the product and the convincingness of the advertising itself. We often hear that these things are successful, and yet the greater successes are achieved in other ways.

The advertising beginner, or even the old hand, must not be misled by stories which find currency in advertising circles, relative to the success of this or that company or product. The bank balance, the dividend record, the price (if listed) on the New York Stock Exchange, frequently tell more than fantastic stories of success achieved by circusing or methods somewhat akin.

### *The Merchandising Tie-Up*

Of course, in all this, what is known as merchandising, the tying up of the effort of the advertiser, his salesman, the jobber, and the retailer, in one unbroken line—to

reach and influence the public—plays a large part. Advertising cast like bread upon the waters may return, but along with advertising to-day should really go the motive power of good selling methods. Advertising is used not only to influence the consumer but to influence the “trade,” beginning with the advertiser’s own organization.

There are various ways of doing this, and too many of them have fallen into the rubber-stamp class.

What will be proper and right and helpful for one manufacturer might fall far short with another.

It is dangerous to assume that all house organs, and all “follow ups,” all circularizing matter, all sales conventions, all direct-mail efforts, will get results of equal value. Some of them reap a harvest of money, and others over-emphasize one side or the other in a way which is likely to “rock the boat.”

Here, too, being sincere and natural with one’s own salesmen, organization, and retailers, is wise. Don’t try to hand “bunk” to the salesman. That’s the way they put it. An ounce of horse sense will get more genuine enthusiasm out of a salesman than any quantity of theoretical “hot air.”

### *Is Advertising “Salesmanship in Print”?*

In a chapter of this kind, it is not possible to touch properly upon the relationship of selling-effort to advertising-effort, but right here I should like to nail one glaring misconception and that is that “advertising is salesmanship in print.”

To be sure, the object of advertising is to sell goods, but it cannot replace the salesmanship which must take place in the shop or in the meeting of the salesman with the jobber or the retailer.

It is not salesmanship in this sense, at all. It is more education, enlightenment and—above all things—suggestion.

The chief reason that advertising cannot be “salesmanship in print” is that a salesman or a retailer can sense quickly the unresponsiveness or prejudices of a potential customer. He can answer questions, avoid issues or close them. He can be extremely specific. As an advertisement must be all things to all men, it must be suggestional rather than argumentative, more often than not. It cannot attempt to answer questions, because it would become interminably involved.

The “salesmanship in print” kind of advertising pretty often is the sort that will pass muster among an advertiser’s employees who are invited to judge of its merits. Written with an eye to the home office viewpoint, this sort of copy usually gets by a jury, but the fact remains, none the less, that the real jury in the case is the consumer.

Another reason why it is sometimes a doubtful expedient to call upon employees for judgment on an advertisement, is that immediately upon being asked for advice or criticism, the average man or woman becomes *unnatural or insincere*. If it were decided to obtain, *before printing* a thing, real substantial expression of the *reaction* of the advertisement on the average run of individuals, it might be excellent. But spontaneity immediately dies when criticism is called into conscious functioning.

Some members of the impromptu jury are bound to endeavor to find out what the predilection of the “boss” may be, and in more or less hit-or-miss fashion try to approximate this.

Others become unnatural, seeking out all sorts of details which would in no wise affect them as advertisers,

or readers, or possibly purchasers of this or that similar line of goods.

Therefore, the advertising writer or counselor, either in the beginning or well along in his or her career, cannot afford to be swayed too much by the judgment of those called into council, who are not equipped by advertising experience and knowledge of advertising and the proper judgment.

This advertising judgment is built up likewise by long experience, observations; by study, investigation, practice. It becomes a sixth sense and cannot be achieved quickly by textbooks, by amateur incursions into advertising, or by the re-hashing of second-hand opinions.

When business men become imbued with the knowledge that advertising is a serious matter because it is a factor of such tremendous strength, they will give it the right attention; and then advertising counselors will receive the same measure of respect and confidence which (as far as they personally deserve it) is bestowed upon physicians, lawyers and others who specialize by study and practice in any definite form of service.

### *Something about "Style in Advertising"*

Style in advertising is a much discussed subject. I have tried to point out that style should be natural and sincere.

There are two great divisions of advertising in which two distinctive styles are necessary—retail advertisements which are largely the announcements of stores and which, to some extent, depend upon the bargain inducement; and general advertising, which aims to develop new habits of living—personal and household—on the part of the readers.

This sort of advertising has exerted a tremendous influence upon life in America, even more than it has in



other countries. The modern home to-day largely owes its development to advertising, which has instilled into homekeepers the desire for mechanical, electrical and other improvements in the home, and has raised the standards until all, irrespective of social class, live on a better plane than the very best families lived thirty or forty years ago.

Any advertising writer who forgets this big fact is overlooking the chief reason for the success of modern advertising.

The people of this country desire to live better and they put their *wish* into *work*, in order that they may earn more, which again means that they may spend more, and so the ascending spiral goes.

Any suggestion looking to the cutting down of comfort, even of certain luxuries, would be a backward step in American development.

Here, then, is another point worth remembering—in writing advertising copy, have in mind an audience that lives better than it did five years ago and is likely to live still better five years hence; that is learning every day; and is, consequently, not to be patronized, but, rather, informed.

On the question of style, further, it must be remembered that advertising written for an exclusively feminine audience must have quite a different tone from that which reaches men, or even the general family. Certain phrases are characteristic of the description of women's garments, women's articles of luxury, of the toilet, and the impedimenta dear to the feminine heart.

The only way this phraseology can be attained properly is by a study of similar advertising, or, better still, by frequent interviews with those properly equipped to explain the ins and outs and to talk in the current language of the women's shops or departments. It is not

necessary that women writers should handle this, because there are men who know exactly the way to phrase a story or to follow it up in order to obtain the right results.

But the right style appeals to women, and fashion and vogue have much greater sway over them than substantiality and long wear.

### *The "Urge" in Advertising*

In all discussions of advertising style, the so-called "urge" must be considered.

There are two ways of expressing urge—one is to argue strongly with the reader—"tell it to the dealer"; another finds expression in the last few lines of the advertisements, wherein the advisability of doing this, that, or the other thing *to-day* is magnified.

Read the average magazine or newspaper—especially the former—and see for yourself how much time you would have left for other things, if you did everything "to-day," "now," "immediately," "before you forget it"—which you are urged to do by the impatient advertiser. It is advertising treason, almost, to leave off the "urge." Yet in a world of urges, one is apt to take one's time and pay no attention to the clarion calls.

As to these urges on the dealer, suppose you try one of them yourself on the dealer, providing you are not a man of family and have no care for what is likely to happen to you. Just imagine yourself going to a dealer and saying: "Mr. Dealer, I want Blank's (here insert jam, sugar, hammers, chocolates, oatmeal, griddlecake flour, patent fasteners, or any of the thousand and one things you see advertised). I will not be satisfied with a substitute. I want the only, genuine Blank's. All I need do is to say—'Blank's'—and you will see that I am a

discriminating man or woman. You are not doing justice to yourself or me if you do not keep this article in stock. I insist upon it," etc., etc.

Before you follow the advice in some of the advertisements, however, practice this speech, or parts of it, that are urged upon you, on your own family. If this proceeding does call into question your sanity, then try it on the dealer, if you will.

Here, indeed, is the acme of the insincere and unnatural in advertising, and so far as style goes, the less of it used, the better.

### *Where to Put the Advertising Urge*

Good advertising will put the urge into the prospective buyer's mind rather than merely give it utterance in the language of the advertiser. The best style technique is the telling of a true story attractively and in terms of the reader's understanding and sympathy, and in being sincere rather than smart; consistent rather than clever.

Furthermore, the use of more verbs in advertising and of fewer adjectives and nouns would be a blessing. Let advertising represent action from the reader's viewpoint rather than adulation from the advertiser's.

Remember that generalities are cheap and can be picked up with no effort. It is the specific that calls for digging and is hardest to obtain.

Remember that no advertisement can be properly written unless the man who writes it has a real interest in writing it—the pride of creation, the pride of service, or the pride of knowledge.

He should be inclined towards advertising work, or he will never be successful; he should be glad to render service which is helpful not only to the advertiser, but to the purchaser of the article. Advertising based on selling

insecure securities, harmful patent medicines, or other things that would establish loss or bad habits, cannot properly inspire any man.

Service, therefore, upon which the progress of life really depends, should be the expression of the advertising writer's inspiration.

Then comes knowledge—knowledge of the product, knowledge of the men back of it, knowledge of the object of the campaign, knowledge of all the factors that enter into production and distribution; knowledge of the article in its various forms of use and its effect on the public welfare.

If it be an article that renders service, inspiration, helps to make life better—all the better, for it makes for clearer and more inspired advertising. Then there must be knowledge of the people as a whole—of the great public mind wherein rests the final verdict of success or failure for any advertising campaign.

Knowledge, too, of the tools of the worker—the language, the type, the pictures, if they be used. Upon these fundamentals depends what the advertising may achieve.

### *The Individual Requirements*

Having begun work with some knowledge and understanding of the things to forget and the things to remember, the success of the individual advertisement writer will depend upon his own power of understanding and assimilation. Some are more gifted than others, and so with even the same details for a working basis, they will achieve better results.

The advertisement writer who for inspiration confines himself largely to the perusal of works on advertising, or of advertising journals, will fall short. Advertising

to-day competes with the best writing—not the most fanciful but the *best* writing.

Given naturalness and sincerity, a wide acquaintance with the various methods of presenting facts or conclusions is a necessary corollary.

The broadening of vocabulary is an excellent thing, not because this means that the advertisement writer should use big words, but that he should use the *right* words. An advertisement should be a mosaic of properly fitted pieces, not a thrown-together thing filled in by the plaster of phraseology.

Broad reading is necessary to the accomplishment of right phraseology. Advertising plays an important part in life, and a knowledge of life, of character, of the various reactions of events upon character and peoples, is of great value.

#### *Giving Advertising Copy a Pleasant "Tone"*

Pleasant, cheerful, sympathetic advertising can be sincere and natural, and yet too many writers mistake harshness for sincerity.

A man can be a gentleman and still be honest; and an advertisement can be kindly, friendly, and still sincere and truthful.

Through inexperience, ill-equipped writers too often mistake blatancy for force.

Refinement in writing and expression can be appreciated and understood by the uneducated as well as by holders of college degrees. The time is coming when advertising must meet a higher standard—when brag and bluster in the presentation of professional claims will be discounted as they should be.

A doctor is not a better doctor because he publishes broadcast his cures. It takes years of effort to build up

his reputation. There are quack doctors in advertising as well as in medicine—sometimes individuals, sometimes organizations. As business men acquire knowledge of the potentialities of advertising and its effect on the public, there will be a more determined effort to obtain worth-while advertising truly representative of the co-partnership between the various classes in the making of American life.

Miss Flora Klickman—editor of one of the largest and most successful women's publications in England—says in her recent book—*The Lure of the Pen*:

The sounds produced by people are invariably a direct indication of the degree of their refinement—the greater the blare and clamor attendant upon their doings, and the more harsh and uncultivated their speaking voices, the less their innate refinements. . . . Unfortunately, the twentieth century, so far, has been primarily concerned with the making of noise rather than music.

*Advertising Is a Reflex of Life*

There is much “jazz” in advertising to-day. Some of it screams forth raucously. Advertising that gets away from this and presents its ideas and claims in a pleasing, interesting, and, if possible, sympathetic way, will most quickly achieve. The copy writer should endeavor to get this spirit into the idea back of the advertising—the soul of it, so to speak—as well as into the words that clothe it.

Remember, too, that in advertising, as in literature, and, in fact, in life itself, there must be a beginning, a development and a climax.

Some things, therefore, to avoid in advertising, are— putting too much force and “buying urge” into the opening paragraphs, too little information in the development,

and little, if any, conclusive inspiration at the end. Advertisements, indeed, should be assembled as well as written. They should be gathered together in their component parts, and all the arguments, reasons and appeals weighed and considered; then the best for the space and purpose carefully coordinated and set forth.

In the words of a well-known critic: "Hard writing makes easy reading."





## VIII

### *The Research Basis of Copy*

**J. GEORGE FREDERICK.** Born 1882; was reporter on a newspaper, became department store advertising man and wrote articles on advertising for *Printers' Ink*. 'Went west to become a member of the Lord & Thomas staff during "reason why" propaganda, and edited magazine *Judicious Advertising*. Came to New York, joined Ben Hampton Agency and later was copy chief for Ward & Gow, subway advertising.

He then became managing editor of *Printers' Ink*, when George P. Rowell sold the magazine and the new owners began to develop it. In 1910 he resigned to form the Business Bourse, International, a commercial research organization, of which he is still the head. For several years, he was editor in chief of *Advertising and Selling Magazine*. He is author of five business books, and many articles in *Saturday Evening Post*, *Review of Reviews*, etc.; and is prominent in the New York Sales-managers' Club, New York Advertising Club, Commercial Standards Council, etc.



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## VIII

### *The Research Basis of Copy*

By J. George Frederick

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FROM the very first modernization of advertising copy—in the work, for instance, of Mr. Powers at John Wanamaker's in the nineties—information was the keynote. The reputation of Wanamaker advertising, made conspicuous by its proven selling power, was a reputation for telling people the facts. The Wanamaker advertising was a rich education in the lore of merchandise, and the people liked it, because of Mr. Powers' journalistic genius. For it was actual journalistic genius; the genius of reporting, of a "nose for news" and of making facts interesting. Mr. Powers was not an advertising genius in the sense of being a brilliant salesman or merchandiser, *per se*. He was an advertising genius in the sense that he demonstrated the selling power of information, as against mere clever plays upon words; and it is no distortion of history to say that Mr. Powers was probably the first modern advertising man. His work created the American department store era, and indirectly he inaugurated also a new era of advertising copy in all lines of business.

This new conception of copy had probably its severest test and most monumental triumph when it was applied to the mail-order field, for Richard Sears, founder of Sears, Roebuck & Co., carried Mr. Powers' idea to its logical conclusion and built a great institution, which

many others have successfully emulated. None of these has ever departed, nor likely will, from the principle that mail-order buyers tend strongly to "sell themselves" if you give them a logically complete battery of information. A good mail-order catalog is a veritable encyclopedia of facts about the goods it advertises. The more information, apparently, the better the returns from mail-order copy.

The building of advertising copy on information advanced into new developments as years went on and as the advertising men gave more and more conscientious attention to all the circumstances and conditions upon which the success of advertising depends. Newspaper, magazine, street-car, poster advertising, to stimulate sales through dealers, had to contend with all the loose links which occur in the chain from manufacturer to

consumer; had to contend with distribution and sales organization conditions, questions of package, of prices, competition, sectional differences, dealer states of mind, consumer conditions. These matters require research for finer fractional adjustment to the market and sure success.

The writer of advertising copy has, therefore, gone through a cycle of development in relation to his data requirements before dipping his pen in ink. Once he sought merely to devise adjectives describing the goods, or concoct catch phrases. Then he sought to individualize the goods by specific differences; and later again he sought to attach to it the atmosphere of quality, and used subtle, indirect methods.

Finally an entirely new phase arrived—a merchandising phase—forced upon the attention of advertising men by the failures of many purely general publicity campaigns, or by the brilliant successes of more practical, skilful merchandisers who wrote their copy from a completely new angle—the selling plan. These

merchandisers focused the advertising on a coupon; they turned periodical advertising into a mail-order and distribution-making tool; they stressed a new sampling or trial plan, a new sales plan for eliminating sales resistance in the reader's mind. They made a working tandem of the sales force and the advertising; in short, they virtually made advertising a sales management, field operation, instead of the rather cloistered semi-literary performance it had been.

Once more, therefore, the advertising man changed character,—he had to become more of a merchandising man, with sales management vision and genius. It took ten years to shake out of the advertising field the predominance of mere “word-slingers,” the men without business capacity. Advertising men of to-day are better business men, because the merchandising development in advertising compelled it. More advertising men are in consequence graduating to positions of sales-manager and higher up.

To advertise an article in a terrifically competitive field, in a complicated distribution situation, such as generally exists to-day, is no task for mere literary facility. The copy must be the apex of a solid base of merchandising plan, and it must be consciously written to aid that plan. It must be tailored to fit the campaign. It is for this reason that criticism of advertisements is conceded to be almost impossible without full knowledge of all the facts regarding the campaign and its aims and strategies. Like the iceberg, the visible part of the advertisement is but a small part of the real thing, and the visible part may look very unbalanced to the superficial critic until he sees the whole iceberg—the trade

condition, the competitive, the consumer and the strategic situations. It is an absolutely naive point of view to judge advertising as one would judge a story or a poem.

Conceding, then, the modern need and use of research, before writing advertising, what are the angles of research used, the type of data which a fully modern advertising writer uses?

*Data Questions for Advertisers*

The need for copy data starts with the first contact with the advertiser and is best exemplified in this preliminary stage by a system of questions for the advertiser to answer. The following series of questions represents perhaps a more elaborate set of data than may be needed in the average case, but it has the merit of being inclusive. It is, of course, for general advertisers, and is most useful for advertising agencies, who can keep it on file systematically to enable different copy writers to have ready access to it.

Nature of business.

Proposition you wish to push (give details as fully as possible).

Description (if some specific article, describe fully).

How long has article been on the market?

How, when and where did the marketing of this product start?

How put up?

Do you sell the wholesaler?

When does he buy?

In what quantity?

Prices and discounts to wholesalers.

Do you sell retailers direct? In what quantity?

When does retailer buy?

Prices and discounts to retailer.

Do you sell consumer direct? In what quantity?

When does consumer buy?

Prices and discounts to consumer?

Do you sell through canvassers?  
How do you secure them?  
When does canvasser buy?  
In what quantity?  
Prices and discounts to canvassers?  
Do you grant exclusive territory? (If so, give details.)  
Do you cooperate in pushing the sale of your goods? (Describe in detail just what you do for wholesaler, retailer, or canvasser.)  
Do you employ traveling salesmen? How many?  
On whom do your salesmen call?  
Give territory goods sell in?  
Give sources from which inquiries emanate?  
How many inquiries do you receive a year?  
What percentage order your goods?  
What season is best for your business?  
After you get an inquiry, how do you handle it?  
Have you ever put out a systematic Direct Advertising Campaign?  
How was it handled and of what did it consist? (Give complete details—nature of pieces and the returns in inquiries and orders.)  
Do you issue a catalog?  
How many times do you follow up an inquiry by mail?  
How many letters do you send a prospect? How many circulars?  
What postage, one or two cent stamp?  
Is article to be advertised Trade Marked? (If so, attach print of Trade Mark.)  
How is Trade Mark shown on article?  
Is Trade Mark registered?  
Are any special inducements or concessions made to wholesaler, retailer, consumer or canvasser? If any, describe them.  
Do you give free trial to consumer?  
What are conditions of free trial?  
Do you offer samples?

If so, how are they distributed?

What competition have you?

Give total annual sales during the past five years.

How much may present sales be increased without interfering with your present manufacturing facilities?

What goods do you manufacture besides those to be directly advertised?

Are they marketed through the same channel as those about to be advertised?

What other lines can be added to advantage?

By what method do you keep record of inquiries, sales, etc., resulting from your advertising?

What mailing lists have you on hand now?

How new are they?

How are they obtained?

How many names do they contain, and what classifications?

What facilities have you for handling the detail work of an advertising campaign, such as office devices, help, etc.?

What advertising literature have you on hand at present?

About what amount would you appropriate for a campaign?

What previous advertising has been done, and average cost per year?

What class of media were used?

What has been the average cost per inquiry?

What has been the average cost per sale?

What is the amount of your average sale?

What is your margin of profit?

What has been the sales history of the product?

- (a) with regard to selling plan;
- (b) with regard to road men;
- (c) with regard to direct selling;
- (d) with regard to retail outlets and dealer and jobber policy;
- (e) with regard to schemes and special plans;



- (f) with regard to analysis of market, class of people, profit, etc.;
- (g) with regard to territorial work.

What has been the advertising history of the product?

- (a) with regard to the appropriation spent;
- (b) with regard to media used;
- (c) with regard to agency service;
- (d) with regard to copy: type of appeal;
- (e) with regard to cooperation with sales department;
- (f) with regard to follow-up work;
- (g) with regard to direct-mail work;
- (h) with regard to local advertising by dealers;
- (i) with regard to sampling;
- (j) with regard to the trade mark and the package.

Just what is the present situation with respect to the above outlined facts?

What are the main factors which limit your market?

In what direction is your product of your organization weak?

Where and under what conditions—

Have you found it easiest to sell?

What class of people are the quickest buyers?

What excuse do dealers give for not stocking up?

What is your policy in respect to—

- (a) price maintenance;
- (b) quantity discounts;
- (c) dealers' and jobbers' profits;
- (d) guarantee; and
- (e) mail-order selling?

Competitors—

- (a) how strong; volume and activity;
- (b) names and brief history of competitors and of class of goods in general;
- (c) price in comparison with competitors.

Waht is the volume of business done and margin of profit?

What are the manufacturing conditions?

- (a) capacity of production;
- (b) season variations;
- (c) by-products;
- (d) ratio of costs to increased volume.

How fully stocked are dealers at present?

What grade men are on the sales force?

What is the exact present status of distribution; how many dealers and where located?

What follow-up literature do you now send out?

After a full line of information about the advertiser is available, the advertising man is ready to raise the following questions about the proposition and answer them, or set about answering them by further research:

- (1) What kinds and types of people purchase goods?
- (2) What individual influences them or has joint authority or activity in making the purchase?
- (3) What are the habits of mind and general conditions surrounding the purchaser?
- (4) What is the exact need which the consumer feels, how does it arise, and what instinct, needs, desires and feelings does the article satisfy?
- (5) What preconceived ideas, prejudices and notions does the consumer bring to the purchase of the articles?
- (6) What are typical past experiences of consumers in endeavoring to purchase such articles?
- (7) What are the shopping or purchasing habits or modes of procedure of the average consumer?
- (8) What impression, reputation and general standing of brands prevail in the buyer's mind?
- (9) What standards in the matter of price and quality and service prevail in the mind of the consumer?
- (10) Analysis of consumer preferences for sizes, marking, types and models, etc.

(11) Statistical study of consumer, from a quantitative basis, giving facts as to number, distribution, location and concentration of consumers.

(12) Inquiry into possible manner and means of developing applications or uses of article.

### *Ten Tests of an Advertisement*

Both before and after completing advertisements, it is a most valuable thing to apply critical estimates. I am setting down herewith a suggested series of tests to be applied to copy as a means of checking back whether it squares with the very high modern standard. These tests are by no means complete or inclusive, but as very few others have been compiled, these will stand for my own conception of such a test:

(1) What was the advertisement planned to accomplish? What were the results?

(2) Has the copy man thoroughly grasped the editorial character, the limitations and opportunities, both from the standpoint of the publication readers and also the typography, space, position, etc., of the periodical in which the advertisement in question is to appear?

(3) Has the copy man thoroughly visualized the general mass mind to which he is appealing, and has he figured out what the mass reaction will be toward the article in question, the distributive situation which stands between the advertisement and the reader, the particular hold which the publication has upon that reader, the mood it finds him in, and the temper and tone and language of the advertisement?

(4) Has the general level of literacy of the mass of readers, in relation to the copy, the illustration and the typography been carefully planned to fit the kind of people whom the advertiser desires most of all to reach?

(5) Has the copy writer studied and balanced and rotated suitably the fundamental consumer appeals inherent in the particular article in hand?

(6) Have the advertisements been laid out with the right tone and atmosphere for the article?

(7) Has the series of advertisements been carefully coordinated one with the other, in relation to the proper importance to be given to all considerations?

(8) Has the relative display position of the headline and outstanding features been calculated so that the large percentage of readers who merely glance through a magazine may catch something as they run which will be of value and may lead to either arrest of attention or the fixation of a name or an idea?

(9) Does the close of the advertisement give all the necessary facts and stimulate thought to get the reader to do what you finally wish him to do upon finishing the ad?

(10) Has each single advertisement been constructed upon the basis of *unity of effect*, both typographically and from the point of view of content—its ideas and logic? Has the copy the right “ring”? Is the English used checked over for double meanings, confusion, error, etc.?

Finally, has the copy been checked by the proper authorities, O.K.’d by them, and have all necessary corrections and instructions been provided for it?

### *Shaping the Product for Good Copy*

There’s a considerable difference between merely a “product” and a thoroughly *merchandisable* product. Millions of dollars are sunk annually on this rock, and it is well to hang a red lantern on it. Many articles now on the market—even fairly successful ones—are suffering handicaps through package, price, size, or other purely

manufacturing errors. There are hundreds of thousands of patents, of course, in the archives at Washington representing “products” of one kind and another which will never be known outside of these archives. They are unmerchandisable; they are not commercially adapted to the market. Some could readily be thus adapted; others could never be.

It is the relation a product bears to a present or possible market that fixes its value; and as a sales product is a thing that is usually alterable and flexible in some degree, there is a great deal of profitable thinking and planning to be done on products either new or already on the market. This is often to a large degree an advertising man’s task quite as much as a salesmanager’s. There are many instances of products which have had high sales resistance, but when changes in the product were made, based on copy and market analysis, the resistance greatly lessened.

Let us take first the case of an entirely new product. It comes often fresh as a new-born babe from someone’s hands. It should be viewed chiefly as raw material and a starting point for development. People often wonder why it is axiomatic that the inventor or originator rarely makes a success of his project. Someone else so often makes the thing a success after taking it over. The explanation is simple: the inventor or originator nearly always has an emotional faith and pride in the exact rightness, “*as is*,” of his article, whereas the subsequent purchaser cares nothing if the reshaped product bears almost no resemblance to the original, so long as it *does lit the market and sell*. The inventor or originator does not perform a complete job—he originates only a material thing, whereas the *complete* creation of a merchandisable product must be material or mechanical and must possess the following:

- (1) average adaptability,
- (2) wide marketability,
- (3) compactness, neatness, attractiveness,
- (4) psychological appeal,
- (5) popular or fitting price, and
- (6) individuality.

It will, therefore, be seen that the advertising man of the modern type examines the article to be advertised, from the above points of view. Live advertisers apply inventive and market research quite as serious and important as the first work of the inventor. In fact, the modern idea—one of great significance in business teamwork—is combination research and technical work on a product, so that there will not be the frequent and wasteful lack of completeness in an article, from a marketing point of view. So much time is often lost by false starts, when this is neglected.

Such preliminary analysis, whether or not done by or through the advertising man, may very well be watched and studied by the modern copy man, who is, after all, the central genius in the work of successful advertising, if he functions on all four cylinders.

The research of the product should gather facts and reach conclusions on such factors as—

- (1) Adaptability in cost, nature, operation and use, and general commercial availability.
- (2) The usefulness, volume of possible sale, technical excellence or defects under average conditions of use and abuse.
- (3) The devising of new models or materials to fit certain market conditions or opportunities.
- (4) The reshaping and planning of an article or device to fit the commercial necessities and advisabilities, from the point of view of price, profit, class of users, public psychology, etc.

- (5) The selection and study of a new article of manufacture desired, which will meet with equal success the suggestions of technical economy and feasibility as well as maximum sales and profit possibilities.
- (6) A technical examination of all competitive goods and an analysis of competitive claims, and the working out in figures of the exact comparative standing of various brands or types of goods.

One of the practical methods of analyzing a product from the market side is to make a consumer investigation which will produce a cross-section of consumer attitude to the line of goods, and develop any defects, suggestions or opportunities. As an illustration, the "corset-buying history" of some thousands of women was taken in one investigation in order to learn why the women changed from one brand to another. The details of five separate corset purchases by each individual were recorded. When all the returns were in it was possible to see on what point each brand of corset had "fallen down" or "stood up," under consuming conditions.

#### *Rating the "Appeals"*

A similar plan was successfully used in a watch investigation to determine how the different makes of cheap watches fared in the hands and minds of purchasers. Such data revealed the weak points of all the articles in the market—a most important matter to be informed about in planning *the copy appeal*; that is, the effective arguments. A product, to a sales and advertising manager, is simply an aggregation of appeals, some strong, some less strong. The problem is to build up a product which has a maximum of powerful appeal for the particular field desired, *and to know the relative strength of*



*each appeal the article has.* The average firm knows only in a rough way the relative strength of its appeals; why not analyze them accurately and fully?

The usual range of appeals for a product is made up of combinations in various degrees of strength of about the following:

- |                  |                                 |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| (1) Price;       | (7) Recommendation;             |
| (2) Utility;     | (8) Taste;                      |
| (3) Convenience; | (9) Economy of use;             |
| (4) Appearance;  | (10) Prompt availability;       |
| (5) Service;     | (11) Reputation and familiarity |
| (6) Reliability; | (12) Advertising.               |

It has been proven over and over again that salesmen will select their own ideas of the strongest appeals, or insist that the appeal varies in strength according to the prospect he is talking to. They are often encouraged to do this; but it is also proven that there is always one fundamentally *strongest* appeal which is wisest to stress to practically all prospects, and through all salesmen and advertising. In other words, an analysis for any given product will show that certain appeals are supreme; that for a certain article appearance may be 60%; reliability 20% and recommendation 20%, and for another product the appeal may bear some other ratio.

It is, therefore, not theoretical, but highly practical to make a searching analysis of the appeals for a product, so that they can be rated accurately. It makes the sales manual more definite and valuable; it is of immense value and importance to the advertising manager and agent, and it permits the writing of copy that strikes far closer to the bull's eye in results.

The analysis should, of course, also be extended to the wrapping of an article—to the shape, size, color and general appearance of the article as it will look in the

store. In many articles, notably toilet articles, this factor rates astonishingly high in sales value. It rates more than is suspected in almost all articles. The eye and the sense of touch are the mechanisms of the brain that must be affected, and if an adverse current of feeling is started by a product's appearance, even strong logic has little chance. A few years ago consumer research work was done on a talcum, disclosing the heretofore unsuspected truth that *odor* has by far the strongest appeal to women in any talc article. New advertising copy based on this appeal quickly expanded sales. Yet contrary opinions had been held by all who had anything to do with the article.

It is typical of most articles that a dozen broad claims are made for it, and that constant debate goes on between salesmen, executives and dealers as to which one has the most weight. The good copy analyst easily sees that this problem of the relative strength of these appeals is vital to his copy campaign, and that facts must be developed as to their precise strength, not in the client's mind, but in the consumer's mind. If sanitation, let us say, is 60% of the entire appeal in strength and power, he can intelligently plan his advertisement so that this strong appeal shall never be absent, but shall be related and associated to all the other appeals in such a balanced manner as will give them all their proper weight, as will cripple no single expensive advertisement by merely minor appeals, and as will provide a wise rotation of the appeals.

The particularly painstaking copy analyst will also make a further test, if his client will permit it. He will prepare a varied line of copy, and then with sets of proofs conduct a carefully guarded test upon consumers (so planned that their unconscious judgment and not their conscious judgment would be obtained). The truly best series of ads can thus be decided upon from

such analysis. The judgment from a competent test of this kind will get 10 to 20% closer to actual fact than even the best judgment made purely on opinion.

It is generally supposed that the public is dormant and incapable of indicating its mind; but this is a poor conception both of the public and our modern measuring instruments. No other profession dealing with the human being is without its means of measuring reaction, and it is absurd in this day of highly developed laboratory psychology methods that reliable tests should not be obtained in advance of large expenditures of money for advertising, since without such tests the relative efficiency of an ad is a mere matter of opinion. There are a great many advertising campaigns which fail by reason of wrong copy; and there is not the slightest reason why preanalysis of this copy cannot to a large extent avert the mistakes before the expenditure is made. Nowadays space costs far too much money to experiment with and hold mere "*post mortems*." The results must be at least 70 or 80% sure in advance if we are to retain the name of being practical advertising men, and if the advertising profession is to rest upon very permanent bases. An engineer, building a longer bridge than was ever built before over a tremendously difficult river, is able to calculate within a reasonable percentage what will happen. All advertising, as well as all sales effort, is to a certain extent guessing, it may readily be admitted. Construction engineers admit the same thing. The thing to do is to reduce the ratio of guesswork to the total by every known means of obtaining exactness.

### *Analyzing Media*

No advertising copy should be written without visualizing the medium in which it will appear. To fail in this

is to talk sporting page language to an audience of nursing mothers. Especially is this true to-day, when periodicals have particularly distinct personalities of their own and special followings.

The plan of campaign in which the medium plays a part is the first thing to be studied. This goes back to the very core of the campaign object and goal, which, as every good advertising man knows, is often a psycho-logic or strategic goal. This is illustrated in the tremendous volume of advertising which a certain well-known weekly carries, mainly because it has become a commonplace thing to use this medium "for dealer effect" and similar strategic reasons.

In spite of fulmination about "waste circulation," "duplication," etc., as used by some advertisers, many such purchases are undoubtedly justifiable and profitable, from a strategic point of view. The broader a campaign policy is, the more sure it is to mean a three-, five- or ten-year policy consistently adhered to, in which media are considered coolly and fundamentally and copy planned an adequate time in advance.

There is a very considerable temptation in purchasing advertising to be an opportunist rather than to operate on principle. There are so many enticing ideas sprung, so many space bargains peddled, and so many last minute offers of exceptional position; there is such a welter of ups and downs in business and changes of personnel and policy, that advertising plans are buffeted about far too frequently for sound economy. The objective changes too often; the appropriation is inflated and deflated too frequently, and there is no clear picture of the advertising plan as a whole. Advertising—it cannot be too often and too insistently repeated—suffers when it is handled by opportunists. Advertising is a deeply submerged principle operating upon the unconscious of the public, slow-

moving but powerful as the tides. You cannot successfully toy or juggle with so deep-seated a principle.

The strategy of the effective use of media, coordinating with a strategy of sales over a long period, must calculate upon long-continued, educational and reiterative steps and a desire to build solidly and safely. Like everything else that is orderly, it must have a logical beginning, middle and end. A program of advertising should have its try-out, preliminary and long-pull stages; it is sound to use media in a preliminary period for certain strategic elements of purpose; to use other media in the middle of the long, full campaign for the hard constant labor of education, and to use other media or new media at the close of the campaign for the logical last wallop and special drive. It is logical, in absolute necessity, to trim sails with an eye to the strategy of a breathing spell in expenditure; using certain media to create a greater impression of activity than the facts warrant.

The temptation to be a mere bell-wether is very strong in the use of advertising media. Because one sees competitors and others using a certain list of media is far from assurance that such a list is best. It is appalling how much advertising is written because competitors and others are "doing the same." Many of the best successes in advertising have been made by men whose attitude toward media was courageous and based on far-seeing policies and clear analysis. Their idea of media was individual and correlated to their own thinking. Wrigley, of Spearmint fame: Post, of Postum Cereal and others built on this principle. The advertiser who "follows along" is the good medium's worst enemy, because he cannot be appealed to; he is operating upon an imitative instinct which is beyond the reach of reason and he cannot be shaken loose. Only when he begins to think does he become different, and the many excellent media which

are not getting from advertisers the attention they deserve could not hope for anything more blessed than a greater realization of this fundamental principle in medium selection. We would then see some of the super-inflated media lose their large and often not wholly deserved mass of advertising, and we would witness a more logical distribution based upon clear analysis of media.

It is wearisome—very especially so to a man who has been in the advertising business a long time, as I have—to hear over and over again each year the same old debates as to the relative merits of different types and classes of media. It is all the question of a merchandising situation, the strategy of the campaign and the type of article, state of distribution, etc. To one thoroughly versed in merchandising tactics it is not alone wearisome, but more or less dishonest to glorify or over-emphasize one type of media over another, because it indicates a woeful lack of study and analysis of the advertiser's problems.

The president of one of the most brilliant companies in the United States, a man who has raced up his sales in half a dozen years from half a million to fifteen million dollars annually, has as fixed and definite a policy regarding media as an engineer has measurements and rules of orientation. He made his success by working out a broad policy, selecting type of media adaptable to his strategic policy, and these media made his proposition successful. Many of his aping competitors do not to-day know anything about the general policy behind the campaign. The president of this company is a theorist on his subject—that of newspaper advertising on a zone basis—and his analysis and his method of linking up his advertising to his sales work have made him successful in his plans. He therefore dogmatizes about his plan. Yet

still another large advertiser is equally dogmatic about his success, which was won entirely on magazine advertising. Both are in the same field with virtually the same problems. It must thus be seen that advertisers do not sit down to “analyze media”—they sit down to make policies work and to make their sales campaigns a success. The medium is only a tool in the general kit of tools, and they use the medium because it fits the job as they lay it out.

Imagine a broad executive working out his campaign in consultation with an advertising man. What might be said to be the line of questions that would come out? They might be somewhat as follows:

- (1) What publication or group of publications have as their audience the most interested readers, in the largest numbers, at the cheapest rate per line or per page per thousand, of the kind of people on whom I am trying to produce an effect?
- (2) What publication or group of publications, by means of the type or size or frequency of the copy I intend to use and of the proposition I have to make, will exert the most influence upon my distributive and sales organization?
- (3) What publication or group of publications, or kinds of media, might I use to achieve the necessary auxiliary campaign effects or side pressure or flank movement with which to fortify my general campaign and complete it?
- (4) What publication or group of publications or media can provide me with the highest ratio of reader-value, based upon the peculiar strength, scope and nature of the editorial appeal?
- (5) What media, publication or group of publications should I use, and for what period, to perform the pre-

liminary, or psychological, or specialized part which I desire them to play?

(6) How may I be sure of getting my money's worth from them, and how shall I check up their claims?

(7) How may I so coordinate the work of my sales organization and my distributive organization with my use of such media so that the largest percentage of the readers of my ad may find my representatives, my jobbers and dealers on their toes and ready at the moment consumers' interest is highest?

### *And Finally, Strategy*

Considered as the practical sales tool, advertising copy is the very heart and center of the particular sales strategy which is being operated by any concern. Advertising copy strategy is, therefore, sales strategy as well; often the chief expression of sale strategy by reason of its flexibility and wide application.

I cannot here give full details of advertising copy strategy, but would refer to my books "Modern Sales-management" and "Business Research and Statistics,"\* wherein are discussed in full detail the matters of merchandising strategy and the research data on which they are erected.

There are a dozen or more principal lines of sales strategy, and these can be listed as follows:

(1) *Strong direct action:* a frontal attack, so to speak; a smashing use of space and forceful language; a direct grappling with the obstacles, a use of sheer power and punch. Useful when analysis shows that sheer force can do the job; costly and hurtful when the obstacles are not of the kind which will yield to force.

\* *Modern Salesmanagement*, by J. George Frederick, D. Appleton & Co., New York, Chapter XIX. Also, *Business Research and Statistics*, by J. George Frederick, D. Appleton & Co.



(2) *Indirect effort*: when opposing forces are too powerful or deep-lying for frontal attack, the situation requires attack “on the flanks”; it requires the line of copy or the appeal which will be an intermediate step to the desired goal.

(3) *Secret action*: this is merely a term for the kind of copy wherein one’s real purpose is not evident; where the sales plan and purpose must be not alone indirect but unobserved; the real purpose being to secure an unconscious action.

(4) *Complicated logical series*: this is only a more intricate line of reasoning for indirect effort; a logical, planned series of “moves,” as in chess, which will inevitably and necessarily lead to desired results.

(5) *Confusing or “feint” moves*: this is a rarer type of strategy which in a legitimate way aims to divert attention from weaker points while remedying them; or to shift the emphasis, or to hide from competitors situations which might be taken advantage of.

(6) *Wedge action*: this is a method of applying force to get results—a method comparable to the lever and the fulcrum, or well-known football formations. Concentration on Uneeda Biscuit advertising put over the entire “N B C” line, when it was not likely that equally distributed advertising could do so.

(7) *Defensive action*: copy aimed to build up strength to resist attack; to ward off competitive criticism or unfavorable events or trends.

(8) *Educational strategy*: a long pull or short pull effort to implant information; to alter a state of mind or change habits.

(9) *Time annihilation strategy*: a special and delicate technique of copy which aims to accomplish very rapidly what ordinarily requires considerable time.

(10) *Distribution strategy*: copy preparation with

the main objective of influencing dealers, securing distribution or otherwise using it as a tool in achieving desirable ends in distribution problems.

(11) *Good-will strategy*: “institutional copy” is a name sometimes applied; but the varieties vary. The purpose is always the same—primarily to make the name, the house and the article better known.

(12) *Domination strategy*: this is often sound strategy in advertising—to “maintain the lead” either by weight of volume of advertising; by size of advertisements, by new developments featured, or by sheer superiority of quality in advertising copy.

(13) *“Caveat” strategy*: a significant plan of advertising early a new article or invention, especially when competition on an equal basis is likely or possible; thus “filing a caveat with the public” on the theory that the public gives credit to the originator and first advertiser.

(14) *Quality strategy*: the specific all-pervading aim being to imbue the public with the feeling and instinctive impression of the high quality of the merchandise. This is subtle copy preparation, calling for the full range of the arts of copy preparation and advertising layout.

(15) *Inquiry strategy*: focusing all the power of the ad upon the matter of securing a reply. This may be as much the aim of the advertiser selling through jobbers and dealers, as that of a mail-order house, the “pull” being possible by various means such as coupon, booklet, sample, prize scheme, etc.

(16) *Economy strategy*: it is sometimes necessary or advisable to appear to be maintaining a previous volume of advertising when the previous appropriation is not available; or a new advertiser with small appropriation may need strategic handling of space afforded, so as to give the impression of larger space.

For all of these strategic purposes, and for others not mentioned here, the use of research is valuable, for strategy is a thing which turns upon hairs, being, as the dictionary says, a use of finesse.



## IX

### *Axioms of Advertising*

**JOSEPH HERBERT APPEL.** Author and merchant. Born Lancaster, Pa., July 19, 1873; A.B., Franklin and Marshall College, 1892. Admitted to Lancaster County Bar, 1895; Philadelphia Bar, 1892. With Editorial Department *Philadelphia Times*, 1896-9; with John Wanamaker since 1899; director advertising and publicity Philadelphia Store until 1912; New York store since 1912; also general assistant to Rodman Wanamaker. Author: *My Own Story*, 1913; *Seeing America*, 1916; *Living the Creative Life*, 1918; *The Making of a Man*, 1921.



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**IX**  
***Axioms of Advertising***  
**By Joseph H. Appel**

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**A**DVERTISING is the “speech” of business. Advertising is to business what language is to man—its mode of self-expression.

A business that will not advertise is both deaf and dumb; and as heavily handicapped in the world’s progress as a deaf and dumb man.

Back of speech is thought. Back of thought is mind. Back of mind is spirit. Back of business speech is the spirit of the business—its individuality. To express this individuality fairly and completely is the province of advertising.

Simple, direct, plain speech is most easily understood by the greatest number of people. Simple, direct, plain language makes the best advertising speech.

People talk mainly of two things; of themselves, of other people. Advertising that is saturated with human interest is bound to be most widely read.

The word “news,” as reflected in our American newspapers, has come to mean “human interest.” Newspapers tell the news of a community. Stores, being a community, must tell their own news in a human interest way.

To present the news of a community, newspapers send out reporters to gather the news first hand. To present the news of a store, the advertising bureau must send

out its reporters to gather the store news first hand. First hand means at the source. The source of store news is the merchandise and the merchandise chief who buys it. Efficient advertising requires the writer's personal examination of the merchandise and the hearing of the "story" of its purchase directly from the lips of the buyer who secured the merchandise in the wholesale market. Every purchase has its story—tell that story.

Merchandise is dumb—until seen; then it speaks louder than words. To bring people into the store to see the merchandise—to speak for the merchandise until it can speak for itself—is the first step in advertising.

Advertising must be fair to the merchandise as well as to the people it invites into the store. Advertising must "square up" with the merchandise and with the store.

To "square up" with the merchandise and with the store, advertising must be accurate. To be accurate, advertising must be truthful.

Advertising is as honest as the man who signs his name to it.

A store is as honest as its advertising.

Efficiency in advertising is impossible without honesty. But honesty is possible without efficiency. Waste in advertising is the natural result of dishonesty.

Honesty in business usually means life; dishonesty surely means death.

Honesty in advertising is not a question of comparative prices or comparative values. Honesty is never comparative nor relative. Honesty is absolute—it means telling and living the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

In advertising, as in everything else, the people are the Court of Last Resort. The people soon begin to discount the statements of a store that habitually exaggerates in its advertising.



Advertising cannot be made honest by means of law, any more than people can be made honest by law. Education only can make advertising and people honest. The most that laws can do is to safeguard people against fraudulent advertising.

Stores—and their advertising—reflect the morals, manners, customs, habits and desires of the community and of the age in which they live. The brazen, big-type, blatant, extravagant advertising is evidence that we are still in the pioneer stage of civilization. Lying advertising exists because people of this nature still exist in the world. Fawning advertising, anemic advertising exist because people of this nature still exist.

But the successful advertising of the present—and what will be the real advertising of the future—is the red-blooded, truthful, plain, simple, dignified, cultured, courteous, common-sense “human” advertising—because people with these attributes rule the world and make it progress.

Advertising is the creative force in business—the electric dynamo that keeps it going,—it literally creates demand for the things of life that raise the standard of living, elevate the taste, changing luxuries into necessities.

Advertising is not to sell goods; it is to enable people intelligently and economically to buy goods.

Efficient advertising must take the customer’s viewpoint. The advertiser is counselor for the public.

The only economic reason for advertising is to make more efficient the distribution of merchandise, reducing its cost, standardizing qualities and products and stabilizing prices.

Distribution—the distribution of wealth, of natural and manufactured products, of people, of property, of education—is the problem of the world to-day.

Advertising is the greatest aid to distribution yet discovered by man.

Advertising becomes a tax upon the people unless it aids distribution and lowers the cost of commodities.

Advertising, when efficient, does aid distribution and lowers the cost of commodities, because it becomes the million-tongue salesman making possible the multiple merchant, who reaches a million people with less cost and effort than the pedler or the cross-roads store—the father of the modern department store (so-called)—could reach one or a dozen people.

Advertising is, therefore, an investment because it is a service,—service to the people.

In its final analysis, advertising is to serve the public; to give information that will help to satisfactory buying; to present the true character and personality of the store; to represent the store as it is—its merchandise, its service. In doing this, advertising becomes what the store is itself—a distinct economic aid to those who will use its service, an inspiration to those who will study its spirit, an education to those who will understand its message; a pioneer in art, in science, in merchandising, in civilization,—a leader in human service.

The retailer is the natural advertiser. Direct to him come the people. Of him they ask questions. Of him they buy. Of him they demand a guaranty of satisfaction. The retailer is the only other party to the deal, and the people hold him responsible.

Retail advertising is born of the people, is for the people, and is used by the people more than any other advertising. Retail advertising is the people's guide in their every-day living. It reflects their daily needs and desires and supplies them. It is the people's market reports—to women, especially, it is what the stock market is to men.

The newspaper is the natural medium for advertising. Distribution of merchandise is most efficient when concentrated and cooperative, under freedom of competition, with just rewards to the most capable. Distribution is greatest where the three elements of a sale are densest—merchandise, people and money. Newspapers circulate in the densest centers of population, where are also congregated the largest stores with the greatest column of merchandise; they are, therefore, the most efficient media for all advertising.

The newspapers that are best for advertising are those that will sell merchandise; that are clean, reliable and fair; that have the largest circulation and the readers' interest developed; that are creative—constructive and not destructive; cheerful, not “knockers”; not blindly partisan; not overrun with advertisements; that stick to their jobs; that have a fair rate.

The prosperity of a community depends upon its retail business. Manufacturers can make, and farmers can grow, only as the merchant sells. And merchants can sell only as the people buy. When the people buy and the merchants sell—when money and merchandise are kept in motion—then the whole world is prosperous.

In the last analysis, all advertisers are merchants; all branches of advertising are merchants. Publishers of all kinds; advertising solicitors; advertising agents; organizers of big business; copy writers,—all are merchants; they must sell the goods they advertise, and they must distribute them more economically than they could be distributed without advertising, or they are building on the shifting sands and their houses will go down in ruins.

If we ever reach the point of “diminishing returns” in advertising, then advertising will go to the junk pile. Advertising must be an asset to business, not an expense. Advertising must produce and not consume wealth.



## X

### *Copy First*

**KENNETH M. GOODE.** Advertising writer and editor. Formerly associate editor of *Saturday Evening Post* and of Hearst's *International*. Later advertising agency experience with firm of Goode & Berrien. Now with P. F. Collier & Sons, New York book-trade and mail-sales division. Has had the unusual experience of having been on both sides of the writing field—editing for large mass circulation and advertising to it.



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## X

### *Copy First*

**By Kenneth M. Goode**

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**I**MAGINE all the telephone wires you ever saw strung together along one giant set of poles. Picture these poles full of men solemnly burnishing those telephone wires, rubbing with pungent aromatic oils, polishing with chamois and sandpaper, chattering with joy when their highlights flash tiny glints of fire.

If you would still become a copy man—climb one of the poles and join us!

For there is nothing so absolutely unimportant as copy for copy's sake. Copy is only the telephone wire that carries the message: if only it carry the message clearly, swiftly, accurately, powerfully, the wire itself may be as rusty and bent as an old nail.

And so, I say, when you find yourself tempted to dash off a tricky string of winged words for publication at somebody's expense, or, what is worse, tempted to lecture somebody else on how to do it, just grab your manicure tools and join us among the telephone wires.

Not that copy isn't important! On the contrary, copy is the only thing that counts in advertising. Research develops facts that may help sell goods; but a hundred men in a hundred Fords, filling out questionnaires all day long, wouldn't of themselves sell enough goods to pay for their gasoline. Wise choosing of places to put advertising copy unquestionably enables that copy to sell more

goods; but you could sit and choose media until you were black in the face, and never move a boy's express wagon full of toy balloons. Mechanical departments help copy find favorable expression; but the most meticulously symmetrical piece of typography that ever lulled a roving eye will never turn a nickel, unless it eases home a message some real copy writer has cut and hammered until it means something very vital to every man who reads it.

Copy, in one form or other, is the heart and soul of advertising. Except as an aid to the preparation of copy, or to the extension of copy after it has been prepared, everything else is more or less meaningless. Much of the unnecessary complication in modern advertising thought is due to straying away from that one simple fundamental. If copy is good enough, it can succeed without a dollar spent on anything except white space to print it in; if copy is bad enough, the most elaborate merchandising and marketing plans will only pile up the possibilities of failure.

This blunt truth will, I fear, run athwart many able men whose generous conceptions of "advertising" have grown to embrace everything—from finding an architect for the factory to placing fair-haired boys behind the merchant's sales counters.

You may remember an old story of the man who proposed to trade his cow for his neighbor's bicycle: "I'd look fine, wouldn't I, trying to ride a cow?" was the ungracious answer. "Yes," returned the proposer, "but think how I would look trying to milk a bicycle."

Respectfully I commend this primitive form of reasoning to any who feel I unduly overestimate the importance of copy. On a pinch, you can easily imagine an advertising campaign—mail order, for example—simplified down to nothing but copy. But try to think of an advertising campaign without copy!



Or try, for instance, to imagine this week's issue of the *Saturday Evening Post* without any advertising copy, with all its great advertising pages, one after the other, showing blank white space.

Yet, with a pair of scissors in hand, I turned yesterday to the latest issue of the *Post*, and out of one advertisement, without touching a printed letter, cut in one piece \$3,700 worth of blank space! I got \$2,500 worth out of another, \$2,000 out of another; and I could have filled a small waste-basket with solid unbroken strips of virgin white that different advertisers had bought at \$1,000 or more apiece.

Then I turned back to Mr. Lorimer's able editorial page, and searched in vain for \$100 worth of wasted space.

Entranced with the eagerness with which advertisers paid for white space they didn't use, I began counting words to find out, if I might, what the average advertiser paid per word of copy in the space he did decide to utilize. Try it for yourself. In the meantime, I may give you this much of a hint: If advertisers could hire famous writers at the regular rate they receive from editors, you might easily engage Booth Tarkington, George Ade, and Irvin S. Cobb—all three—to write your copy at a cost per word less than most advertisers pay per word to have it printed in a single advertisement.

If the advertiser paid for his copy by length, and the editor didn't, this economy in the use of words might be more easily understood. But it's just the other way round. Why, then, does the advertiser—who pays for his space and not his words—turn his space back into white paper, while the editor—who pays for his words and not his space—jams his space chuck-full of words and pictures?

Is it possible that the advertiser is not quite sure of the importance of his message?

Does he mistrust the strength and attractiveness of his copy?

Is he so uncertain of real *interest* that he must mince words and sugarcoat his story with thousands of dollars worth of white space?

Or, is it that advertisers, generally unaware of the vital importance of good selling copy, and, perhaps, even less aware of what constitutes good selling copy, allow their message to be determined by the way they want the advertisement to *look*?

At any rate, as every advertising agency man knows, copy, in an astonishing number of cases, is written more or less to fit a preconceived layout. The layout, of course, is determined by the space. The space is determined by the schedule. And the schedule, by the size of the appropriation. And so, in what we advertising men are fond of calling the “last analysis,” the expression of the advertising message, if not the actual message itself, is far too often determined in advance by the approximate sum of money available for advertising.

Suppose—to take an extreme example—a man decided to send a telegram. His reasons for sending a telegram may be various; he may have heard that telegrams are good for business, he may have read so many telegrams that he wants to send one himself, all his competitors may be sending telegrams, the Western Union may have an able solicitor selling telegraphic service— or what not. However be it, our man decides he can afford to spend, say, \$4.63 for telegrams.

This \$4.63 he finds will pay for a night letter to Los Angeles.

Obviously, all he has left to do is to sit down and think out what he might like to telegraph to Los Angeles!

And anything he writes will be just about as important as the copy of an advertiser who buys his space before he knows exactly what he wants to say in it.

There are a few of us who think no advertiser has a moral right to spend money on white space before he has a pretty clear vision of what he intends to accomplish with it.

To accomplish anything at all with it, he must first get rid altogether of the idea that anybody in the world is interested in his goods or what he has to say about them, except as they translate what they read into something of purely selfish interest.

If any advertiser doubts this, let him make a test:

When he starts looking through next month's magazines for his new advertisement, let him stop long enough to recollect that every one of the other advertisements he skips over so lightly is equally the pride of some other advertiser; and that each of this multitude of other advertisers is, at the same moment, skipping just as lightly all the other advertisements in the same enthusiastic search for his own.

The only difference between this group of self-seeking advertisers and the ordinary public reading this same magazine is that they are looking for something, while the public is looking for nothing. But, passively, each person who looks through the advertising pages is just as self-centered—just as keen for his own interests—as any of those advertisers.

The next step, therefore, for our successful advertiser is to project himself out of the place of the proud father of an advertisement and into the place of the average man—that casual reader who, if he is kept interested, idles away half an hour on a magazine that would take three or four hours to read through hastily.

Let the advertiser then try to imagine what, if anything,

he can say to this average man interesting enough—to *the man*—to hold his attention against all other advertising and editorial attractions long enough to give that single proposition thought enough to repay *his* share of the money that advertiser spent to reach him.

Here, for example, are fair samples of copy for which somebody paid \$7,000. They are picked practically at random, not from one poor inexperienced amateurish effort in some country newspaper, but from five different high-class advertisements—tremendously expensive words of great national advertisers!

Those motorists whose appraisal of a car is influenced by its fitness to reflect their standing in the community agree in according custom built closed bodies their unqualified approval.

Far beyond any previous high mark, the new extends and amplifies those superiorities of performance which seem to belong peculiarly to

It is rare indeed that the best things in life can be purchased on a purely bulk value basis. Genuine quality is seldom to be gauged by the inch, the ounce, or by a strict price measure.

Everybody now knows of the tendency of experienced owners to step up from the class of ordinary cars to the proud possession of a good looking, economical, balanced, lightweight, distinctive car of the highest resale value.

These impressions of interior comfort are further emphasized when the car gets under way, and you experience the admirable balance and buoyancy of the new spring suspension.

Memorize a dozen or so of these lines and try them on your wife, your partner, the man next you on the train, or even your office boy.

Just repeat them in a quiet conversational tone.

See if you can detect any quick glint of interest in your listener's eye, an attentive flash of the ear, an exclamation, "By Jove, that's true! I'm certainly glad you reminded me of it."

Why does any one spend thousands of dollars printing for distribution among millions of miscellaneous people a bunch of words that he can, in five minutes, prove definitely won't hold the interest of the first three men he meets on the street?

The answer is, of course, the words interest *him!*

He is fascinated with his own advertisement. As he views his clean white proof gleaming before him in solitary splendor and pronounces it "O. K.," he is honestly—unconsciously perhaps, but none the less honestly— of the opinion that this advertisement is going to look to a vast number of people the same as it does to him.

Just as a beginner in polo is so conscious of the fact he is on a horse that he gives little thought to the ball, so this average business man adjusts with infinite care to his own taste an advertisement intended for an absolutely different type of reader.

Thus, men without the slightest real training in theory or practise of writing copy, men wise enough to heed explicit direction from their lawyers and expert accountants, will, nevertheless, with calmest assurance dictate to experts just how an advertisement must read and look.

This subjective element—this very natural idea that other people are interested in the things of most interest to oneself—costs the business men of the United States far more money annually than the nation's standing army.

Nothing but years of professional training in the prac-

tical psychology of advertising enables a man to regard copy and layouts before him simply as a sort of photographic negative, and so to disregard pretty completely what he wants to *say* for the sake of what he wants his readers to *do*.

Nobody will deny that the man who pays the bill has a perfect right to have his advertisement read anyway he likes. Or, like the little girl in the Metropolitan Museum, he may simply proclaim, "I don't know anything about Art, but I know what makes me sick!"

Such a frank recognition of the fact that he is putting out an advertisement to please himself—to get a little kick out of seeing his own words in print—would immediately put things on quite another basis. There is, in fact, no reason why a successful business man shouldn't find legitimate self-expression in this sort of advertising just as enjoyably as in yachts, owning professional baseball teams or offering peace prizes.

But to regard these mandatory messages as "copy," and then to add insult to injury by calling that copy successful because the company that pays for the advertising is successful, is to fall into error as frequent as it is dangerously misleading. Weight of circulation is one thing; effective copy, quite another. Yet the two are constantly confused.

Wilbur Wright used to say that he could fly on a kitchen table if he could get a powerful enough engine. So, regardless of how bad the copy may be, you can make some sort of a success of any advertising campaign *if you spend enough money*. So, too, any South Sea Islander might thrash a golf ball completely and successfully around the golf course with a croquet mallet. But the youngest caddy would know better than to call it "golf"

Successful copy, on the other hand, is like good golf.

It isn't a matter of brute force. Nor of luck. Your trained copy writer knows exactly what he intends doing with every word and sentence. He knows his average man and just how he is affected by various uses of printed words. He knows the few basic motives that govern all human action. With certain carefully calculated appeal he makes a definite play upon these motives to make large numbers of people perform some simple act he himself has clearly and definitely in mind.

All "general publicity" and "institutional" advertising to the contrary notwithstanding, it follows inevitably that any advertiser who hasn't in his own mind a pretty clear picture of the definite *action* he aims to bring about in the minds of his readers may expect to waste a very large percentage of the money he spends on advertising.

For, reverting to the golf metaphor, your really good copy man makes always an attempt to hole out. He is not content just to shoot in the general direction of the green in the hope that the hole itself will somehow contribute something that he didn't! And when golf holes do begin to meet your puts half-way, readers will begin doing, on account of your advertisement, things you fail definitely to ask them to do in words they cannot fail to understand.