

THE AMERICAN NEWSPAPER

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The American newspaper by James Edward Rogers

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JAMES EDWARD ROGERS

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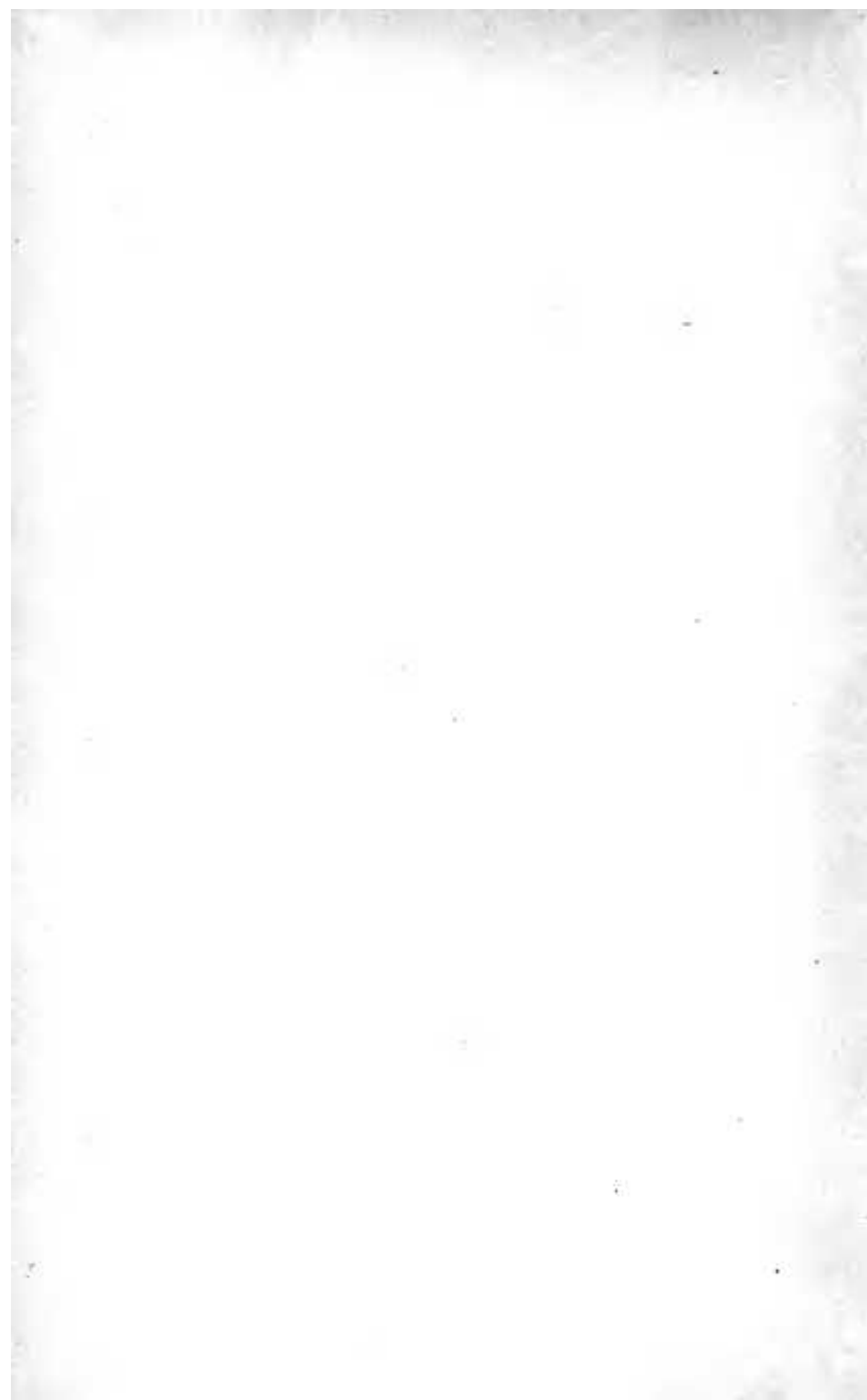
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TO
J. B. P.



PREFACE

Professor S. N. Patten in his latest book, the *New Basis of Civilization*, opens his first chapter with the following suggestive words:

One summer day I took my notebook to a wooded hillside whence I could overlook a rich and beautiful valley. The well-tended farms, the strong stone houses, the busy men and animals moving peacefully over the roads and fields, would inspire me, I was sure, with the opening theme of this book. As I seated myself under a chestnut tree a fellow-guest at the hotel came by, and glancing at my memoranda asked if I, like himself, was writing a lecture. He too had come to the woods, he said, to meditate and to be inspired by nature. But his thesis, enthusiastically unfolded, was the opposite of mine. It was part of his faith as a Second-Day Adventist that the world is now becoming more unhappy and more wicked; and it is now so evil that the end of it rapidly approaches.

Professor Patten then proceeds to tell how they saw different meanings in the same things, how they came to opposite

conclusions, and how one pair of eyes is always apt to see but one side of life.

In this study, however, I have tried, as far as possible to see both sides of the question. My aim has been to avoid the pitfalls of hasty or set notions. The subject for discussion seemed to me to be one of concrete fact and not one of personal philosophy, and therefore I have examined some fifteen thousand newspapers from all sections of the country as a first means of getting some acquaintance with the necessary facts before forming any decided judgments. Essays like those by F. Wilcox in the *American Academy of Political Science*, July, 1900, and E. L. Shuman, *Practical Journalism*, have also proved particularly valuable and the essay of Professor W. I. Thomas in the *American Magazine* for March, 1908, has aided much in formulating my point of view on the psychological aspects of the subject.

President Roosevelt's recent onslaught on newspapers that "habitually and con-

tinually and as a matter of business practice every form of mendacity known to man, from the suppression of the truth and the suggestion of the false to the lie direct," seems to have given expression to a critical attitude toward American newspapers which has long been growing. Lord Northcliffe, the premier of English journalism, is reputed to have told a *New York Times* reporter recently that in certain important respects "American newspapers are getting worse and worse every year—most of them," and it is not long ago that Mr. Charles Whibley, an English writer of distinction, stated in *Blackwood's* his sincere conviction that "no civilized country in the world has been content with newspapers so grossly contemptible as those which are read from New York to the Pacific Coast." Such criticism does not come entirely from foreign visitors. Several of our own foremost thinkers and writers have been severe in their indictments of the American press. John A. Sleicher, editor