

# TO SATISFY THE PEOPLE.

GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT W. F. BURDITT FINDS IT DIFFICULT

To Accomplish—His Exhibition Experience and How he Got It—His Work in his Present Position and Some of the Trials he has Overcome.

A newspaper man without much idea of the detail of an exhibition superintendent's work could not be supposed to give as good an idea of it as the gentleman who occupies the position.

Knowing this PROGRESS sought Mr. W. F. Burditt, the general superintendent of the St. John exhibition, and asking him some leading questions about how he earned anything about such work and was

arrangement of exhibits and allotment of space. At previous exhibitions there has been a great lack of system, a general pulling and hauling at the chairman of different committees, and finally a grand scramble for the best positions and biggest spaces, every exhibitor looking out for himself as best he may. The directors concluded that it would be better to make some one man responsible for the general arrangement of exhibits and the allotment of space to individual exhibitors. It was natural that they should look for a man of some experience in such matters, but after all, good judgment and general knowledge of the nature and requirements of the various kinds of goods is the principal requisite. A little knowledge of human

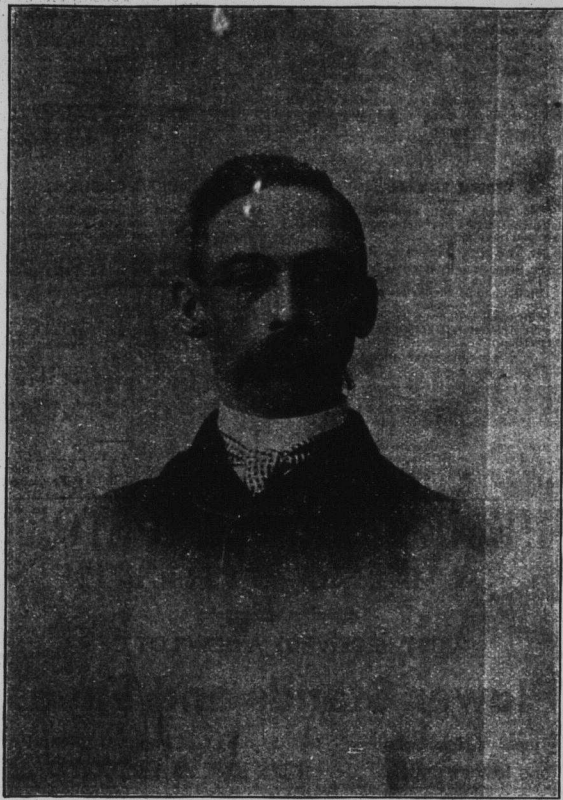
the best general effect. Before considering this question or while considering it I made a careful survey of the buildings to ascertain how they could be utilized to best advantage. To consult with the average exhibitor in a matter of this kind is almost worse than useless, because each considers the particular class of goods in the sale or production of which he is interested of far more importance than any other; but I have been glad to hear the views of different parties and endeavored to take a disinterested and impartial survey of the whole question. In connection with laying out the general plans, such matters as providing sufficient aisles and walking space for visitors as well as frontage and exhibiting space for exhibitors had to be considered. When I had decided on the general arrangement and made drawings of the plans they were submitted to the building committee, adopted and approved of in the same form as you now have them engraved. Reason and necessity have required some slight modifications in the plans, but the arrangement of exhibits will be essential as laid out in the original plans.

"I have, of course, all along freely advised with the directors, particularly the president, Mr. Everett, chairman of building committee, treasurer, Mr. Reynolds, and the secretary, Mr. Cornwall, and am indebted to all of them for much valuable assistance and advice.

"I have only referred to that part of my work which was more particularly contemplated when the appointment was made but incidentally I have had a good deal of other work to do in connection with repairs to buildings, arranging for electric lighting, cleaning of buildings and all sorts of preparatory work under direction of the building committee."

There was a sudden termination to the interview at this point, some exhibitor demanding Mr. Burditt's attention in hot haste.

PROGRESS has had something to do with the superintendent since he entered upon his duties and adds its testimony to the careful and painstaking way he has performed them. No trouble was too much for him; his sole aim has been to satisfy the exhibitors and at the same time do his duty by the committee.



GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT W. F. BURDITT.

placed at his present task got him "talking." What he says is best told as he spoke:

"You want some information in regard to my work in connection with the exhibition. Well, this would come with better grace from some other than myself—Mr. Reynolds or Mr. Everett for instance—but if I must speak you will excuse the seeming braggadocio.

"I have had more or less to do with previous exhibitions and having attended the Toronto exhibition almost annually, from business motives, since the first exhibition held under the auspices of the Toronto association in 1879, I naturally felt some interest from the first in the proposal to follow the example of Toronto, here. I have watched the development of Toronto exhibition association—the improvement and enlargement of their grounds and buildings, since its organization, and believe that their association has accomplished an immense amount of material and financial good for the city of Toronto. This made me take particular interest in the movement to attempt a similar work here. Apart from attending meetings, however, and working on one or two committees I did little in connection with the organization of this exhibition until sometime in July when Mr. Cornwall and Mr. Reynolds came to me to ask if I would act as general superintendent. I told them that I had plenty to do, more, in fact, than I could find time to do in connection with my own business, and that there were doubtless, many men who could serve them or the public just as well with less sacrifice to themselves; besides that, I thought (and still think) that some man better known to the public, even if less capable, would serve their purpose better, because people would have more confidence in a name with which they were familiar. However, they insisted that I could do the work they wanted better than any one else they knew of, and finally I consented, so if my part of the work is a failure the responsibility rests with those who selected me.

"I assisted Mr. Cornwall in connection with the Industrial Exhibition, held in the Victoria Skating Rink in 1875, and after that was in the employ of the Dominion Government at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, sent there at the recommendation of the exhibitors from this province, and virtually represented this province at the Centennial, as the Provincial Government sent no representative on its own account. I was among the first on the ground of the Dominion staff at Philadelphia and the last to leave. This previous experience is, I suppose, what prompted Mr. Cornwall to recommend me when the directors of our association decided that it would be necessary to make some such appointment. The appointment of a superintendent was recommended by the building committee in the first instance with the main object of systematizing the

nature is also a good qualification to have thrown in. Whether the directors have struck the right man for the work, they and the public will have to judge. I have devoted many spare moments to a careful study of every detail connected with the city part of the exhibition since I accepted the appointment, and for the past three weeks my time has been exclusively devoted to it almost night and day, and I have many times wondered why I was such a consummate ass as to undertake all this extra work and worry when I could have done myself far more good by attending in a quiet way to my own business.

"The first thing I did after accepting the appointment was to consider what general arrangement and disposal of the different classes of exhibits would display them to

# A RUSHING SECRETARY.

THE ONE MAN OF ALL OTHERS FOR THE PLACE.

An Attempt to Speak of Him and His Work—Full of Originality and Inventiveness—What "Inventor" Says About the Past of Mr. Cornwall.

To write about Secretary Ira Cornwall, to describe the man and his work, as well as the man at his work, to give some idea of his energy, inventiveness and originality, to speak of his thorough sympathy with the great task he has undertaken; in fact to give a proper pen picture of him is more than the writer would care to attempt.

Three fourths of the people have heard of him—but a small proportion of them

imagine he went to work on the St. John carnival, and so far as his work went, made a success of it. Combinations over which he had no control counteracted the effect of his hard work and brought the carnival committee face to face with a rather disagreeable deficit, but the enthusiastic Cornwall who worked night and day could not shoulder all the blame of that.

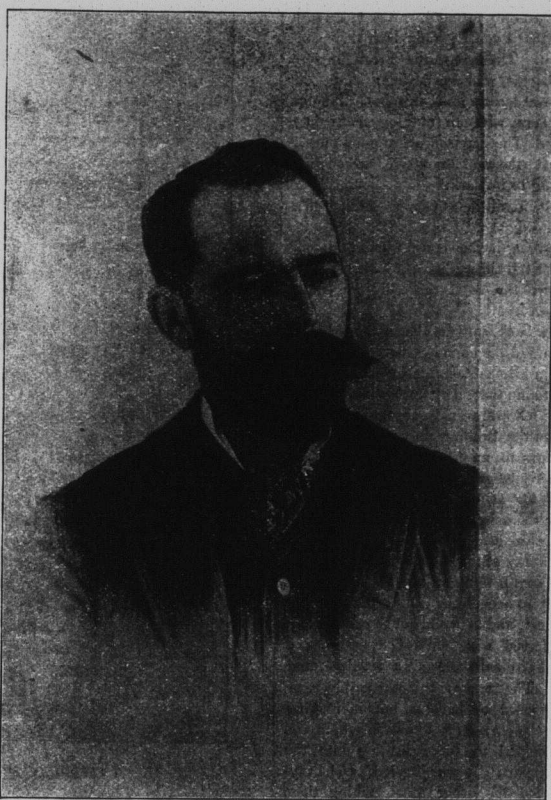
Previous experience with civic bodies, with boards of trade and exhibition associations, has taught Mr. Cornwall much that stands him in excellent stead just at present when he practically shoulders the work of the exhibition. He has the benefit of an able body of directors who are supposed to, and do for the matter of that, direct all things in connection with the

In 1875 he was, from among a number of candidates, chosen Secretary and Manager of the New Brunswick Manufacturers and Mechanics' Exhibition, held in the city of St. John, and generally admitted to be the most successful and attractive industrial show that ever took place in the province. The exhibition gave a direct stimulus to production and manufacture of all kinds. . . .

The success of this provincial exhibition induced the committee to appoint Mr. Cornwall permanent secretary of the Manufacturers' and Mechanics' association of the province, and also secretary to the provincial advisory board for the adequate representation of New Brunswick at the great Centennial exhibition held at Philadelphia in 1876, where, largely through his efforts, the province had an extensive and valuable display, on account of which she carried off several honors, besides giving her that publicity and prominence which a young country so much requires. Mr. Cornwall at his own expense did a deal to form the excellent display made by New Brunswick in 1884 at the Edinburgh Forestry exhibition, where her various woods for durability, color, and grain were very much admired. Like most men in new countries, he has had a varied experience, that specially qualifies him for exhibition work, which like every other business is all the better for being carried on by trained officials. In his younger days, Mr. Cornwall served for a while in a country shop, and trading with the Indians, then in a grocery store, also a draper's establishment, both located in the city of Hamilton, Ontario. Subsequently manager in a large tannery and leather warehouse, and after this conducting a commission business and insurance agency on his own account, the latter embracing fire, marine, life, accident, fidelity guarantee, steam boiler, and plate glass insurance; and the knowledge thus acquired, together with the journalistic experience related above, has given him an acquaintance with materials and details and large experience in advertising which, in connection with exhibitions, is of immense value. . . .

In addition to his knowledge of the Great Dominion, he is very well acquainted with this country, where he has principally resided for the last seven years, and during that time, in connection with business matters, traveled in it extensively, thus forming an acquaintance with our chief towns and business centres as well as our system of business generally, and as the result of his experience and observation he is certain that if New Brunswick and her many resources were better known in Great Britain her manufacturing and agricultural industries would be vastly developed, and her capital city of St. John made even a larger transatlantic port than at present, as it is excellently situated both for steamships and sailing vessels, and connected by rail with all parts of Canada and the United States.

Of his confidence in this idea of a large and profitable commerce springing up between New Brunswick and Great Britain he has given practical proofs by acting for some time in this country as agent for the province, free of expense to the country, which is a strong evidence of his faith in her future commercial activity. When the Colonial and Indian Exhibition was projected Mr. Cornwall returned to Canada, and at his own expense travelled not only in New Brunswick, but also in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, and Quebec, to assist in producing an exhibit worthy of the Dominion, using for this purpose the press and the platform, as well as personally canvassing manufacturers and others, and no doubt this energetic step contributed much to the splendid Canadian display now at South Kensington. In this exhibit New Brunswick holds an honorable place, and the beautiful timber trophy, which at the suggestion of Mr. Cornwall her Government erected in the principal Canadian Court, is one of the most striking objects in the great show. A number of the New Brunswick exhibitors, believing it would be to the public interest if Mr. Cornwall took charge of his display, to that end had an influential signed petition presented to her Government praying for his appointment as Provincial Commissioner at the Exhibition, and at the advice and request of several friends and exhibitors he accepted the position, which, apart from his special duties, enabled him to render considerable service to the dominion generally by assisting to arrange the various exhibits. In addition to being Provincial Commissioner at South Kensington, he also represented New Brunswick as Agent-General, paying, however, special attention to such matters as immigration, export trade, and commerce generally, and other subjects of importance. He also organized and took charge of the Canadian press exhibit and reading room, to which the most prominent daily and weekly journals from all parts of the dominion are sent. Mr. Cornwall was chairman of the exhibitor's committee, which took an active part in agitating for a proper representation of Canadian food supplies, and which committee also prepared an admirable report upon cold-air storage, which was largely circulated in Canada. Mr. Cornwall was late and early at his post and always glad to give information to inquirers, or otherwise benefit Canada in general, and New Brunswick in particular, which, largely through his energy, we may fairly say was in all her interests well to the front in the great show. The display itself was an excellent one, and she has attained that distinct prominence which both directly and indirectly must vastly conduce to her benefit.



SECRETARY IRA CORNWALL.

have seen him, and consequently, PROGRESS prints his portrait, not only with the full knowledge that he deserves this tribute to his work, but knowing that its presence in these pages will give them an added interest which is worth many times the cost of engraving. At the same time it is glad to be able to pay some fitting tribute to his work for St. John—not only in connection with this exhibition, but with other things that have done much to advance the true interests of the city.

The writers acquaintance dates back but a few years since Mr. Cornwall's connection with the Board of Trade and the exhibition association, but in that time he has shown what a man of energy and ability and unflinching persistence can accomplish. Against greater odds than anyone can

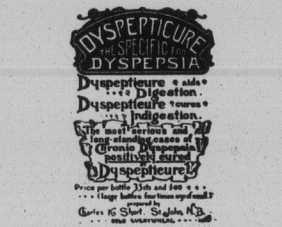
exhibition, but it is one thing to direct and another to perform. On Mr. Cornwall falls the performance.

The writer has spent some odd half hours in his office watching him and his clerks at the work of the exhibition with much curious interest. One of the things that must occur to an onlooker is the thorough system that must guide everything. Nothing can be overlooked; nothing can be left undone if the affairs of the office would go smoothly along and without complaint. Everything has its place and must be found there. The special books made for this work and the difficulty of learning new hands how to handle such an amount of work, must be one of the most difficult tasks of the secretary. To answer correspondence satisfactorily and judiciously is another task of importance. To do this thoroughly Mr. Cornwall has always employed a typewriter and stenographer who takes his correspondence from dictation and in a short time submits a bundle of letters neatly written on the type writer for his supervision.

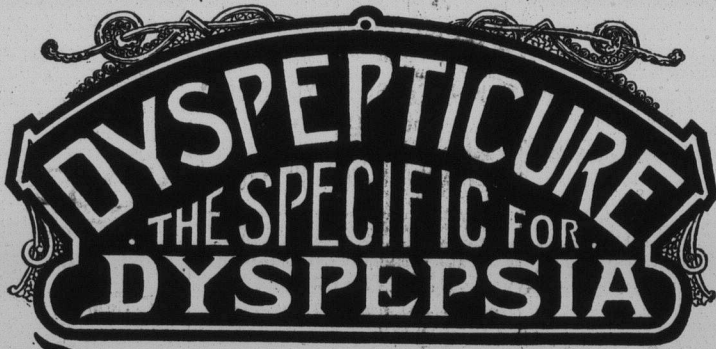
Much of the knowledge the people have of this exhibition arises from Mr. Cornwall's incessant and interesting notes which are published in every issue of the press of the province. He makes it a point to send news, not stale matter, to the outside press, and when the time for advertising arrives treats them all alike and as liberally as the association can afford to. The result of such treatment is that the newspapers give generous notices to the preparations for the exhibition and keep the people well posted on what the directors are doing.

Some three or four years ago when the Indian and Colonial Exhibition was being held in England, *Invention* devoted a good deal of time and space to the representatives from the different colonies. Among them was Mr. Cornwall. The sketch published then is rather stale now, but some of it is sufficiently interesting to reproduce.

*Invention* says that "in commercial circles Mr. Cornwall is known as the 'exhibition manager' for his province, because his name has both journalistically and officially been for some years connected with such enterprises in New Brunswick, as well as in the neighboring provinces of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward's Island, Quebec, and Ontario. In Canada, local exhibitions of arts, manufactures, and agriculture are frequently held, and for the past twenty years Mr. Cornwall attended at most of these gatherings, either in an official capacity or as a correspondent for several papers, among which we may enumerate the *Hamilton Daily Spectator*, the *Montreal Daily Gazette*, and *Ottawa Farmer*. In addition to this journalistic experience, he has written several pamphlets on commercial subjects, especially on the woods and wood industries of New Brunswick, and these publications were well received by the people, and largely quoted by the press and in official handbooks, both of the Provincial and Dominion Governments.



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