

SIFTING THE NEWS

By RALPH MATTHEWS

Time magazine leaped upon the Abbott divorce case, won last week by Mrs. Abbott to the tune of \$50,000 alimony, as an opportunity to draw a comparison between the publisher of the Chicago Defender and the white publisher of the Washington Post.

The comparison is interesting and is republished here to show how minutely the white press can pry into our affairs when it so desires. What a force for good the press of the nation could be in eradicating discrimination, if the editors could be induced to expose some of the unfair measures taken against us.

Says Time:

Such readers of the "white" press as were aware of the troubles of ex-Publisher Edward Beale McLean of the Washington Post and Mrs. Evalyn Walsh McLean last week found vague analogy in the adventures of their own famed publishing family. No. 1 Negro publisher is capable, courteous Robert Sengstacke Abbott, 62, founder-owner of the Chicago Defender and Abbott's Monthly, only Negro fiction magazine. Like Publisher McLean, he is a loyal Republican. His wife, Mrs. Helen Thornton Abbott, who says she thinks she is 36 but is not certain, is practically white-skinned, with straight brown hair. Georgia-born, she is a normal school graduate and has dabbled in welfare work.

In a Chicago court last week, Mrs. Abbott demanded: (1) separate maintenance from her husband, whom she accuses of peccadillos (as did Mrs. McLean); (2) removal of her ailing husband as publisher because she asserted he was letting the paper go to ruin through neglect (as did Mrs. McLean). There the analogy ends.

Whereas Mrs. McLean wanted to buy the Post for herself and her sons, Mrs. Abbott, childless, asked a receivership for the Defender. (Presumably, however, she hoped to get it for herself.) Whereas the Post admittedly has been losing money for years, the Defender has picked up after its depression slump and, according to its owner, is making a little money. According to the owner's wife, it is worth \$1,000,000. (Eugene Meyer got the Post last fortnight for only \$825,000.) Fun-loving "Ned" McLean could not be bothered with business. Round-faced Publisher Abbott was kept from work by tuberculosis and Bright's disease. "Ned" McLean's woman friend was the sister of Film Actress Marion Davies. Mrs. Abbott says that two years ago she found her husband in bed with his nurse.

During Publisher Abbott's illness of the past two years the Defender has been run by his right-hand man, Nathan K. McGill, brown-skinned onetime Assistant Attorney-General in Illinois, onetime Assistant State's Attorney. His divorced wife, Idalee, is Mrs. Abbott's sister, two years younger, a few shades darker and not so good looking. Mrs. Abbott charges that McGill runs the business badly and that he continues to draw his salary of \$700 a week, although he insists that neither he nor Publisher Abbott (salary \$2,000 a week) has drawn money for a long time.

Last year, Mrs. Abbott was awarded temporary maintenance of \$300 a month, use of their 11-room house on the South Side, the Pierce-Arrow, Arthur the chauffeur, and Rosalee the maid. Publisher Abbott was permitted to keep the Rolls-Royce which, he has confided to friends, he bought second-hand to set at rest the gossip of competing papers that the Defender was on the rocks.

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EXPLAINED AT LAST

Dr. W. A. Evans, white, of Chicago, informs us that whites in Africa often find that native bearers learn their language in less than a week and the ofays cannot even ask for the necessities of life in the native tongue.

Among the races that have a genius in the use of words, he named the Negro as being very fluent. He said that there is no mental faculty that varies over a broader field than does the use of words.

"American Negroes," she said, "are facile in the use of words. If they do not know a word that fits, they can generally improvise one that is an improvement over what the dictionary offers. As public speakers they rank high, many of them in spite of a lack of adequate training."

This, I take it, explains why the race is overrun with "bobtail" preachers. It's a gift.