

Twenty-five years ago Henry Ward Beecher wrote: "THE NEW YORK EVANGELIST is one of the oldest and best Religious Newspapers in this country." It was started in the year 1830 by half a dozen young men, of whom the late William E. Dodge was the last survivor. It grew out of a public necessity. A great excitement was sweeping over the country. Finney and other revivalists were going through Central and Western New York, preaching as with tongues of fire. Yet all the while the so-called Religious Papers were dry and dull, as if they were musty with age. They were in no sense Newspapers, but rather Religious Tracts. Hence there rose a general demand for something which was in touch with the life of the day. In the midst of such a tempest THE EVANGELIST was born, and immediately took its place as a leader of Reform. When the use of strong drinks was almost universal, it stood forth in advocacy of Temperance. When the Church at the North was silent on the national wrong of Slavery, it spoke boldly for Freedom. But its zeal was denounced as fanaticism; and those who stood with it were cut off from the Presbyterian Church. When they were cast out, it went with them, bearing their reproach. But when the War came, the whole North had to take the very ground which it had taken. During the War it was circulated by the Christian Commission throughout the army, and read by a thousand camp fires. From many a field of battle, and from many a hospital for the wounded, came letters telling how the soldiers were cheered by the news it brought of their kindred and neighbors at home, who were following them with anxious hearts, and with their blessings and their prayers. Among those who wrote from the field was a young chaplain, E. P. Roe, whose letters first appeared in the columns of THE EVANGELIST, and who, as he often frankly stated, was induced by its encouragement to enter on a literary career; and became the most popular writer in the country, his books being circulated by millions.

When the War was over, THE EVANGELIST was just as earnest in favor of a policy of conciliation and peace. It encouraged the return of kindly feeling, and to-day it has no better friends than those in the South.

When the Country was united, the Church began to feel ashamed that it was divided, and there were advances on both sides towards Reunion. If we assume nothing for the living, we may at least tell the truth of the dead. At that time the late Dr. Henry B. Smith was a constant contributor to THE EVANGELIST, and it is the testimony of all his contemporaries that no single influence contributed more to the final consummation.

But new times bring new questions. Four years ago it was proposed to revise the old Confession of Faith so as to adapt it to the belief of the Church in our times. But the suggestion was considered hardly worthy of notice until THE EVANGELIST took hold of it, and in a single year had so far revolutionized public opinion, that it was carried in the General Assembly by a majority of two-thirds.

Again, Professor Briggs set the Church in commotion by his bold "Inaugural," in which he gave offence, not so much by his opinions, which were by no means new, as by his brusque and somewhat contemptuous manner of expressing them. It was a delicate matter to defend him from the resentment of those whom he had needlessly offended. And yet, however unguarded his utterances may have been, it was not right that he should be condemned merely for an indiscretion. The question of liberty was impersonated in one man. If he was struck down to-day, any one of us might be struck down to-morrow. And so THE EVANGELIST had to throw itself into the breach, whatever the cost to itself. In all these questions it has tried to hold the balance even, doing justice to all men. It has never belonged to any party in the Church, but claims to be at once Conservative and Progressive, holding fast to all that is good in the old forms, and yet keeping its eyes wide open, and turned towards the rising sun. If it has been drawn into controversy now and then, it has been always against its will, for it has no love for strife; its motto has been, Liberty and Union, Love and Peace!

Of the necessity of such a class of journals, if Religion is to be maintained among us, there can be but one opinion. Otherwise we shall have to leave its treatment by the Press to the mercy of the Daily Papers, which often show an utter ignorance of religious questions,

and refer to them only with an air of flippancy and contempt. If our Faith be left to be thus caricatured, it will not be long before the mass of readers will be far gone in infidelity. These insidious attacks can only be rebuffed and cowed down by papers of another class, that cannot be despised for want of intellect, and whose courage is equal to their ability.

Nor is it only for the defence of Religion that they are needed, but in the interest of public morals ; for the peace and good order of society. Other questions are coming to the front, that will shake the world more than questions of theology. There is the Social Question, which is the terror of every capital in Europe, lest it break out in revolution and deluge cities with blood. A touch of it we have had in this country, in the anarchists of Chicago. When Chicago put down anarchy with a strong hand, she rendered a service to New York, which may return the favor by the same firmness in the support of law. There is a perfect community of interest between the great city of the East and the great city of the West. But the trouble does not end here. Mobs may be put down by bayonets, but the different classes of society can only be *reconciled* by Religion, and here again is the place and the value of a class of Papers that look at public questions from a higher plane than that of mere politics.

When any Journal has, in the course of a long history, raised itself to such a position, and acquired such a power for good, it is not a matter of private interest, but of public concern, that it should not be dependent on the life of one man, but should be conserved and perpetuated from generation to generation. And he who has been at its head owes it to those who are to come after him to see that its influence shall be transmitted to proper hands. Such has been the thought of the Proprietor of THE EVANGELIST ever since the day that he crossed the line of threescore and ten. Those who are wise in such matters tell him that the only way is to form a Company, as the New York Observer has done, to which he has so far consented as to be willing to submit it to his friends. As to its value, he has only to say that twenty-three years ago he paid for one-half of it \$45,000 in cash, and was soon after offered \$100,000 for the whole, which he refused. Hence he thinks it to be a moderate estimate of its present valuation to put it at \$150,000, which in any reorganization would be made the capital of the Company, the same being divided into a hundred and fifty shares of \$1,000 each, of which he would take eighty, leaving seventy to friends who would like to have a share in the control when it passes into other hands.

But a Newspaper is not like other property, whose value is to be reckoned merely by figures. This may be doubled by incidental circumstances : as by the mere fact of location, if it be central for those whom it would reach ; by its past history ; by its position, that is, by what it represents ; and by its peculiar constituency. In all these points THE EVANGELIST is second to no other paper in the country. It is published in the chief city of the Union ; it stands for practical Christianity ; and its constituency is of the very best, being composed wholly of families that are noted in their communities for intelligence as well as for piety : into which it comes, week by week, not as a new acquaintance, but as an old friend. *It has sixty-three years of history behind it*, and has thus served not only its generation, but two generations, passing down from father to son. There are at this moment thousands of families in all parts of the country that have been, as they express it, "brought up on THE EVANGELIST," and feel for it that personal attachment which belongs to something that is tenderly associated, not only with the living, but with the dead. These things are more precious than silver and gold, and give to the familiar face of the old family visitor and friend a welcome that would not be accorded to any new comer, and which is one element of its influence and power.

After nearly forty years of such responsibility, it is the one desire of him who has been entrusted with it, that the Paper with which he has been so long connected should be left in strong hands—strong not only in ability, but in a financial backing that shall insure its absolute independence, so that in all time to come—though there may be days of darkness—it shall never cease to do manly service for God and our Country, for Liberty and Truth.