

# THE SHOP

**W**E have done rather well with this magazine since we reorganized it a few months ago and began publishing a complete novel in each issue. It has already gained more than one hundred and fifty thousand in circulation, and this gain is made up of steady increases month after month in its sales.

This is very good evidence that in **THE MUNSEY** of to-day you find the kind of magazine you want. If it were not so you wouldn't buy it. There is no reason why you should buy it except you want it. We do not bribe you to buy it. We offer nothing but the magazine itself. We have no schemes or tricks for swelling circulation, and no agents or canvassers anywhere in the wide world importuning people to subscribe to the magazine. We do not club it through subscription agents and do not sell it, as many publications are sold, on the instalment plan in conjunction with books and other merchandise.

The circulation of **THE MUNSEY** is purely and wholly spontaneous; it must live on its merits or die on its defects. With a magazine so circulated we can readily tell whether we are giving you what you want or not. It is an accurate barometer of public taste so far as concerns likes and dislikes. It tells us nothing more, but this is something, a point to work from.

I may have said some of this to you before in these talks, but I haven't said it to our new readers—to our hundred and fifty thousand new readers. Anyway, it won't do you any harm—you the old readers of this magazine—to get a fresh realization of the difference between a bargain counter circulation and a circulation made up of spontaneous purchases.

It is no trick at all to go out and buy a circulation through clubbing, premiums, bargain counter methods, or the instalment

plan. But subscriptions got in this way don't mean anything. They furnish no test of the standing of a publication with the public, no guide to editors as to whether or not they are giving the people what they want.

Voluntary purchasers of a magazine mean something to a magazine, mean good will, substantiality, real worth. Bargain counter circulation means nothing except big figures on which to get advertising, and on this to recoup for the losses on a circulation that is little better than given away.

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I have not worked on this theory. My publications, **THE MUNSEY** and all the others, have always been independent of the advertiser. That is to say, if they had not carried one line of advertising they would have shown a margin of profit from circulation receipts and this, to my way of thinking, is the right theory of conducting a periodical publishing business—the only independent way to do it.

I do not believe and never have believed in making my magazines mere vehicles for advertising. As a matter of fact, the advertising carried in periodicals is the most overrated thing in the world as a revenue producer—actual net revenue.

It costs something to get advertising, with a corps of advertising solicitors covering the country, with commissions to advertising agents, with the expense of typesetting, electrotyping, paper, printing, binding, bundling, postage, free copies to advertisers, to agents, bookkeeping, correspondence, and many other overhead charges. When all these costs have been deducted from the gross revenue, the net figures are not so alluring as they look to be, written in the sky.

I should not, however, wish to give the

impression here that advertising in a magazine is not desirable. IT IS DESIRABLE BOTH FOR WHATEVER MEASURE OF PROFIT THERE IS IN IT AND FOR ITS VALUE TO THE MAGAZINE ITSELF, ITS VALUE TO READERS.

The advertising pages of a magazine keep you in touch with things—keep you informed concerning inventions, developments, improvements that have to do with your living. It is very much worth your while to have these facts put before you from month to month and to read them seriously with a view to the benefit you will get from them.

They keep you informed on the prices of things, guide you in your purchases and enable you to know whether you are getting the latest, most up to date things or not. They tell you of what is new in architecture, decorating, and furnishing, and tell you what is new in supplies for the table, in dress, in headwear, in footwear, what is new in inventions, in science, in art and in agriculture.

I have often heard men rail at the advertising pages of a magazine, not realizing the valuable information these advertising pages contained for them.

No magazine could be as valuable to the public without its advertising pages as with them. They furnish a phase of information and reading that the magazine itself cannot furnish, but the advertising should be INCIDENTAL TO THE MAGAZINE, NOT THE PURPOSE OF IT. To make it clearer, the periodical that isn't independent of advertising, that gets little net revenue out of its circulation, expecting from advertising revenue to make good its losses, is primarily a vehicle for carrying advertising. But for this revenue from advertising such publications would cease to exist.

On the other hand, the periodical that is independent of advertising revenue, independent by reason of the legitimate revenue it gets from circulation, occupies a substantial ground and is in the broadest and fullest sense of the word doing business on legitimate lines.

Nothing has so damned the publishing business as bargain counter methods in circulation getting. It is the vast aggregate of these advertising vehicles or semi-advertising vehicles that has got the publishing business in bad with the Post Office Department, which claims that the gov-

ernment is losing too much money annually on the transportation of periodicals at the second class mail rate.

Readers who kick at advertising pages have good ground for doing so when magazines are overloaded and grotesquely interlarded with advertising. If the entire periodical business of the country were conducted on sound business lines, wherein periodicals were independent of advertising, then they would have no occasion for carrying an excessive quantity of advertising, and it were well if all publications were prohibited from carrying an amount of advertising in excess of say one-third of their reading space.

Such a regulation on the part of the Post Office Department would go very far towards legitimatizing the publishing business and removing the objection of the Department. Under such a ruling publications would not be sold for a song or practically given away. Bargain counter methods would disappear.

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But just now there is not much occasion for kicking because of too large a proportion of advertising in magazines as a whole. Up to a few years ago the magazines of standard shape had a great vogue with advertisers, and then advertisers suddenly swung over to the large page flat periodicals, where in great measure they remain to-day.

The vogue with advertisers for big display, bigger display than they could get in a standard magazine page, resulted in a number of magazines changing over to what is known technically as the flats. Among these are *The American* and *The Metropolitan Magazines* of New York, *Maclean's Magazine* of Toronto, and I dare say a good many others scattered throughout the country. Personally, I doubt the wisdom of these changes, though I know nothing about the result of the changes.

I doubt the wisdom of the changes for the reason that the flat publication, with advertising interlarded in its reading pages, is not as satisfactory to the reader as the compact, book shaped magazine, and in the last analysis it is the reader that publishers should keep in mind, not the advertiser. The periodicals that will live, or are more likely to live than others,

are those that are published for the reader, not the advertiser.

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There is always a reason for everything, and the reason for the craze for big display in advertising is perhaps due more than anything else to our new automobile industry. The automobile business, as you all know, sprang up in a night, as it were, and developed into astounding proportions. Its magnitude, as a whole, in all its bearings and ramifications, was simply dazzling. This new enterprise, with its tires and its multitudinous makes of cars, and with all its accessories, suddenly filled the periodicals of the country with advertising.

And all manufacturers tried to outdo the others of their line, with the result that the limit of space in a standard size magazine page or even in two opposite pages in no way measured up to their fancied requirements—these men who were doing big things and springing a new sensation every minute. So they flocked to the flats and took pages and double pages. Great big spreads, with great big pictures, and dominated the publications. **COST! WELL, IT DIDN'T MATTER WHAT IT COST, THE IMPRESSION WAS THE THING.**

There is an old saying in the advertising business that advertisers are like sheep, and that all follow the leader. And so the advertisers in other fields followed the automobile men to the flats and flared out into big space advertisers. There may be a better reason, there may be several reasons for this swing to the flats, but you have here my analysis of the change, and I think it is pretty nearly right.

Twenty years ago there were few full page advertisers in the standard magazines. A quarter page advertiser was a big advertiser. The rank and file of the advertisements ran from half an inch to two or three inches, and the advertisers of that day got paying results, though the rate per line for their small ads was higher.

May it not be that we have gone mad in these days of extravagance in our craze for a great splash in our advertising? May it not be that more attention given to concrete, lucid writing and less to great big pictures, cost taken into account, would pay us much better? I am convinced that it would. I am convinced that our ex-

travagance, the extravagance of the times, has led us into wasteful and unwarranted methods in our advertising campaigns. Wouldn't it be well for advertisers to get back in part to the methods of our daddies?

It is a very thrilling thing I know for a man to see himself spread over a great big page or two pages of a great big page publication, but I am not so sure that it is the wisest expenditure of his money. In my judgment, the advertiser spends his money to much better purpose when he tells his story clearly and effectively in a small space, a page, half or quarter page, of a magazine of standard shape than when he spends four or five or ten times as much to tell the same story in a great big spread on a great big page or in double pages. Advertising, to get the best results, must of course be bold enough not to look skimpy and mean, bold enough to be easily read and understood, but it is not necessary to tell the story in a scream.

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There are many great fortunes in America and many thriving enterprises that came about from magazine advertising. No periodicals ever had a greater vogue with advertisers for a stretch of twenty years than the standard magazines. The great big volume in magazine advertising came in with the establishment of **THE MUNSEY**, with its then astounding circulation and the other great big magazine circulations that followed. It cannot be that the advertisers who crowded the advertising pages of magazines for twenty years spent their money unwisely or to no purpose, and it cannot be that the advertising agents of the country, keen, clever men in advertising affairs, did not know their job, and that all the while, for two decades, they were wasting their customers' money.

Flocking to the flats was more or less of a fad, and a fad that I fancy has cost many advertisers dearly. Everything is relative in business, as well as in life. An advertisement in a flat occupying a space of four inches single column, makes a poor showing beside the great big spreads. But in a magazine, four inches make a quarter of a page, and a quarter page advertisement makes a very respectable showing beside a full magazine page advertisement.

For the money expended there is no

medium that gives the general advertiser so much impressive, effective publicity as the magazine of standard shape.

By reason of its book shape, it lends itself to greatest economy. This is true both because of the cost, due to the small page, and because of the longevity of the advertisement, the length of life of the magazine, book that it is. It is kept on the library table a month, two months, or many months, and sometimes the life of these magazines is measured by years. The more compact a periodical, the nearer it comes to being a book, the longer its life, and the longer the life of the periodical, the more value the advertising.

That I am an interested party so far as concerns the standard type of magazine is certain. But I don't believe this fact influences my judgment. To put it in another way. I would much prefer telling my story to ten million readers through an effective advertisement in a magazine than to tell it to one million readers through a megaphone, or the big spread—the cost being the same in each case.

If, in this analysis, I am right, advertisers will gradually return to the standard magazines. This perhaps will not come about in a rush, but eventually it will have to come about. The thing that is right is bound to triumph in the end.

I don't know whether you will be interested in this talk or not. To tell you the truth, I had no thought of wandering at such length in the field of circulation and advertising. But the more colloquial and spontaneous these shop talks are, the more worth while they are as shop talks. Careful and precise writing wouldn't fit them at all. Anyway, this view of the matter gives me an excuse for being natural and talking to you without regard to form or style, quite the same as I would talk if you were in my office or if we were enjoying an after-dinner cigar together between sips of coffee.

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Bob Davis was talking with me yesterday about the surprising number of new authors we have put on the map since we began the publication of our complete novels. Here they are:

HARRIS DICKSON, CHARLES NEVILLE BUCK,  
P. G. WODEHOUSE, FRANK L. PACKARD,  
A. HAMILTON-GIBBS.

"The Kangaroo," by Harris Dickson, was immediately seized upon by the moving picture men and has been converted into what is regarded as one of the finest American historical motion picture dramas ever produced.

"The Little Nugget," by P. G. Wodehouse, brought a new humorist to the attention of American readers. Its appearance in *MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE* resulted in its immediate book publication, both in England and America, and it is now being dramatized for the fall theatrical season. Mr. Wodehouse is the author of "The White Hope," the full book length novel which appears in this issue of *MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE*.

The publication of "The Hour of Conflict" in *THE MUNSEY* at once put its author, A. Hamilton-Gibbs, on the map and established him as a book writer of real talent. "The Hour of Conflict" was grabbed for book publication instantly on its appearance in *THE MUNSEY*, and is now on sale both in England and America.

The Shuberts, the theatrical managers, pounced upon "The Battle Cry," by Charles Neville Buck, as soon as it appeared in *MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE* and secured the dramatic rights for a production that will be made in New York this fall. The merits of the novel revealed a delightful story teller to the American public, thus putting Mr. Buck on the map of American authors.

No man among these new authors occupies a bigger space on the map than Frank L. Packard, whose "Miracle Man," published in the February *MUNSEY*, made a great hit. George M. Cohan, than whom there is no cleverer playwright, and himself a clever actor, got in first on "The Miracle Man," securing the dramatic rights, and is now at work converting the book into a play for production in the autumn. Concerning "The Miracle Man," Mr. Cohan wrote to the author this comment on the story:

My only hope is that I will come as near writing a big play as you have a big novel.

Dickson, Wodehouse, Gibbs, Buck and Packard are all new men, who probably would not have made much of a dent in the literary world up to this time, if any

at all, had it not been for MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE, with its wide circulation and complete novel publication. The way MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE is bringing out and aging authors beats anything that ever happened in the publishing world. When this magazine stands sponsor to an author and introduces him to the reading public it means that he has arrived as a literary man, and that overnight, as it were, he has secured a place of public recognition as a writer.

Louis Joseph Vance had been before the public a number of years when his story, "The Lone Wolf," appeared in the March issue of THE MUNSEY. Nothing, however, ever did so much towards putting Vance on the map in a big way as the wide publicity we gave "The Lone Wolf." The merits of the story as a dramatic tale may be judged from the fact that William A. Brady, the theatrical manager, contracted for both its dramatic and moving picture rights within three days after its appearance in THE MUNSEY. This story has also been sold for book publication and will appear this fall.

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This all goes to sustain what I said to you in The Shop last month, and what I have said to you on other occasions, namely, that I am at a loss to understand why more people do not go in for fiction writing. The ranks of newspaper writers and clergymen and actors and actresses should be able to turn out any number of clever writers, and a handsome percentage of great talent, perhaps even genius.

The reason I mention these classifications is that the training lends itself to literary work. Newspaper writers learn the power of expression, the way to handle words, and to handle them effectively, and they learn a good deal more. They learn how to work, become students of the world, and the things in it. With imagination and such a training, the newspaper writer is in line for literary work.

The clergyman is a student, a polished, effective, dramatic writer. With his skill, and his knowledge of human nature, his sense of refinement and delicacy, he is primarily equipped for literary achievement. Imagination he must have for creative work. Without imagination it is

folly to undertake it. Fiction that sells must have a story in it, and must be dramatically told, and the more gracefully and charmingly told, of course the better. And so, too, the purer and sweeter and more refined the story, with a substratum of strength and power, the greater will be its success and the greater the achievement of its author.

But of these three callings I am inclined to think that the stage best lends itself to dramatic fiction. The actor lives in a dramatic atmosphere, sees everything from a dramatic point of view. Dramatic effects eventually become the fiber of his fiber, his whole life. Then, too, he is dealing with letters, rehearsing plays, memorizing the brain work of men of talent, and thus he takes on something of the power of expression and the refinement of culture. Again, the actor has all kinds of time on his hands. He is occupied only a few hours a day in the working season, and in the vacation season he has months of idleness. In view, therefore, of the nature of the actor's work and the measure of his leisure, he, it seems to me, is better equipped to become a fiction writer than the man of any other calling. Moreover, it is to be presumed that the actor who counts for anything has some inherent dramatic talent, otherwise he would not be on the stage.

Of course, it by no means follows that writers should not come from all callings in life, the farm, the workshop, the mercantile establishment, the sea, the plains, and the wilds. The main thing is to have imagination and dramatic expression, and to be able to tell a story, and sometimes we find the best story tellers where we least expect to see them. The army and navy have at one time and another furnished many good writers, and it is perfectly logical that they should do so. These men have much spare time on their hands and have lived and know what living means.

If this little free-hand talk about writing and writers serves to encourage some man or woman, or some number of men or women, in journalism, in the pulpit, or on the stage, or in the wider world, to produce some creative work that will mean a bigger and fuller life to them, I shall be very glad.

FRANK A. MUNSEY