

A Woman in the Press Gallery

The Christian Science Monitor (1908-Current file); Nov 10, 1952;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Christian Science Monitor (1908-1998)

pg. 8

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JANE GREY SWISSHELM, an invincible damsel who started life as a child prodigy, quoted the New Testament at the age of three, badgered Daniel Webster . . . was the pioneer who first opened the [Senate] Press Gallery to the woman correspondent.

Mrs. Swisshelm had no intention of lingering in the halls of government. She merely wanted to open the door to show that it could be done. One day was sufficient for her purpose. She was in the capital on a junket, having persuaded Horace Greeley to buy her Washington letters at \$5 a column. After seeing the town she felt the urge to do something spectacular before returning to Pittsburgh:

"There was yet one innovation I wanted to make, although my stay in Washington would necessarily be short. No woman had ever had a place in the Congressional

reporters' gallery. This door I wanted to open to them, so I called on Vice-President Fillmore and asked him to assign me a seat in the Senate Gallery. He was much surprised and tried to dissuade me. The place would be very unpleasant for a lady, would attract attention, I would not like it; but he gave me the seat. I occupied it one day, greatly to the surprise of the Senators, the reporters, and others on the floor and in the Galleries; but felt that the novelty would soon wear off, and that women would work there and win bread without annoyance."

Mrs. Swisshelm's prophecy was correct. That was in 1850. Today the newspaper women sit on terms of comparative equality with the men in the Press Gallery.—From "Ladies of The Press," by ISHBELL ROSS. Copyright, 1936, by Harper and Brothers.

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