

THE PROBLEM OF THE COCK-A-HOOPS!

Value of Advertising Destroyed by Exaggerated Claims

Well-Known Writer Flails Sloganeers

By ARTHUR O. RICHARDSON, F.I.P.A.

Specially Written for "Newspaper News"

Just as there was a time when Actors were regarded as rogues and vagabonds, so there was a time—not so long ago—when the Advertising Agent stood no higher in the social scale than a horse thief. In recent years both Actors and Advertising Agents have been honoured with Knighthoods and other royal distinctions. To-day Advertising men have a "Who's Who" all to themselves. I have been in it myself. That was the year I paid my subscription.

It took a long time to rescue advertising from the bog of ill-repute into which it had fallen—to get the buying public to place some degree of faith in advertised statements.

In the last year or two, however, the high-brows have indulged too freely in airy rhapsodies. The scientific advertising, super-salesmanship, sales-analysis stuff has gone to their heads and fogged their outlook.

The trouble began when some second Daniel dived deep into old man Webster's locker and, after a period of travail, emerged with the confidence-destroying slogan "Truth in Advertising."

The worst of this slogan is that its meaning isn't the least bit obscure. Even a child can understand it. There is no back-door. I often wonder why

facturers of doubtful merchandise, take a parental interest in the slogan, change their names to "Simon Pure," and use the phrase as a sort of Coat-of-arms at the top of their advertisements. They believe it disarms suspicion.

Advertising Associations have worked the slogan into stationery headings, badges, brochures, buttons and banners, and encouraged their members to parade this newly discovered virtue before an admiring world.

At the Advertising Convention held in London three years ago, two thousand delegates decorated themselves with these "Truth" badges and, as they moved about the city, it was apparent that many of them believed that the brass-looking slogan carried with it the freedom of the City of London. When they mixed with just ordinary folk there was a look in their eyes which said:

"Of course you can never be like us—But be as like us as you're able to be." When the delegates returned home and their children asked "What did you do at the Convention, Daddy?" they replied "I struck a blow for the noble cause of truth."

The "Truth in Advertising" mottoes were framed and hung over the delegates' beds—in the place once occupied by "Love one another," and "What is home without a Mother." And sympathetic wives whispered "My Hero."

In the meantime, John Citizen looked on and wondered—wondered what sort of business this could be in which men shout their virtues from the house-tops and claim exclusive rights in the word "Truth."

You can always pick out the man who believes in "Truth in Advertising." He is the one who rarely speaks the truth.

When Diogenes went about with a lantern looking for an honest man he had very little time to be honest himself.

Business men who plaster their printing and advertising with these ridiculous slogans forget that for thousands of years men have been trying to find a satisfactory definition of that word truth.

Two thousand years ago Pontius Pilate, faced with a critical problem, asked "What is Truth?" The question has never been answered.

G. K. Chesterton tells us that "when a man really tells the truth the first thing that he tells himself is that he is a liar. Even among liars there are two classes, one immeasurably better than the other. The honest liar is the one who tells the truth about his old lies; who says on Wednesday: 'I told a magnificent lie on Monday.' He keeps truth in circulation. He does not have to live with his lies, a horrible domesticity."

BACK TO THE BARNUM DAYS?

Looking through a bunch of British advertising magazines the other day, I came across a letter which dealt with Australian advertising conditions. It carried the signature of a well-known Sydney advertising agent, and among many things it said: "There are papers here that will not allow you to state

that your product is the world's best." Turning to the advertising columns of my morning paper—I confess to a rag-and-bone taste in literature—my eyes met these captions:—"the world's best mincer," "the best car in the world," "the world's best value," "the world's best brakes," "startling the world," "the world's outstanding car value," "the world's most experienced craftsmen," "the world's fastest time," "acknowledged as one of the world's finest racers," "the greatest show on earth," and so on ad nauseam and ad infinitum.

Five of these flamboyancies appeared on one sheet—three of them in one advertisement.

The frequency with which these exaggerated claims are made indicates that there is a tendency among certain advertisers to drift back to the Barnum days.

The cinemas with their "stupendous productions," "mighty openings," and a super-this and super-that are not the only offenders. Two of Sydney's best known department stores, using the same issue of a morning paper, headed advertisements with these headlines:—

"Newspaper News" will contain each month matter directed to advertisers, showing what can be accomplished in business-building by the bold use and skilful employment of newspaper space.

Mr. Publisher, is there, in your town, any advertiser who, you think, ought to read these articles? If so, write to us and arrange for "Newspaper News" to be posted regularly to him.

(a) "Amazing offer" (b) "The savings are amazing." "A" applied the word "amazing" to three different offers in the same advertisement and, as make weight, added an "astounding value" and "unparalleled service."

These superlatives rise like bubbles from the froth of boastful claims.

(Continued on page 5)

TRAPPING THE EMDEN

What the Sub-Editor Did

KILLING A FRONT-PAGE STORY

The part played by "The Herald," Melbourne, in the smashing of the Emden, has not been disclosed hitherto. But the fact is that the Australian Navy and British shipping owe something to the patriotism which deliberately threw away a startling front-page story.

Word reached the Chief Sub. of "The Herald" from the Parliamentary Press Box that an amazing premature disclosure had just been made to the House of Representatives and a crowded Gallery regarding the presence of Australian and Japanese cruisers near the West Australian Coast in readiness to trap the Commerce Raider.

Without a second's delay the Chief Sub. was through to the Censor, warning him.

"For God's sake, stop it!" came back over the telephone.

"I have!" said the Chief Sub.

Within 30 minutes of that ring, cables, wires and papers throughout Australia had been effectively blocked by the Censor. By the time the Government had realised what had been disclosed in the House all possibility of harm had been removed.

"The Herald" alone, of all the dailies, did not receive an imperative order not to publish. It was a gracious return for the part played.

When the Emden was finally caught, it became known that all Australian papers on captured ships had been carefully examined for news of value. Imagine what would have happened if the captain of the raider had read a report of the announcement in question!

—S.K.

MISS BERYL MILLS

A NEW ROLE

FAMOUS BEAUTY ENTERS ADVERTISING BUSINESS

An announcement of general interest with special interest for the advertising world is that Mrs. Frank Davidson—better known, probably, by her maiden name of Beryl Mills—is to commence business in Sydney as an advertising service agent.

Miss Mills was the "Daily Guardian's" "Miss Australia" of 1926, and, as the central figure of the most successful "publicity stunt" ever carried out by an Australian newspaper, she became almost a national figure. Her beauty, personal charm and quiet



modesty captured the hearts of the Australian public, and, long after her year of triumph was over, the public remained interested in her career. A few months ago, when it became known that she was to be married to a member of the "Daily Guardian's" literary staff, crowds of "Miss Australia's" friends thronged all approaches to the little Valence church where the ceremony was performed.

Now, evidently having decided to capitalise her very extensive experience of publicity and advertising, Miss Mills (as she will be known in business) has made all arrangements to commence practice.

The Beryl Mills Advertising Service has been established in Culwulla Chambers, Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

WORLD'S LARGEST PRESS ROOM

Melbourne Will Have 47½ Units

BUT CHICAGO ORDERS 72

It has been said that the presses of the Melbourne "Herald," when complete, will be only half a unit less than the largest plant in the world. To confirm this "Newspaper News" wrote to Mr. Bert Wynne, mechanical superintendent of the Melbourne "Herald," and the following is his reply:

"The statement you refer to was based on the fact that the Philadelphia 'Enquirer' has 48 units, and claims to be the largest plant in the world. Our plant will be 47½ units."

"Just to show how this could be disputed, however, I would point out that the Hoe Company of New York recently received an order from the Chicago 'Daily News' for 72 units. This, I should think, must be the largest order that has ever been placed in the world for printing presses."

"Yesterday I had a letter from Lendrum, Limited, of Melbourne, stating that they had just received a cable from Crabtree & Sons, the press builders of Leeds, stating that they had received an order for 56 units from the 'News of the World,' London. These are two enormous orders—one from America and one from England."



THE MOTOR-CARS WHICH CARRY OUT THE NEW DELIVERY.



Mr. A. O. RICHARDSON, F.I.P.A., who has written the accompanying brilliant article, is notable as a journalist and author, as well as an advertising expert. He is the author of "The New Era in Advertising," "Forging Ahead," and other books, and he was Examiner in Advertising and Salesmanship for the Royal Society of Arts, London. He is a Director of Messrs. Sanson Clark & Co. Ltd.

he author blundered into such plain English. He should have said it in French or Latin. People would have been awed by its high-sounding quality and, except for the inquisitive folk who will search the back-ends of dictionaries, few people would have known its meaning. Some folk would have said it was snobs, but we should have saved the charge of hypocrisy.

THAT HYPOCRITICAL SLOGAN

And that is the trouble with "Truth in Advertising." It is hypocritical to be last degree—a piece of wing-sprouting piety which invites cynical ridicule. Like most slogans "Truth in Advertising" doesn't mean a darn thing—except, maybe, "Truth in the other fellow's advertising!"

The Cough Cure Kings, and manu-