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times the pre-Sheldon average. That figure was verified by Dell Keizer and confirmed by Mr. Sheldon in their report to advertisers. How Babize and Houston managed to boost the *Capital's* circulation to that fantastic figure is a success story touched upon only briefly in Mr. Sheldon's autobiography.

Yet to be heard from was a report from Great Britain where it was said that Mr. Sheldon's following was even greater than in this country. Now, 64 years later, Great Britain is still to be heard from. This much is known: following a cable inquiry received at the *Capital* from Sir George Newnes, London, publisher of several large circulation magazines as well as a daily newspaper, the *Westminster Gazette*,²² a Chicago lawyer, Frederick W. Pringle, formerly of Topeka, was sent to London to negotiate a contract. On March 24, 1900, the *Westminster Gazette* announced that the first issue of the *Rev. C. M. Sheldon's Ideal Newspaper* would go on sale March 27 in London; Dundee, Scotland; Belfast and Dublin, Ireland. Price, twopence.

No copies of the Sheldon edition are to be found in the fabulous newspaper section of the British Museum. The appearance of the London-printed Sheldon edition did not rate a single line in either the *London Times* or the *Manchester Guardian*. A short cable dispatch was printed in the *Daily Capital* under the headline, "RIDICULE HEAPED ON SHELTON EDITION BY BRITISH PRESS":

London, March 31. . . . The comment by the [London] *Globe* on the enterprise is a fair specimen: The journal is very like an ordinary American paper, only duller. It will be an evil day when the hysterical rubbish which poses as religion in America and to a lesser degree in England, ever has a large following.²³

Regardless of Mr. Sheldon's reported popularity in Great Britain, without the services of the two gifted ballyhoo artists, Babize and Houston, the *Ideal Newspaper* scored something less than a resounding success abroad.

The smoldering controversy between Popenoe on one hand, and Editor Hudson and Business Manager Keizer on the other, flared up when Mr. Sheldon's ultimatum regarding what he termed "objectionable" advertising was first published.²⁴ The list of categories of merchandise and services for which space would be unavailable in the Christian daily, was long and, to most readers, amusing. In Keizer's opinion, the *Capital's* old and valued advertising accounts, regardless of their products, were to be coddled and not cold-

22. In Sheldon's autobiography the *Gazette* is incorrectly identified as the *Westminster Review*.

23. *Topeka Daily Capital*, April 1, 1900.

24. *Topeka State Journal*, March 13, 1900; *Printer's Ink*, New York, March 14, 1900, p. 28.



shouldered. He pointed out to Popenoe that advertisers who had contracted for specific space and time, might sue the Capital Publishing Co. if their ads were refused by Mr. Sheldon. Worse yet, they could be expected to switch their patronage to the opposition *State Journal*. Doubtlessly, Keizer also pointed out to Popenoe that his generosity in granting exclusive foreign advertising rights to Houston could very well result in a damage suit brought by the S. C. Beckwith Agency, New York, whose designation as exclusive foreign advertising representative had appeared for years on the *Capital's* masthead.

Whether because of the ominous warnings from Keizer and Hudson, or perhaps upon the advice of Herbert Houston, whom he had just engaged as advertising manager, when in New York City Fred Popenoe sought legal counsel. Here, still another ex-Kansan comes into the story, Attorney Sam Gardenshire, who had left a successful practice in Topeka some 10 years earlier to specialize in patent and copyright law in New York City. Although the procedure recommended by Lawyer Gardenshire to protect the Capital Publishing Co. from damage suits arising from the Sheldon edition was simple and strictly within the law, it is doubtful that Jesus Christ would have resorted to such a legal loophole. Gardenshire suggested that an agreement be drawn up by which the physical properties of the Capital Publishing Co., together with its valuable Associated Press franchise, would be leased to one Charles M. Sheldon for a period of one week, for one dollar and other valuable considerations. Then if anyone wanted to sue, let him sue the preacher.²⁵

Always indifferent toward business and financial matters, Mr. Sheldon probably signed the lease without ever inquiring into its purpose. He was a man who trusted his friends implicitly. The matter of the lease is not mentioned in his autobiography.

With the legal obstacles cleared, Babize and Houston launched a nationwide subscription campaign. It was aimed at all Protestant religious groups but particularly the interdenominational Christian Endeavor with its 55,000 local societies. There will never be another organization like the Christian Endeavor of 1900-1915. It was then the recognized youth organization for 30 different Protestant denominations. In 1900 the Endeavorers claimed a membership, world-wide, of more than three million.

In order to cash in on the Endeavorer's enthusiasm for Mr. Sheldon's proposal during their convention at Detroit, the promoters of

25. *Chicago Times-Herald*, March 11, 1900.

the subscription campaign hit upon a scheme that succeeded far beyond their fondest hopes. Immediately after the Christian daily was announced, Houston, then in Topeka, hopped a train for Boston. There he fast-talked the publisher of the *Christian Endeavor World* into donating the entire back page of the February 8, 1900, issue, which was ready to go to press, for an announcement of special interest to local C. E. societies everywhere.²⁶ The back page advertisement which had already been sold, was pulled, and in its place appeared a Houston-designed layout that, with a few minor changes, was later to be found in numerous religious and temperance publications. A feature of each advertisement was a facsimile of a letter from either the magazine's editor or an officer of the sponsoring organization. In the *C. E. World* the letter was addressed to "All Christian Endeavor Societies of the World," and was signed by William Shaw, treasurer of the United Society of Christian Endeavor. The potent section of the letter read:

SPECIAL OFFER THAT WILL ENLARGE ENDEAVOR FUNDS

With the approval of Mr. Sheldon, I have the authority to make the following offer . . . :

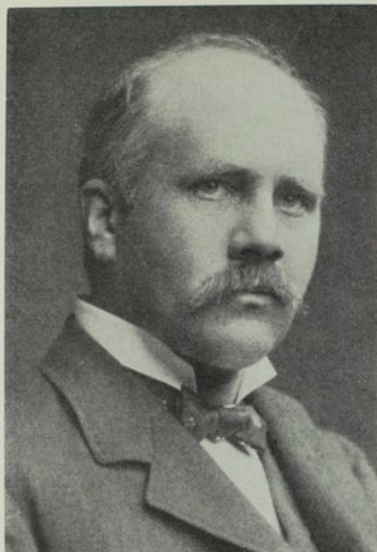
On every subscription of 25 cents secured for The Sheldon Edition . . . by a Christian Endeavor society, 10 cents may be retained by the society for its own uses. [Then came instructions for preparing mailing lists and forwarding money] . . . Let us push the Sheldon Christian Daily to a million copies. Faithfully yours.

On Tuesday, March 13, 1900, the Brooklyn *Eagle* reported:

One after another, the great religious organizations, the Christian Endeavorers, the Young Men's Christian Association, the Epworth League, the Baptist Young People's Union, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, were set in motion as divisions of a great army of canvassers to solicit subscriptions. In every city, town and village throughout the nation where one or more of these organizations is represented solicitors have been at work taking in quarters for the Sheldon edition and retaining 10 cents . . . for local church purposes. Arrangements were also made with the news companies so that wherever a newsdealer can be found there will be the Sheldon edition all this week.

Although their subscription campaign produced results far beyond expectations, Babize and Houston were surprised to discover that top honors were captured by a publication that completely bypassed their recommended procedures. The leading religious journal of the time, *The Christian Herald*, with a circulation of 268,000, ignored the idea of promoting the Sheldon edition through its advertising columns. Yet the *Christian Herald* forwarded to the *Capital* a list of 16,000 subscribers, more than twice the number

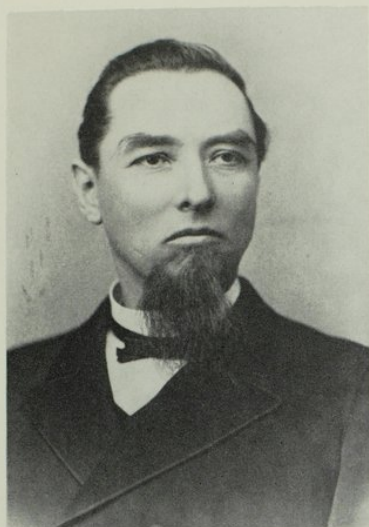
²⁶ Herbert S. Houston, "Truth Drive Began in Early Days," in *Editor and Publisher*, New York, June 27, 1936, pp. 15, 16.



The Rev. Mr. Charles M. Sheldon, who edited the Christian daily as he believed Jesus would do it. Photo courtesy Central Congregational Church, Topeka.



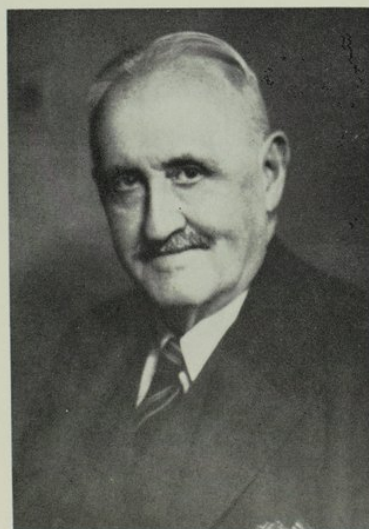
Auguste C. Babize, former Kansan and correspondent of the *Chicago Times-Herald*, who was hired by the Topeka *Capital's* publisher to promote the enterprise.



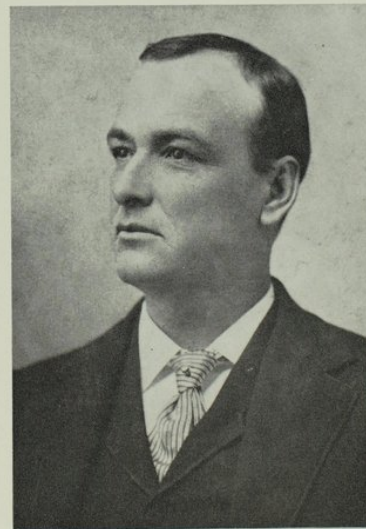
Gen. Joseph K. Hudson, regular editor of the *Capital* who was shoved aside during Sheldon week.



Dell Keizer, although opposed to the experiment, continued as the *Capital's* business manager.



Herbert S. Houston, a former Kansan, was hired as publicist and manager of foreign advertising.



Edgar Watson Howe, Atchison editor who said Sheldon should stay in his pulpit and stop meddling.



"RULES AND REGULATIONS."

Instructions Mr. Sheldon Gives to His Reporters.

Mr. Sheldon did not formally open his conference with Capital reporters with prayer when he gave them their general instructions today. It has been generally surmised that he would do so, but he did not. He simply said, "Here we are," and started in.

The instructions embody in a great measure Mr. Sheldon's idea of what ought to be published in a Christian daily newspaper, and what ought to be suppressed. They show his idea of how Jesus would conduct a newspaper were He an editor today. They settle the point concerning which there has been the greatest surmise and the most discussion in the press of the country during the past few weeks—what is Mr. Sheldon's conception of a Christian daily newspaper.

The instructions are as follows:

1. Avoid the use of slang in writing reports, both words and phrases.
 2. Submit all interviews to the persons interviewed.
 3. If a reporter is assigned to interview a person and the person does not wish to talk, do not insist upon it. Do not quote a man unwillingly.
 4. No theatrical news of any kind is wanted.
 5. Sporting news—only clean sports are wanted. Athletic sports and clean sporting events will be covered.
 6. In reporting crime go into the causes, but avoid the horrible details; find out if liquor or something else caused the criminal act.
 7. Political stories must be non-partisan.
 8. Scandals—Avoid them, waste no time on them. They will not be printed.
- For tomorrow morning's Capital the reporters were told to simply cover their usual assignments, as the advance copy which Mr. Sheldon has been working on will fill much of the local space.

The reporters will write up their stories, turn them in to the city editor, who will lay them before Mr. Sheldon. A number of assignments have been given out concerning special matter which will appear in the paper during the week.

The reporters were given to understand that they must not use the word "Pop" in referring to a member of a certain political party.

Mr. Sheldon will occupy Gen. Hudson's room.

The request was made of reporters that they come to Mr. Popenoe's office at various intervals for information, proofs, etc., and that they keep aloof from the editorial rooms of the Capital.

Mr. Sheldon will run no patent medicine advertisements or tobacco advertisements. It is understood too that he will accept no amusement advertising and will not permit any dramatic criticism of any kind, good, bad or indifferent.

The Topeka Daily Capital.

SHELDON EDITION.

Charles M. Sheldon, Editor and Publisher
Harold T. Chase, Associate Editor
Deil Keltzer, Business Manager
H. S. Houston, Eastern Manager
P. C. Chamberlain, Manager of Circulation

EDITORIAL STAFF.

J. F. Jarrell, News Editor
Jno. P. Fritts, Washington Correspondent
R. A. Wright, Telegraph Editor
H. G. McKinnel, City Editor
H. D. Wilson, Exchange Editor
G. A. Nichols, Reporter
C. C. Smith, Reporter
W. T. Reed, Reporter
Geo. E. Overmyer, Reporter
B. C. Whitlock, Reporter
Jessie M. Garwood, Social and Club Reporter
Geo. W. Hart, Associated Press Operator

BUSINESS DEPARTMENT.

R. L. Thomas, Cashier
W. B. Reboy, Local Advertising Manager
H. J. Wingart, Advertising Bookkeeper
F. Hughes, Daily Subscription Bookkeeper
E. D. Curtis, Semi-Weekly Subscription Bookkeeper
C. E. Maxwell, City Circulator
D. B. Dyer, Travelling Representative
Geo. O. Boone, Travelling Representative
A. M. Stephenson, Travelling Representative
R. A. Miller, Travelling Representative
A. Bass, Janitor

COMPOSING ROOM.

Geo. Raus*, Foreman
K. U. Whitted, Assistant Foreman
J. F. Kirkpatrick, Foreman Advertising Room
O. G. Miller, Advertising Compositor
A. E. Thorson, Advertising Compositor
Wm. H. Morris, Advertising Compositor
T. Q. Whitted, Advertising Compositor
C. R. Mitchell, Compositor
P. C. Phares, Linotype Operator
G. W. Patterson, Linotype Operator
J. D. Stevens, Linotype Operator
John Ryan, Linotype Operator
John Corbin, Linotype Operator
Geo. Lathrow, Linotype Operator
Charles J. Erickson, Linotype Machinist
Paul Evans, Galley Boy

STEREOTYPE ROOM.

Henry W. Dalby, Foreman
Edward Bryant, Stereotyper
Ray Brooks, Assistant Stereotyper
Chas. Wilkerson, Assistant Stereotyper

PRESS ROOM.

R. Maxwell, Foreman
H. F. Sheldon, Pressman
Byron Long, Assistant Pressman
Walter Staples, Assistant Pressman
Emery Slaughter, Helper

MAILING ROOM.

J. H. Andrews, Foreman
Thos. Bass, Mailing Clerk
Fred Kinney, Mailing Clerk
Arthur Majors, Mailing Clerk
R. E. Heller, Mailing Clerk
J. D. Powers, Mailing Clerk
Frank Root, Mailing Clerk
Burt Buckner, Mailing Clerk
Geo. F. Hill, Mailing Clerk
F. L. Curtis, Mailing Clerk

The Sheldon "Rules and Regulations" as published in the opposition Topeka State Journal, March 12, 1900. Right, masthead of the Topeka Daily Capital during Sheldon week, March 13-17, 1900.

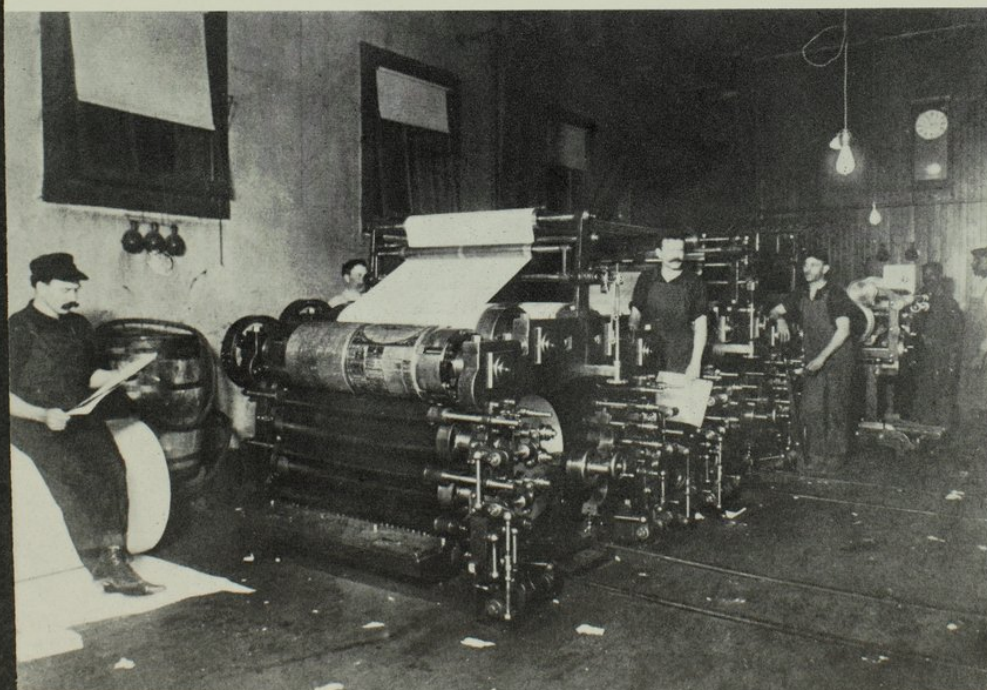


Frederick O. Popenoe, majority stockholder of the Capital Publishing Co., who invited Sheldon to conduct the journalistic experiment. This and the following photographs were taken in the early months of 1900. Below, the newsroom. The woman probably was Miss Jessie Garwood, society editor.





Corner of the *Capital* composing room. Below, ready for a pressrun, with longtime pressroom superintendent Robert Maxwell sitting at left.





Part of the subscription department where mailing labels were prepared for the six Sheldon issues. Below, newsboys who distributed the *Capital* in Topeka.





[From the Denver Republican.]
The meeting to decide whether the paper shall go on as a Christian daily, or be run as Hudson would run it.

The Rev. Mr. Charles M. Sheldon leaves with his editorial portfolio and halo, while the regular newspapermen resume their discussions. First published in the *Denver Republican*, the cartoon was recaptioned and reprinted in the *Topeka State Journal*, March 22, 1900.

SHELDON'S NEWSPAPER

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from any other religious journal, and with the list was included a shipment of pre-addressed mailing wrappers.

Immediately following the announcement of Sheldon's newspaper experiment, the *Christian Herald* sent a well-known free lance writer, Gilson Willetts, to Topeka, to turn out a series of comprehensive articles about Mr. Sheldon, his church, and his aspirations in journalism. As a footnote to each article, the editor suggested that readers could support the Christian journalism movement by subscribing to Mr. Sheldon's forthcoming newspaper. As stated above, 16,000 took the hint.

Ostensibly, the ten-cent commission on each subscription "as authorized by Mr. Sheldon" was offered only to temperance and religiously oriented associations. How many newspapers used the Sheldon edition as a premium will never be known. The Des Moines *News*, in front-page announcements that appeared in 20 consecutive issues, offered the Sheldon edition free to new subscribers to the *News*. Five thousand subscriptions to both papers resulted. As a good will demonstration the Buffalo (N. Y.) *Courier* and *Enquirer* (morning and evening papers under the same management) accepted 17,000 subscriptions at its office, remitting the commissions to two local Christian Endeavor Societies.

Despite Mr. Sheldon's refusal to grant exclusive interviews to the press (he made an exception for Willetts of the *Christian Herald* which, incidentally, had been allotted more advertising space—348 inches—than any other advertiser), Press Agent Babize managed to feed visiting correspondents and the Associated Press with enough items to keep Topeka and the *Capital* in the national news during the weeks of preparation for the big event. One day it was the endorsement of the upcoming Christian daily by the St. Louis Ministerial Union. Another day it was a condemnation of the idea by a Catholic priest in Detroit. Slippery Rock, Pa., a community of only 800, somehow managed to send in 1,500 subscriptions. Newsworthy was a single subscription received from South Africa, with best wishes to Mr. Sheldon, from Oom Paul Kruger, president of the Boer Republic which was then at war with the British. From Wichita came word that a candidate for congress had declared he would run on a platform which he thought Jesus would endorse. On the lighter side, the owner-editor of a small town weekly paper inquired of Mr. Sheldon, editorially, how, in his opinion, would Jesus deal with a delinquent subscriber?

Commenting upon the press agency exhibited in promoting the



Sheldon edition, the *Brooklyn Eagle*, after interviewing Houston, printed the following:

Nearly all is fish that comes to the press agent's net; criticism is more valuable than fulsome praise, for attack inspires counter attack, all of which keeps the subject of the controversy before the public. Consequently, when E. W. Howe, the far-famed editor of the *Atchison Globe*, upon being duly incensed by figurative red rags [waved] by some of Mr. Houston's journalistic matadors, took his vitriolic pen in hand to baste Mr. Sheldon to a finish in his wild Western way, Mr. Houston could have wept tears of joy, so to speak.²⁷

Although Houston was halfway across the continent from Babize, his collaborator-in-publicity, he took full credit for needling Edgar Watson Howe into action. The free-thinking, free-swinging editor of the *Atchison Globe* had months before indicated his antipathy toward Sheldon and the Christian daily idea in no uncertain terms. Following the official announcement of the Sheldon *Capital*, Ed Howe, too, had a statement for the Associated Press. The *State Journal* gave it position on page one.

Parson Sheldon's desire to publish a newspaper for a week, is evidence that he does not believe that a sufficient amount of religion is injected into the columns of the newspapers.

Neither is there enough common sense . . . in the average sermon but editors are not making the experiment of turning preacher for a week. It would be only fair exchange if J. K. Hudson became pastor of the Central Congregational church . . . for a week. It would be a nice little vacation for him.

In case J. K. Hudson does not care for the assignment, the editor of The *Globe* would be glad to write a sermon to be read [by Ed Howe] in Sheldon's pulpit during the week he is busy pointing out the mistakes of editors. . . . Or, if Topeka people object to the editor of The *Globe* in the pulpit, his sermon in reply to Sheldon will be printed in the *Topeka Journal*.

If we fail to make out as much of a case against preachers as Sheldon makes out against newspapers, we will buy a Bible, and join the church.²⁸

Evidently members of Mr. Sheldon's church decided that they could get along nicely without the services of an editor-turned-preacher, so Ed Howe, true to his promise, wrote not just one lay sermon for the *State Journal* (and, of course, his own paper), but four additional sermons, one for each day of the Christian daily. The sermons were copyrighted and offered for syndication. A few days before the first installment appeared in print, Howe boasted that through syndication his lay sermons would enjoy a circulation of 600,000 or three times as much as the most recent circulation figure reported for the Sheldon edition.²⁹

27. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 13, 1900.

28. *Topeka State Journal*, January 27, 1900.

29. *Ibid.*, March 10, 1900. The *Topeka Daily Capital*, March 8, was speaking in terms of a circulation of "over 200,000."



The apparent ease with which Ed Howe hooked an editorial ride on the coattails of the Sheldon edition prompted his fellow townsman, the owner and editor of the once successful Atchison *Champion*, to attempt to get his paper in the national headlines, too. Editor H. H. Brookes announced that "contemporaneously with the Right Rev. Sheldon and the Left Rev. Ed Howe," he had decided to run the *Champion* for one week as only the Devil could.³⁰ His announcement drew widespread comment from editorial funnymen. Probably the most appropriate remark was delivered straight from the shoulder of William Allen White: "The *Champion* has been a h— of a paper for some time and that week will probably show no material change."³¹ It was William Allen White, who, when the Sheldon edition was announced, tabbed it "the best advertising scheme that ever struck Kansas." Then he added, "of course it will not test Sheldon's theory. A year's test would be the only fair test by which a Christian daily paper should be judged."³²

Few if any advertising salesmen have ever worked under as many restrictions as Herbert Houston. To all prospects he ticked off what he could *not* offer. He could not offer advertisers a choice of any of the six issues, nor could he tell them the page or position where their ad would appear. He could promise that their advertisements would not be placed next to editorial material because three pages of each issue would be filled solidly with display ads, and the other five pages solid editorial matter. Houston was not even able to quote a rate per inch until the circulation had been verified. Yet Houston managed to sell every inch of space reserved for foreign advertisements, about one half of the total advertising space, and could have filled the advertising columns many times over.³³

Blacklisted by Mr. Sheldon were advertisements for tobacco in all forms, patent medicines (whose ads were then bread and butter to 90 percent of the nation's newspapers), electric belts, Keeley Cure for Drunkenness (to Sheldon alcoholism was a sin rather than a disease), bargain sales (because Sheldon did not have time to verify values), corsets (unhealthy because of their restrictive properties), and illustrations of ladies' hosiery and underwear (suggestive). Also barred were ads for theatrical and sporting events. The press had lots of fun with Sheldon's advertising blacklist. However, small town papers cheered one particular "thou shalt not."

30. Atchison *Champion*, March 3, 1900.

31. Emporia *Gazette*, February 23, 1900.

32. *Ibid.*, January 23, 1900.

33. Charles M. Sheldon—*His Life Story*. p. 121.



A friend of the small shopkeeper, Sheldon refused to accept any advertising from the big department stores in nearby Kansas City.³⁴

To refresh his memory about the business end of the venture, Mr. Sheldon, in writing his autobiography, asked Dell Keizer to set down his recollections of, among other things, the Christian daily's advertising policy. In part, Keizer stated: "Not one line of copy was permitted to reach the advertising columns of the paper unless it would stand the closest scrutiny [by Mr. Sheldon], and was without question from the standpoint of morality, integrity and thorough honesty in both spirit and letter."³⁵ Evidently both Sheldon and Keizer had forgotten several embarrassing incidents, two of which were acknowledged by Mr. Sheldon in the columns of the *Capital*.

The *Wichita Eagle*, March 16, suggested that had Mr. Sheldon consulted his wife before accepting an ad for a washing machine that "makes washing a pleasure" he would have learned that the claim was entirely misleading.

Advertising men had a good laugh over Mr. Sheldon's naivete in printing an anonymous contribution headed "Open Letter" which was patently a professionally prepared reader-ad. Addressed to the editor of the *Topeka Capital*, the writer felt compelled to spread the good news about a wonderful new magazine he had just discovered. "It is called the New York Times Saturday Review of Books and Art. . . . It is astounding to think that so excellent a journal can be sent, with postage prepaid, to any address in the United States, for \$1 per year. . . . I am told that sample copies will be sent free to any address, upon application. [Signed] A BOOK LOVER."³⁶

The New York *Daily Tribune* which had shown continued and sympathetic interest in the Sheldon edition from the start, indulged in a display of righteous indignation over a certain ad that Mr. Sheldon admitted had got by him. To the embarrassment of Sheldon and the *Capital*, the editorial was reprinted widely:

SANCTIFIED SACRILEGE

The Rev. Mr. Sheldon, who has been running a newspaper in Kansas "as Christ would do it," thus with admirable humility of spirit, posing as the journalistic peer of the Almighty, is understood to have extended his divine authority to all departments of the establishment. . . . It is fair to assume, then, that the advertisements . . . admitted to the columns of the paper were such as, in the Rev. Mr. Sheldon's opinion, Christ would approve. With

34. Greenville (Ill.) *Advocate*, March 15, 1900.

35. Charles M. Sheldon—*His Life Story*, pp. 121, 122.

36. *Topeka Daily Capital*, March 13, 1900.

that assurance in view we feel emboldened to quote from Mr. Sheldon's paper . . . :

"Stir the Subsoil Deep

"To let in the rains that refresh the earth. Otherwise a large portion of moisture graciously sent by our Heavenly Father is wasted by running off from the surface.

"_____s Subsoil Plow accomplishes the stirring, as we believe would please JESUS, who said let nothing be lost.

"Also, _____s improved Potato Digger, designed to work well, even in unfavorable conditions of soil, which induces good words instead of bad words, by which we desire to honor JESUS.

"_____ FLOW WORKS, TOPEKA, KANSAS."

Such is, we are to assume, the Rev. Mr. Sheldon's idea of an advertisement "as Christ would write it." Blank's plough ploughs as Christ would plough. Blank's potato digger digs potatoes as Christ would dig them. Shall we not presently have corn plasters for curing corns as Christ would cure them, and sanitary plumbing such as "would please Jesus"?

To every man of healthful, decent mind, not to say of religious disposition, the objurgations of an angry truck driver must seem pure and reverent by the side of the revolting, studied sacrilege paraded in the name of Jesus the Christ by this "Rev." Mr. Sheldon. . . . It reeks of the Black Mass, and calls for spiritual civet to sweeten the imagination.³⁷

Unprintable, perhaps, were the remarks of the writer's father, J. W. Ripley, Sr., on discovering how Mr. Sheldon, a friend and long-time customer of the family-owned Topeka Laundry Co., had meddled with the first line of copy in a little standing ad that had been accepted for the first issue. A modest declaration, the line, as submitted, read: "Strictly High Grade Work," to which Mr. Sheldon had prefixed three little words. As it appeared in his Christian daily it read: "Claims to do Strictly High Grade Work."³⁸

Early in the subscription campaign the ever-increasing number of letters, with quarters enclosed, accumulating in the *Capital* office, indicated plainly that a portion of the printing of the Sheldon edition would have to be farmed out. The *Capital's* one Goss press, by running continuously, could print a maximum of 120,000 eight-page papers daily.³⁹ Before March 1 Dell Keizer had arranged for the Chicago *Journal* to print, wrap, and mail or distribute to newsdealers a minimum of 100,000 copies daily, principally for subscribers living between the Alleghenies and the Missouri river. To print and distribute the Sheldon edition east of the Alleghenies, the German language *Staats Zeitung* in New York City was selected.

37. *New York Daily Tribune*, March 21, 1900. The advertisement of the Perine Plow Works appeared in the *Capital* on March 16.

38. The ad of the Topeka Laundry (now Ripley's, Inc) was published in the *Capital* on March 13, 1900.

39. *Topeka Daily Capital*, March 25, 1900.



The *Capital's* press room handled the papers for the rest of the nation.⁴⁰

Each day during Sheldon week four sets of matrices were made by *Capital* stereotypers. One set was sent to Chicago, where the Sheldon edition appeared one day late; another went to New York City, where the paper was printed two days later than in Topeka. The fourth set was dispatched to London.

Although only one third of the total press run was to be handled through the Topeka post office, the postmaster, well in advance of the first issue, notified his superiors that local facilities would be inadequate for the unprecedented volume during Sheldon week. To avoid a probable tie-up, the superintendent of railway mail service for Kansas, an obliging and personable young fellow by the name of Clyde Reed, later U. S. senator from Kansas, ordered two large mail cars to Topeka, and came along himself to supervise operations of the temporary post offices for handling Mr. Sheldon's newspaper.⁴¹

The first issue of the Sheldon edition dated Tuesday, March 13, 1900, was late in reaching Topeka subscribers that morning due to mechanical troubles, plus the fact that all carriers had to serve a substantial number of one-week-only additional subscribers. The general reaction of local subscribers, old and new, to the first issue was described in the *Chicago Tribune* by its special correspondent, E. L. Bertrand:

Topeka, Kas., March 13, 1900 [Special]—No guns were fired at sunrise this morning. The newspaper created by the Rev. Charles M. Sheldon on the lines suggested in "In His Steps," proved a disappointment, even to townspeople, who love him for himself and revere him for the genius which they consider he possesses.

Those of Mr. Sheldon's Topeka admirers who looked for news in the first issue . . . had hard work finding it, and those who hoped to find homilies and sermons and lessons were rather annoyed because matter of that kind set before them had already been read by them in religious publications of uncertain and remote dates.

It was the general comment that the finished product did not come up to the prospectus.⁴²

A somewhat more detailed critique of the first issue—the pattern of the next four issues—was written by Frank MacLennan of the *Topeka State Journal* in his capacity as special correspondent for the *New York Herald*:

. . . A careful survey of the first page of the *Capital's* first issue under Sheldon shows an entire absence of important news of the day. Not a line about bubonic plague at San Francisco, the dreadful tenement house fire at

40. Charles M. Sheldon—*His Life Story*, pp. 118-120.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

42. *Chicago Tribune*, March 14, 1900.



Newark, N. J., the wounding of eight American soldiers in the Philippines, and the advance of [General] Roberts on the Orange Free State, the death of the Italian boxer Guydo, who died as the result of a blow struck by James Jeffries in a fistic contest. None of those important news items of the day appear, at least, not on the front page. What a chance for Mr. Sheldon to point a moral by exploiting the death of this poor Italian, from a blow . . . on the part of the pugilistic champion. . . .

Two columns on the first page are devoted to the Kansas prohibitory law, covered by interviews from prominent people. . . . These views have been published before, and as news are somewhat stale. To all intents and purposes these two columns could have been clipped from a magazine, back numbers from '93 and '94.

The most prominent item on the first page is signed by Mr. Sheldon himself and refers to the Famine in India.⁴³ Another article on the first page refers to consumptives who flock to Colorado. This is a letter contributed by the secretary of a Y. M. C. A. of that state and looks like an advertisement of the "Consumptive Home in Denver," which is referred to in that clause, although I have no doubt the article is one for which the *Capital* receives no pay. Another article prominent on the first page is a communication from Rochester, N.Y., signed by the founder of the "Prohibition Union of Christian Men." This article closes with the remarkable sentence, "In the Name of Jesus Christ, the Carpenter, the liquor traffic ought to die."⁴⁴

The best description of the editorial content of the Sheldon edition, according to the exchange editor of the *New York Times*, who in line of duty had read or skimmed over hundreds of opinions of the paper, was written by a staffer of an upstate New York paper:

Innumerable newspaper writers have described and criticized the Sheldon edition of the Topeka *Capital*, but the most successful of them all, it seems to us, is a fortunate genius who contributes to The Rochester *Post-Express* the following remarks:

"No doubt every journalist of experience, who glanced at the paper, felt that he was meeting an old friend, though he may not be able to hit upon the source of resemblance. The writer was very much puzzled for a time; but after a while the explanation came. Mr. SHELDON's ideal of a Christian daily, as given to the public, is closely akin to a number of newspaper[s] issued from an office when a sudden strike has taken place. The editors are worried and cannot write anything of value; the fresh news and the daily advertisements have to be put aside because they cannot be set up; and the columns are filled with 'standing matter,' gentle and harmless miscellany that has been accumulating for weeks, awaiting the order to be 'killed,' and with stuff borrowed from yesterday's issue of an esteemed contemporary. The moment the analogy is suggested every man who has worked on a newspaper the day after a strike, will recognize the likeness."

To this the *New York Times* added: "They will indeed. Never was

43. The famine had been in the news for many months. Sheldon's article was in the form of an appeal for donations, and according to Sheldon it proved most successful.—See Charles M. Sheldon—*His Life Story*, pp. 126-128.

44. Dispatch to the *New York Herald*, reprinted in the *Topeka State Journal*, March 13, 1900.

comparison more accurate; never, to be rashly venturesome, was one more striking."⁴⁵

One good pun deserves another. In London, when the first issue of the Sheldon edition was being hawked by newsboys, their shouting of "Top'-eka" sounded something like "tapioca." Which tempted the *Newspaper Owner & Modern Printer*, London, April 1, 1900, to observe: "The Westminster Gazette of the Topeka Daily Capital is a capital topical production. (We have never done it before, and promise never to do it again)."

Generally speaking, Protestant religious journals endorsed the idea of a Christian daily to the extent of urging subscribers to send in their quarters without delay. After publication, however, the editors of the same journals found themselves in the embarrassing position of critics. Many dodged the main issue: was the Christian daily a success? Instead readers were advised that the time was too short for a fair trial, that Mr. Sheldon was to be congratulated for his noble effort, and similar hedgings with faint praise.

It remained for the editor of the leading journal of Mr. Sheldon's own denomination to administer the unkindest cut of all. Considering the fact that Mr. Sheldon had been a frequent contributor to *The Congregationalist*, Boston, its severe criticism of his journalistic demonstration came as something of a surprise to its readers. A portion of the two-column editorial states:

While Mr. Sheldon's venture in journalism was merely a project we refrained from criticism. He is a Congregational minister of excellent repute, and his sincerity, modesty, humility and devotion to the truth as he sees it have never been questioned. Moreover, he has acquired no small influence as an exponent of practical Christianity. . . . What, then, is the outcome of Mr. Sheldon's experiment? *The Topeka Daily Capital* during his six days' management of it passed from the category of daily newspapers to that of religious pamphlets. . . . He defines news as anything that the public ought to know for its development and power in a life of righteousness. Starting with that principle, he was likely to make a product which resembles the periodical issued by reform organizations rather than the conventional daily newspapers. . . . Indeed some of the religious news which Mr. Sheldon printed and headed up as such, was lamentably stale. . . . The main criticism, then, to be passed is that Mr. Sheldon has failed in producing a sheet which could be laid alongside our best papers. . . .

The editorial concludes with this summation:

We have no space to comment at length upon other aspects of this venture, for which Mr. Sheldon is not to be held responsible. But the sensational advertising of it, the implied reflection upon modern daily journalism, the seeming

⁴⁵ Rochester (N. Y.) *Post-Express*, quoted in the *New York Times*, Paris edition, March 24, 1900.



assumption of superiority in motive and method, and, above all, the commercial flavor which has tainted the entire enterprise have not been calculated to exalt the standard of Christ in the eyes of the world.

We hesitate to dogmatize upon what Jesus would do were he in another man's place, yet it is our reverent opinion that Jesus, had he been in Mr. Sheldon's place, would never have entered upon this experiment, but that, if he had, he would not have made such a pronounced failure.⁴⁶

The leading Roman Catholic publications remained discreetly silent on the Sheldon editon, regarding it as a strictly Protestant matter. Here and there statements by Catholic clergymen appeared in the daily papers but without any unanimity of opinion. By far the most widely quoted theologian, Protestant, Catholic, or Jew, on Mr. Sheldon's newspaper venture was one Father Kelly, a fictional Catholic priest whose parish encompassed the entire English-speaking world. Father Kelly had been created by the celebrated, irreverent humorist, Finley Peter Dunne, to serve as a consultant on all matters pertaining to morality or religion when brought up for discussion by Dunne's alter ego, Mr. Martin Dooley. Better known as plain Mr. Dooley by readers of *Harper's Weekly*, which regularly printed his devastating comments on the American scene delivered in Irish dialect, he devoted his full column in the issue of April 28, 1900, to an essay "On Mr. Sheldon's Newspaper." As usual, Mr. Dooley directed his remarks to Mr. Hennessy, by vocation a bartender, and Mr. Dooley's patient listener.

. . . The editor [Sheldon] thin addressed th' staff: Gintlemen, he says, I find that th' wurruk ye've been accustomed to doin' is calc'lated f'r to disthroy th' morality an' debase th' home life iv Topeka, not to mintion th' surroundin' methrolopuses iv Valencia, Wanamaker, Sugar Works, Paxico, an' Snokomo. Th' newspaper, instead iv bein' a pow'rful agent f'r th' salvation iv mankind, has become something that they want to r-read, he says. Ye can all go home, he says, I'll stay here an' write th' paper mesilf. . . . I'll give thim something that'll prepare thim f'r death. . . .

Father Kelly was talkin' it over with me, an' says he: They ain't anny news in bein' good. Ye might write the doin's iv all th' convents iv th' wurruled on th' back iv a postage stamp, an' have room to spare. Supposin' ye took out iv a newspaper all th' murdhers, an' suicides, an' divorces, an' elopments, . . . an' famine, he says, ye wuddent have enough left to keep a man busy r-readin' while he rode ar-roun' th' block on the lightnin' express. No, he says, news is sin, an' sin is news. A religious newspaper? None iv thim f'r me. I want to know what's goin' on among th' murdher an' burglary set. Did ye read it, he says.

I did, says I.

What did ye think iv it? says he.

I know, says I, why more people don't go to church, says I.

46. *The Congregationalist*, Boston, March 22, 1900. Throughout its pages the style of this journal called for a lower case "h" in "he" and "him" in referring to Jesus.

From the otherwise complete file of bound volumes of *Harper's Weekly* at the Topeka Public Library, the issue in which the above quoted article was printed is missing. A possible explanation: Mr. Sheldon and Mr. Popenoe were both members of the library's board of trustees at that time.

Meanwhile, back in Atchison, Ed Howe, whose fame rested largely on his singular ability to dish out criticism of conventional and often hallowed institutions, found himself on the receiving end of a torrent of editorial wrath from every direction. The American press, which had been overly generous in publicizing the announcement of Howe's lay sermons, fully expected him to come to the defense of secular journalism in his syndicated articles. Instead, his lay sermons were long, tedious diatribes, supercharged with bitter and unjustified attacks on Christianity in general. Nowhere in the sermons, each four columns in length, could be found evidence of the sparkling satire which had been the delight of exchange editors everywhere. Later, Howe told Frank MacLennan, whose *State Journal* had, despite petitions of protest, printed all five lay sermons, that his essays had suffered because he had been rushed in their preparation. On the other hand, MacLennan, in a front page editorial, half-apologized to his readers, saying the lay sermons were not what he had expected, and that half of the text should have been cut out.

Four newspapers, in addition to the Atchison *Globe* and Topeka *State Journal*, had announced with some pride that they would print Howe's lay sermons in answer to Sheldon's Christian daily. All four—the Chicago *Tribune*, New York *Herald*, St. Louis *Republic*, and Indianapolis *Press*—suspended publication of the series after printing the first.

After reading Howe's first lay sermon, the editorialist on the Denver *Republican* held his fire. But he admitted that sermon No. 2 was just too much. In it Ed Howe had committed an unpardonable offense. He had taken a verbal slap at Santa Claus. "With apologies to Kansas [the Denver *Republican* stated] we quote from Mr. Howe: 'I go so far as to say I have never been able to understand the Santa Claus story. If parents give their children gifts and please them, why give the credit to a mythical saint?'"

Without attempting to answer the question, the Denver editor expressed his opinion of the man who asked it: "The unhappiest man in the world is he who has no illusions."⁴⁷ This editorialist could not have known that 41 years later Gene Howe would write a

47. Denver *Republican*, March 18, 1900.

biographical sketch of his father, who had died four years before, with the title: "My Father Was the Most Wretchedly Unhappy Man I Ever Knew."⁴⁸

From the Wichita *Eagle*, March 15, 1900, the following observation:

. . . But for all Mr. Howe's avowal that he is not a fanatical infidel, his first [lay] sermon is infidelistic and dechristianizing, in every orthodox sense, and to the core. . . . So far as the pulpit is concerned and as also for Christ and His religion, Howe's sermons will do far more injury than Sheldon's paper, run as Jesus would, can possibly do good.

The rules Mr. Sheldon laid down for his editorial staff were, if nothing else, unique: no smoking; no swearing; slang to be avoided in news stories; no partisan political news (which prompted one editorialist to ask, what other kind is there?). Crime stories, if used at all, were to be brief with a shirttail editorial by the reporter citing how the crime might have been prevented. Theatrical news was barred, as was all news of what Mr. Sheldon called "brutal" sporting events. Permissible was an account of a bowling tournament at the Y. M. C. A. As pointed out by the *Chicago Tribune*, Mr. Sheldon's policy differed from that of the renowned editor of the *New York Sun*, Charles A. Dana, who maintained that whatever divine providence permitted to occur, he was not too proud to report.⁴⁹

For a realistic view of the Topeka scene at the turn of the century, researchers and historians should look elsewhere than in the columns of the Sheldon edition, just as they should ignore Sheldon's word picture of the fictional city of Raymond, the setting for *In His Steps*. But in the Sheldon *Capital* there was one exception. It was a feature story written by the society editor, Jessie Garwood. She presented a detailed estimate of the cost of fun and frolic along Main street, U. S. A., in the year 1900. To keep Miss Garwood busy during the week in which society news was taboo, Mr. Sheldon gave her the assignment of computing how much money was wasted in Topeka on social frivolities during a typical week.

A full week in society might include two receptions, one thimble party, two card parties, two dinners, a luncheon and two club dances, according to Miss Garwood, who included an estimate of the cost of each function. Total for parties for one week, \$616.00; for theater admissions, \$1,000, or a grand total of \$1,616.00. Whether or not Mr. Sheldon was impressed by the amount of money wasted

48. *Saturday Evening Post*, Philadelphia, October 25, 1941, p. 25.

49. *Christian Herald*, March 21, 1900, p. 230; *Chicago Tribune*, January 22, 1900, quoting Dana. *Topeka State Journal*, March 12, 1900, "Rules and Regulations."



in giving two club dances, is not known. Miss Garwood's survey recalls the title of a song made popular by Bert Williams, "Bring Back Those Wonderful Days." It was further stated that

the dancing clubs afford no small item in the expense account of entertainment, the Imperial parties which have been given the past season costing \$65 apiece. Which included the hall rent, music, refreshments, engraved invitations and embossed programs. Some of the other clubs, however, have no expense save the music and the hall rent, so a party of that kind can be given as cheaply as \$36.00.⁵⁰

During Sheldon week the *State Journal* racked up its highest circulation figure to date. The main reason for the *Journal's* spectacular 40% increase in circulation was, of course, the paucity of both local and national news carried in Mr. Sheldon's *Capital*. In addition, Topeka was treated to a journalistic duel of sorts. For each local story of importance to break in Sheldon's *Capital*, the *Journal* demonstrated how the same story would be handled by a secular paper.

When Editor Sheldon ran a story condemning rich Topekans (unnamed) as tax dodgers, citing the case of an anonymous Santa Fe railroad baggage clerk who paid more personal property taxes than an anonymous official of that great railroad, the *Journal* countered with what must have been regarded as one of the best local news stories of the year. Under the headline "GREATER TOPEKA," the *Journal* printed on its front page a two-column list of personal property assessments of 259 firms and individuals whose assessments were in excess of \$1,000. "REMARKABLE SHOWING," the headline continued, "The Men Whose Personal Property Raises the Funds To Run the Machinery of Local and State Government."⁵¹ *Journal* readers could determine for themselves who was doing the tax dodging.

To match Sheldon's story of the launching of an anti-cigarette campaign directed at the youth of Topeka, the *Journal* came up with a survey which reported the number of cigarette addicts in each of Topeka's public schools.⁵²

Late Wednesday, March 14, the *Capital* received from the Associated Press news of the suicide in Kansas City, Mo., of J. Sherman Pepper, Topeka, son of former U. S. Sen. W. A. Pepper, also of Topeka. Adhering to his policy of playing down sensational news, Sheldon gave *Capital* readers one paragraph on an inside page which contained nothing more than "who," "when," and "where," plus a mes-

50. Topeka *Daily Capital*, March 14, 1900.

51. Topeka *State Journal*, March 19, 1900.

52. Topeka *Daily Capital* and Topeka *State Journal*, March 13, 1900.

sage of sympathy to the parents.⁵³ The public's curiosity, whetted by the lack of facts in the Christian daily, was gratified that evening by the *Journal*. Young Pepper, a Linotype operator, had been working for the *Capital* and had set much of the advertising copy in advance, for the Christian daily. On Saturday, just prior to Sheldon week, he was discharged. He spent a "lost weekend" in Kansas City, then ended it all with morphine, in a 25¢ flophouse room. Despondency over the loss of his job was given as the reason for suicide. To the *Journal's* credit, it refrained from connecting Mr. Sheldon with the tragedy as did many papers. For example, the New York *Herald's* headline: "SUICIDE DUE TO SHELDON EDITION.—An Intemperate Printer Discharged for Fear of Offending Reverend Editor, Kills Himself."⁵⁴

Late Friday night, on the eve of the final day of Sheldon week, Fred Popenoe appeared in the *Capital* newsroom with a prepared announcement that came as a shock to the staff and the few visiting correspondents who had not yet left town. The *Capital*, declared Popenoe, was to be continued indefinitely as a Christian daily:

There is complete unanimity of sentiment among the stockholders. . . . We now believe in Rev. Mr. Sheldon's idea. We believe the time is ripe for a Christian daily, and we will make one out of the Capital. In matter of detail the Capital will probably not strictly follow the example set by Rev. Mr. Sheldon this week. For instance, the make-up of the paper will be changed somewhat and there will be more news printed, both local and telegraph. However, in a general and material way the Capital will adopt Rev. Mr. Sheldon's idea of a religious paper.⁵⁵

Mr. Popenoe added a few more facts. A. C. Babize of Chicago would join the staff as managing editor; the overall plan would be officially approved by the board of directors on the following Monday, and he fully expected to be able to retain at least 100,000 of the more than 350,000 subscribers to the Sheldon edition.⁵⁶

The succession of events that followed Popenoe's surprising announcement provided the *State Journal* with a meaty two-column front page story for Saturday. It appeared under an arresting headline nine decks deep:

A BIG ROW IS ON. — Capital to Be Continued as a "Christian Daily." — Business Manager Keizer Says It Shall Not Be. — MR. POPENOE IS FIRM. — Holds a Majority of the Stock in His Name. — Four Directors Out of Five Approve the Plan. — GEN. HUDSON MAY QUIT. — Says He Will Never Edit Any But Secular Daily — Must Be Partisan Republican in Politics.⁵⁷

53. Topeka *Daily Capital*, March 15, 1900.

54. New York *Herald*, March 15, 1900.

55. Topeka *State Journal*, March 17, 1900.

56. Kansas City (Mo.) *Journal*, March 17, 1900.

57. Topeka *State Journal*, March 17, 1900.

A correspondent for the *Kansas City World* reported that the "bitter" row began at 1:00 A. M. Saturday with a scene between Hudson and Popenoe in which the former charged the principal owner of the *Capital* with high-handed tactics in announcing such a drastic change in policy without consulting the directors or stockholders. "An Associated Press man was getting ready to put Popenoe's announcement on the wire when Keizer had it suppressed until the board of directors had acted on the plan."⁵⁸

Dell Keizer, quoted in the *Chicago Inter Ocean*, said that the Christian daily scheme was all right for a week, and had proved to be a money-maker, but that it would be an utter impossibility because of existing advertising contracts, to convert the *Capital* into a religious daily. The *Inter Ocean* also reported that Harold T. Chase, director and associate editor, opposed the continuation of the Christian policy, but that he had gone along with the Sheldon edition out of friendship for Mr. Sheldon.⁵⁹

With directors Keizer and Chase opposed to the plan, Mr. Popenoe still was assured of a majority of the five-man directorate. Yet on Monday his proposal for establishing a national Christian daily was not approved by the directors. No details of the meeting were ever revealed but it is entirely possible that the matter never came up for discussion. A clue to the abandonment of the plan may be found in the *State Journal* under the subhead, "MR. SHELDON IS SILENT."

Rev. Charles M. Sheldon completed his editorial labors early this morning [Saturday] but when he walked into Mr. Popenoe's office shortly before noon, a blue pencil still protruded from his vest pocket. Mr. Sheldon was closeted with Mr. Popenoe and other stockholders of the Topeka Capital for some time, but when he came out refused to say anything about the conference. . . .

[Reporter:] "Naturally you would like to see the movement continued."

Mr. Sheldon smiled. "Really, I don't care to say anything for publication."⁶⁰

It was quite apparent to all who had been following Mr. Popenoe's plan for Christianizing the *Capital*, that he had failed not only to obtain an endorsement from the man who had been leading the crusade for just such a Christian daily, but of equal importance, had failed to obtain from Editor Sheldon as much as a single line of publicity about the publication in the Sheldon edition. Nor was

58. *Kansas City (Mo.) World*, March 17, 1900.

59. *Chicago Inter Ocean*, March 18, 1900.

60. *Topeka State Journal*, March 17, 1900. The only hint that Mr. Sheldon was aware of the differences of opinion among *Capital* staff members regarding not only his Christian daily but also of Popenoe's announced plans for the future may be found in his autobiography, in a tribute to the tremendous amount of work accomplished by his friend Dell Keizer. "He acted . . . as if . . . there was not a shadow of doubt in his mind that whatever was done [in connection with the Sheldon edition] was all right even when, I am sometimes constrained to believe, he felt back in his mind that it was all wrong."—*Charles M. Sheldon—His Life Story*, pp. 136, 137.

the affair ever mentioned in the *Capital* after it resumed publishing as a secular paper except for an announcement that Auguste Babize, formerly of the *Chicago Times-Herald*, had joined the *Capital* staff as an associate editor—not as managing editor as previously announced by Popenoe.

Speculation regarding the net profit from the Sheldon edition had been very much in the news ever since the *Capital's* announcement on March 8 that more than 200,000 prepaid subscriptions had been booked, and the end was not yet in sight. With sharp pencils, men in the business end of newspaperdom said to themselves, let's see, 200,000 times 25 cents—that's \$50,000 in subscriptions alone. But they didn't know that about half of the subscriptions netted only 15 cents each, 10 cents going for commissions. To the income from circulation, they added advertising revenue. That's where they all got lost. Local advertisers, those fortunate enough to get into the Sheldon edition, were charged the same old rate of 50¢ per column inch. Each eight-page issue carried approximately 10 columns of local ads and 10 of foreign. Apparently the daily press was never advised that the rate per inch for foreign advertising could not be determined until total circulation figures had been verified. Undaunted, newspapers erroneously stated that the *Capital's* advertising rate had been hiked to the sky. Some had it as low as \$1.33 an inch. The most frequently quoted rates per inch were \$26.00 and \$36.00.⁶¹ These figures were not even close to the correct rate. Never released to the press, the rate formula turned up in a most unlikely place.

The editor of *The Church Standard*, a regional journal of the Protestant Episcopal Church, published in Philadelphia, observed in an editorial about the proposed Sheldon edition:

The managing editor who arranged with Mr. Sheldon for this brief experiment is certainly "no slouch." He has nothing to lose and much to gain. An ordinary week's subscription to his newspaper is ten cents. For this particular week the price is advanced to twenty-five cents. As to the matter of advertising the following is not lacking in interest.

There followed a sales letter, signed by Herbert S. Houston, informing prospective advertisers that the great Christian societies of this country were making it their business to gain a huge audience for Mr. Sheldon, that every line of the Christian daily would be closely read. An advertisement would not only reach a reader's hand but also his head. The advertising rate was fixed at one third

61. Rates \$26.00 per inch, *Ottawa Republican*, March 12, 1900; \$1.33, *Topeka State Journal*, March 26, 1900; \$36.00 inch, *Brooklyn Eagle*, March 13, 1900.

of a cent per agate line per insertion on each one thousand actual circulation.⁶²

The hand of lawyer Sam Gardenshire surely guided the pen of adman Herbert Houston when he composed the sales letter reprinted in *The Church Standard*. Conspicuously absent is the name of the Topeka *Daily Capital*. Houston was soliciting advertising for a paper called *The Christian Daily*, a title that appears twice in the body of the letter, italicized. In his signature, Houston did not indicate his official capacity. His New York office address was given at 171 Broadway.

Seven days after the final issue of the Sheldon edition, Dell Keizer announced the average daily circulation figure of 362,684, which furnished the basis for the average foreign advertising rate of \$16.92 an inch.⁶³ (Circulation varied from a high of 384,000 for the first issue to a low of 351,300 for the final issue.)

During Sheldon week the *Mail & Breeze*, then owned by Arthur Capper and Tom McNeal, quoted Fred Popenoe's estimate: that the *Capital's* earnings on the venture would reach \$30,000. Auguste Babize, then a stockholder, sent a dispatch to the *Chicago Times-Herald* in which he predicted the stockholders would have a \$45,000 melon to divide.⁶⁴

A breakdown of the Sheldon-*Capital's* income and expenses printed in the *Topeka State Journal*, March 26, 1900, indicated a net profit of only \$15,000. But the *Journal's* estimator committed a whopping \$15,000 error in computing the income from foreign advertising. He used the rate of \$1.33 per inch instead of \$16.92. Adjusted, the *Journal's* estimated profit for the Sheldon *Capital* would be \$30,000, a figure that tallied with Mr. Popenoe's own estimate.

With admirable restraint, Ed Howe in the *Atchison Globe*, March 19, stated that "women and children" (when he yearned to say "widows and orphans") contributed largely to the \$65,000 profit. The *Chicago Tribune* of March 13 called Ed Howe's estimate and raised it to \$70,000. Then the *Kansas City World* on March 19 upped the pot to \$95,000, whereupon the Council Bluffs (Iowa) *Nonpareil*, March 14, gave the kitty a hefty boost to \$150,000. But a gentleman from Tipton, Nev., made pikers out of the Midwesterners. The editor of the *Tipton Gazette* disqualified the *Capital*, and on March 8 awarded the entire profit of at least a quarter of a million dollars to the Rev. Mr. Charles M. Sheldon.

62. *The Church Standard*, Philadelphia, March 10, 1900, p. 617. The rate formula was confirmed in the March 14, 1900, issue of *Printers' Ink*, p. 28.

63. *Topeka Daily Capital*, March 25, 1900.

64. *Topeka Mail and Breeze*, March 16, 1900; *Chicago Times-Herald*, March 16, 1900.



The actual profit from the Sheldon edition may furnish a clue to the mysterious falling-out of the once fast friends, Sheldon and Popenoe. It is a matter of record that Mr. Sheldon was to receive no financial compensation for his services, but that a share of the profits would be placed at his disposal for charitable, religious, or educational donations. Correspondent D. O. McCray in a dispatch to the *St. Louis Republic*, March 13, 1900, stated: "Mr. Sheldon will not receive a cent . . . but by the terms of his contract, 50% of the profits will be turned over to him for charitable work." That was the percentage also quoted by the *Mail & Breeze*, adding that "\$20,000 . . . profit is regarded as a conservative estimate." Possibly the only reporter to obtain a private interview with Mr. Sheldon, Gilson Willets, representing the *Christian Herald*, stated that Sheldon accepted Popenoe's offer "of at least one-half the profits" which he would designate for charities.⁶⁵

Now, if Mr. Popenoe was quoted correctly by a reporter from the New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, February 14, 1900, when he was visiting in New Orleans soon after the Sheldon edition was announced, Mr. Sheldon was to get better than a 50-50 split on the net profits. To the *Picayune* reporter's question, "Is there an agreement as to the disposition of surplus money made from the enterprise?" Mr. Popenoe answered, "Certainly—we have agreed to give practically all of the surplus over the cost of the experiment to charity and benevolent institutions." Remember, the *Mail & Breeze* quoted Popenoe's own estimate of profits at \$30,000.

Eventually, the sum of \$5,000 was placed at Sheldon's disposal which he distributed to local institutions. But in his autobiography appears an enigmatic statement. Rather than to lift it out of context, the preceding paragraph is quoted:

One of the commonest reports that nearly every paper published was to the effect that the whole affair was a piece of the most astounding hypocrisy because I was receiving between \$10,000 and \$25,000 as my share of the week's profits.⁶⁶ This story was published like a hundred others as preposterous, in scores of papers, and I suppose thousands of readers all over the country believed it then and if any of them are living they believe it now. "It was in the paper," they say. "It must be so."

It is true that near the end of that week the owner of the paper sent to my house a roll of bills amounting to \$1,000, but they went back to the office by the same messenger who had brought them out.⁶⁷

65. *Christian Herald*, March 14, 1900, p. 212.

66. Of more than 1,000 available press reports, only two or three have been found in which such a charge was made.

67. *Charles M. Sheldon—His Life Story*, p. 123.

Why was the money sent to Sheldon's home? Why was the payment made in currency? Why did Sheldon mention the matter at all? Assuming the Sheldon *Capital* made X number of dollars, who got the money? Babize said it would be split among the stockholders. The *State Journal* and a few other papers predicted any profit would be applied on a \$45,000 note held by the Bank of Topeka.

Dell Keizer, the business manager, had nothing to say on this matter. He had other worries. Rumors which had been circulating in newspaper circles that the *Capital's* advertising department was in for a rough time were confirmed in this dispatch to the *Chicago Times-Herald*, March 16, 1900, written by Popenoe's unsuccessful candidate for managing editor, Auguste Babize:

ADVERTISERS ARE PROTESTING

Advertisers whose "ads" Mr. Sheldon either threw out altogether or printed in a different part of the paper than that stipulated in the contract, are up in arms. Numerous letters of protest have been received by Dell Keizer, the business manager. The writers say a breach of contract has been committed and they order the discontinuance in the future of their "ads." General J. K. Hudson, the *Capital's* editor in chief, believes that ultimately a peace will be patched up again.

On the day following the first issue of the Christian daily, the city editor of the *State Journal*, L. L. Kiene, filled two columns of the front page with opinions of leading citizens on the Sheldon edition. Among the printed interviews was one with the new pastor of the First Congregational Church, Dr. Daniel Moses Fisk. Dr. Fisk commended Mr. Sheldon's experiment, saying he hoped it would show the metropolitan press that there was another side to newspaperdom than the counting house. Then, as an afterthought, the pastor of the church to which the Popenoe family belonged, ventured an opinion that had an ominous ring:

. . . But there is another side: When Mr. Sheldon's reign of a week is over who must bear the violation of canceled advertising contracts. The business office can, perhaps, best answer that. It will take them at least a year, I should judge, to square themselves.⁶⁸

On March 12, 1901, *just one year to the day* from the evening Mr. Sheldon took over J. K. Hudson's private office, to prepare the first issue of the Christian daily, the *State Journal* confirmed certain rumors that had been going around town:

CAPPER TO GET IT — Deal on by Which He Will Own the Capital — Paper Is Again Held by Bank of Topeka — IS ANXIOUS TO SELL — Bargain Will Probably be Closed This Week — F. O. Popenoe No Longer in Control of the Paper.

[The text, in part:] Mr. Popenoe virtually relinquished his interest [in the paper] a month or more ago. . . . Mr. Popenoe bought the paper over a

68. Topeka *State Journal*, March 14, 1900.

year ago and for a time J. K. Hudson was in charge. Then came the Sheldon edition and the dissenting action of Hudson and Dell Keizer, the business manager who both resigned. . . . A. C. Babize then acted as business manager⁶⁹ but the paper steadily lost money and Mr. Popenoe, after making a heroic effort to put the publication on its feet, gave up. He is now in Costa Rica looking after his [gold] mining property, and it is not known when he will return. . . . Mr. Capper is an old newspaper man and was for several years city editor of the *Capital* when Hudson was editor and owner.

It was now apparent that Mr. Sheldon, when selecting a cast for the real life dramatization of the Christian daily story, had completely overlooked one very important role. Toward the end of Act III when the town banker threatened to foreclose the mortgage on the newspaper, there was no Virginia Page waiting in the wings for her cue to step forward with a half-million dollars to save the paper and, in so doing, provide the happy ending typical of Mr. Sheldon's novels.

Instead, as if the script had been written by Horatio Alger, the paper went to a former printer and reporter on the *Capital*, Arthur Capper, whose thorough training in newspaper work under Editor J. K. Hudson is so admirably described in Homer E. Socolofsky's excellent and readable biography of Senator Capper.⁷⁰

Just two weeks after the announcement that Popenoe was out of the *Capital* and Capper was about to move in, the *Journal* broke another front page story that really shook the town. The basic facts were in a two-column headline that dropped 12 decks deep:

POPENOE AFFAIRS INVOLVED. — Three Trustees Appointed to Straighten Them Out. — Owes About \$50,000 to Eastern Clients. — USED THE MONEY. — Was Paid to Him on Account of Mortgages. — When Creditors Demanded Money Mr. Popenoe Left. — NOW IN COSTA RICA. — Will Return If Business Is Adjusted. — Hopes To Get Money Spent in Mines. — DISASTROUS EFFORT. — Lost \$20,000 in Booming the *Capital*. — Country Home and Other Property Transferred.

In recounting Mr. Popenoe's brief whirl at the newspaper business, the *Journal* stated:

Mr. Popenoe [then president of the Accounting Trust Co.] desired to enter a new domain. He wished to shine in public life and the Topeka morning paper which was then laboring under a load of debt offered him the opportunity. . . . He paid only \$5,000 [cash] at the outset [and gave notes for the balance, \$45,000.]

This was one of the great mistakes in the career of Mr. Popenoe. He was entirely ignorant of the details of the newspaper business. . . .

69. The resignations of Hudson and Keizer occurred on May 28, 1900, about 10 weeks after the Sheldon week squabble, as a result of an accumulation of editorial differences. At that time Babize acquired the title of managing editor and acting business manager.

70. Homer E. Socolofsky, *Arthur Capper: Publisher, Politician and Philanthropist* (Lawrence, University of Kansas Press, 1962).



Then came the Sheldon edition with its phenomenal notoriety and circulation. The name of Popenoe was heralded from one end of the country to the other. . . . Mr. Popenoe thought that he would continue to conduct the paper along the same lines as were laid down by Rev. Mr. Sheldon, and would thereby hold a large portion of the subscribers. . . . General Hudson now came to the front and said that as long as he was connected with the paper Mr. Popenoe's plans would not be followed. The quarrel which ensued extended over a period of several weeks, and was ended by the retirement of General Hudson and his son-in-law, Dell Keizer, from the management of the Capital. Mr. Keizer was business manager and owned stock in the paper, for which Mr. Popenoe paid him \$10,000.

GIVES PERSONAL ATTENTION TO HIS PAPER

Then Popenoe assumed direct control of the paper. Much foreign advertising had been lost. . . . Mr. Popenoe set about to win back what had been lost. . . . The profits of the Sheldon edition, which were more than \$20,000, were available, and the young financier saw a bright future ahead in his newspaper career. . . . Expensive men were imported to boom the advertising and help in the editorial department. . . . The Sunday paper was enlarged from 16 pages to 32 and even 40 pages, and the issues were distributed free, scattered broadcast over the city and state. The young manager evidently did not know how expensive such proceedings and policies were, but he soon learned. . . . As the year was drawing to a close it became evident that Mr. Popenoe's newspaper venture was not bearing fruit . . . a policy of retrenchment was started, but it was too late. He had spent \$20,000 more than the receipts in booming the Capital in the brief period of eight months.

Money was collected for clients in the Accounting Trust Company, which did not find its way to the . . . clients. It may have been used to help make up the newspaper deficits or for something else—at any rate it was gone, and these people began to clamor for settlement. . . .⁷¹

Mr. Popenoe was no more successful with his mining investments than with newspaper publishing. After disposing of his gold-mining property in Costa Rica, he established a nursery for subtropical fruits in southern California. Horticulture had always been his hobby. His contributions to the economy of California are noteworthy. They consist in part of the introduction of one of the leading varieties of avacadoes, the Fuerte, and also of the famous Deglet Noor dates.⁷²

How much money Herbert Houston made in advertising commissions from the Sheldon edition is not known. Circumstantial evidence indicates that he didn't do so badly. Before the end of that year, 1900, he had purchased a substantial interest in the publishing house of Doubleday, Page & Co., and was elected its vice-president, an office he held until his retirement 20 years later.

⁷¹ Topeka State Journal, March 27, 1901.

⁷² Yearbook of California Avacado Association, 1934, reprinted as *Memorial Frederick O. Popenoe*, no date.