

The Carleton Observer

THE EDITOR PASSED AWAY ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 18

The Death of Fred. H. Stevens, Editor and President of The Observer, Comes as a Great Shock
---Interesting Details of His Life, Death and Burial

AN APPRECIATION BY M. L. HAYWARD.

On Friday last the mortal remains of Fred H. Stevens, the editor and publisher of this paper since its inception, were laid to rest in Greenwood cemetery, which is now one of the beautiful spots along a beautiful river, largely through his own disinterested efforts. He has written his last editorial, set his last line of type, and ordered the foreman to "print off" the last issue of The Observer to come out under his supervision. His "life copy" has been handed in to the Great Proofreader of all the world.

As a newspaper man the late Mr. Stevens possessed a rare quality close by approaching genius, with a fine sense of appreciation and discrimination. He knew exactly what made a country weekly interesting and what should be consigned to the wastebasket. If his ability was not fully recognized and appreciated in his home town, if he was a prophet without honor in his own country, he was not alone in that respect, but his ability was recognized by strangers and he stood high in the councils of the Newspaper Association. That this outside recognition was not mere fulsome flattery is proved by the known but unadvertised fact that at different times he had rejected lucrative offers to assume charge of larger newspaper enterprises in larger centres of population.

His interest in all things relating to the advancement and well-being of his own town had become proverbial in a locality where home talent probably ranks lower than in any other town on the continent. The "Observer medal" in connection with the closing exercises of the Hartland school was inaugurated at a time when local interest in the local schools was an unheard of thing. In conjunction with a little band of chivalric spirits, he freely devoted his time and professional skill to the improvement of the Hartland of Greenwood cemetery, thereby converting a local disgrace into a "God's acre" which is "a thing of beauty and a joy forever."

It is true that he was pronounced and positive in his opinions, and did not hesitate to express them, without fear or favor, but who shall impute this as a fault? After all, the only people who are white in this world are those who have the ability to think clearly, and the courage to express their thoughts without fear or favor. It is equally true that he did not hesitate to criticize governments, public men, local institutions and individuals when criticism seemed in his opinion to be called for, but, in these days, when the liberty of the press is so rarely exercised, who can say that criticism is an unpardonable sin? The individual who is above and beyond criticism is generally so colorless that criticism is a waste of time.

Like a few others, however, he had his faults, the "defects of his qualities." He was not always a believer in the sunny ways of conciliation. At times, in the midst of the battle for bread, and when oppressed by physical ill, he wrote and spoke words which ruffled the feelings of those with whom he disagreed, but who has the courage—or hypocrisy—to rise up and condemn him? Which one among us, who, favored abundantly with health and riches, can honestly say that we have not done the same thing?

The late Mr. Stevens was one of those "luckless pots" he marred in making, but as Rev. Mr. Haigh expressed it, he bravely and uncompromisingly took up the cross of physical disability, and, instead of becoming a burden to his friends and relatives, as many individuals in his position would have felt justified in doing, earned a living, carried on his work in his own way, devoted his time and talents to the best interests of his own locality, and left an enviable name and reputation in the Canadian newspaper world.

The Observer, it is safe to say, will continue to be published, to fill a public need, and to stand for all that is best in our local and public life, and, when, as we all of us, and the late editor, especially fondly hoped, our town has multiplied its population many times, when at least one daily newspaper is published therein, the name of Fred. H. Stevens will be honored as the first and the very best of local newspaper men.

These halting but sincere words of appreciation are done, his life work is ended. In the beautiful cemetery due to his own inspiration, overlooking the valley where he was born and lived his brief span of life, and the town where he did his appointed work and to whose interest he was sincerely devoted, he "sleeps in the windowless palace of rest."

"There scattered off, the earliest of the year,
By hands unseen are showers of violets found.
The redbreast loves to build and warble there,
And loving footsteps lightly press the ground.
Nor further seek his merits to dis-

close.
Nor draw his frailties from their dread abode.
There they alike in trembling hope repose,
The bosom of his Father and his God."



AN ARTICLE FROM A WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

The following article was published in a weekly newspaper of the province on July 7, 1922 and we reproduce it as it was written before anyone suspected that Mr. Stevens would be laid in the cemetery before two years had passed away. His native modesty refused to let him reprint it in his home paper, only one or two people in Hartland ever having seen it. It is part of a larger article which bore the title "A Little Journey to the Home of Success" and was written by the Rev. John Hardwick of Edmundston. Part of the material of the original article was obtained from "The Inland Printer" (The leading printing journal of the world) which several years ago published an appreciation of him. Little did Mr. Stevens think that this article would form part of a memorial edition to his life.

"We will interview Mr. Stevens himself. 'Fred' as he is called by ninety per cent of the newspaper men of Canada—was not born with riches, he did not inherit a newspaper, or a printing plant, nor the means to buy them. And the story of the struggle to get them and to publish papers and to put out printing de luxe, is a story of pluck, perseverance and courage unsurpassed anywhere.

"Over forty years ago Fred H. Stevens appeared on the scene in Hartland, and that day a new star appeared on the newspaper sky, not that its light was then seen, but nevertheless it appeared. Thirteen years afterward the boy printer bought his first printing press and the real taste for newspaper work manifested itself. A little while after this he was smitten down with a sickness which made him almost helpless for a year or two. But what others would have resigned themselves to, this plucky boy rebelled against and gradually with faith and perseverance he began to gain his strength and to achieve the impossible. In 1897 he published his first paper and all he gained was experience and the Advertiser died; and after the funeral expenses Stevens had neither money or health for five long years he battled again to regain his health, or enough health to battle with life and wrest success from an unwilling world. In 1909 he had sufficiently recovered his health—and his courage was never at an ebb, so that he started, once more, a newspaper—"The Carleton Observer." And from that day the paper business has been a success. With a circulation in and around Carleton and Victoria counties, that is a credit to any weekly newspaper in Canada. He sends out a paper that is a credit to any newspaper plant anywhere. He says his success in those counties is due to the fact that he gives the local news, and lets his readers gather wide-world events which do not touch directly the people in his territory, from the daily papers. He is a local news specialist. But his Carleton Observer is not only a mirror for news. Mr. Stevens has decided opinions and

express them without fear of favour. Does a politician in his domain depart from the straight and narrow path, woe betide him, no matter what his politics, for the dictionary will be searched for, for words scathing enough, and damning enough to pil-

lory him, until the culprit withdraws from public life.

"He looks upon the paper as a trust, and he jealously guards the prerogatives of its stewardship. To build up the community to encourage its industries, to keep down vice, to render raw deals, to unmask hypocrisy, these are some of the things that he feels falls into his sphere as a proprietor of newspapers.

"Same few months ago the Edmundston paper was started with the writer as editor, and in the correspondence which ensued before the arrangements were consummated, these things were discussed, and in the case of the Edmundston people, as with the Hartland paper, its publisher stands for an absolutely fair deal.

"When speaking with a friend some months ago, the writer asked him about the speech of a certain public speaker, and the answer from the lips of his friend, who was something of a wag, was this 'He talked for two hours but he didn't say anything.' Stevens talks freely, and people listen and are interested, and although he is not a public speaker, but to be a good conversationalist means some-thing these days. Practically self-educated, he has a fund of knowledge, which is especially true in the realm of literature, and quotations spring to his lips from the English classics, which show not only his familiarity with the world of books, but the training of a keen mind.

"Barnum once said that the world boasted so many millions of people, mostly fools. Apropos of that, Stevens weighs only 99 pounds, but it is mostly brains. Despite his physical handicap which necessitates the use of crutches, he is certainly a man's man. Last year he crossed the continent with the newspaper men, and was one of the popular men of the party, and this year when the Association went to Ottawa he was one of the sought after men of the press association.

"He is the best known figure in land, respected by the townfolks, and loved by the children. He belongs to the Knights of Pythias, is the New Brunswick Director of the Canadian Weekly Newspaper Association, which position he has held for several consecutive years, and is churchwarden of the Episcopal church. From early in the morning until late at night he can be found in the Observer Office, directing, guiding, inspiring. He is unmarried. He loves music, and possesses a good voice. He is a good writer, and his stories have appeared in Canadian periodicals again and again—in the past, for now he has no time to write fiction. His sister, who keeps house for him, travels with him and helps him, has the same qualities as he has, but are manifested in making a real home, makes a delightful hostess to his friends and welcomes all who makes a visit to his plant.

"Success is a qualitative word. Men with millions are oftentimes failures. Ambition satisfied sometimes makes for discontentment. But for one who

in his business has built up an establishment with modern equipment, and an ever increasing clientele and subscription list. Who in his profession is referred to in the councils of a National Association, who is deemed same enough and business like enough to be elected again and again to the directorate of the association which is the largest press association of Canada, if not the continent. Who refuses to let his body dominate him—but laughs at what to others would be a cruel fate, but who takes his place with other men, and is listened to by them, with affection and respect, who acknowledges his faults, and is intensely human, this man surely knows the meaning of success.

And as surely my readers will acknowledge that they have taken with me "A Little Journey to the Home of Success." And will say with Kipling—

"He's little and he's wise,
But a terror for his size,
Ah! yer Fred?"

John Hardwick.

OUR LATE EDITOR

The Town of Hartland was shocked when it learned on Wednesday night that the president and general manager of the Observer Newspapers Limited had been found dead in his office. President Fred H. Stevens returned last week from Toronto where he attended the Canadian Weekly Newspapers Association Convention and on Wednesday night when Miss Green and Miss Albright who were the last of the staff to go out, left the office a little after six, they did not notice anything unusual in him, but about ten o'clock when Frank Day called at the office he was shocked to find that he had passed away. Dr. Macdonald was immediately notified and gave it as his opinion that it was heart failure.

The late Mr. Stevens was born February 2, 1878, at Somerville, the son of Henry M. and Mrs. Stevens, both of whom predeceased him several years ago. His one near, living relative, Miss Marion Stevens, who has kept house for him for many years and his death is the more distressing on account of the fact that Miss Stevens was on her way to Europe on board the S. S. "Melita" with the Canadian Weekly Newspaper Association party. Miss Stevens was called by Marcomgram and a wire received by H. H. Hatfield on Friday morning conveyed the news that she would return on the "Empress of Scotland" from Southampton, Eng., on Saturday, and it is expected that she will be home about the 27th.

The funeral was held on Friday afternoon from the residence. The Rev. W. P. Haigh of the Anglican Church officiated, assisted by the Rev. G. E. Foster, Rev. W. E. Lester and Rev. N. Franchetti of Edmundston. The Rev. John Hardwick who has been in directly associated with Mr. Stevens for some years arrived on the down train which, much to his regret, came too late for him to attend the funeral at the house, but he joined the cortege and assisted at the ceremony in the cemetery. The pall bearers were H. H. Hatfield, Sheriff A. R. Foster, A. G. Baker and J. E. McCollum. The funeral tributes were numerous.

Amongst them being: Mrs. Harris Keswick, spray; Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Hatfield, wreath; Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Bayle, spray; Mr. and Mrs. Robert Strain, spray; Mr. R. J. Potts, broken circle; Knights of Pythias, spray; Mrs. L. Ray Brewer, spray; Roy Stevens, spray; Church of England, cross; Observer staff, large wreath; Mrs. A. Plummer, spray. Among the out-of-town friends attending the funeral were S. L. Lynott, of the Carleton Sentinel; Mrs. Robert Strain, Woodstock; Rev. John Hardwick and Rev. N. Franchetti of Edmundston and many others. There was a very large attendance at the funeral, all the business place of Hartland being closed for two hours. The funeral arrangements were in the hands of H. Adams. Mrs. Robert Strain of Woodstock taking charge of the home in the absence of Miss Stevens.

Fred. H. Stevens was one of the best known men in Carleton County, and among the newspaper fraternity was known from coast to coast. He was a patient sufferer all his life but was possessed of an indomitable spirit which enabled him to overcome the mountains of difficulty. As a child he was stricken with a disease which made its mark upon his physique and which increased in seriousness as the years went by but what he lacked in physical strength was made up in mental vigor and he has been, for many years past, a power to reckon with in the social and business life of Carleton county. His trenchant pen, his well read mind, his deep and natural philosophy, his power to read men, made him a factor in the life of Carleton county, such as is possessed but by few.

His first newspaper venture was "The Carleton Advertiser" which made its first appearance in May, 1897, and to use his own words in a paper

for The Weekly Newspaper Association he said: "After seven years of misery I died and was long dead before I had the heart or business acumen to bury it. I was left with the few clothes I had and a host of creditors yearning for debts aggregating \$1500. While The Advertiser was dead and buried my ambition to establish a weekly was not, and it was not long before I got together a small plant and launched "The Observer." For a long time the way was very hard yet my zeal never wavered nor did my ambition fail. Every day in all the years I have been more eager to get-back to the office than I was to leave it near the middle of the night before."

Of the success of The Observer there is no need for us to tell the readers anything. They know. Suffice to say that The Carleton Observer is today in the forefront of weekly newspapers in New Brunswick, indeed in the whole Dominion. This paper published in a town of less than 900 population has a circulation of nearly 3,000 copies. The Observer which took the place of the Advertiser was started in 1909 and has continually grown not only in circulation but in prestige and influence and has been recognized by National Advertisers as one of the best advertising mediums in the country. The success of The Observer has been due not only to the newspaper sense, acumen and honor of the late president but to the fact that he gathered around him on his staff a loyal corps of workers. The esteem in which they held him being manifold at the time of his death and their loyalty to his memory in trying to "carry on" despite the shock which sudden death was to them. Another factor in the success of the paper is the splendid equipment of the printing plant which is equipped such as few weekly papers. All of which is directly due to Mr. Stevens' foresight and judgment.

The Observer Newspapers Limited is a company and associated with Mr. Stevens, helping him in his efforts to put out the best paper possible, and giving him that backing which is necessary to any man who is trying to accomplish things, were Sheriff A. R. and Mrs. Foster, H. H. Hatfield, Hon. P. B. Carvell and his sister, Miss Marion Stevens. Both Mr. Foster and Mr. Hatfield were deeply shocked at the death of one they had been so closely associated with in the past years and they are doing all they can, in the interval before Miss Stevens arrives home, to carry on the work with the aid of the loyal staff.

It is impossible to realize the difficulties under which Mr. Stevens accomplished his measure of success, his physical handicap would have daunted the majority of men but his frail body housed a dauntless spirit and in every good work of the town he became a part. He was secretary and one of the moving spirits of the Greenwood Cemetery Association and to keep the grave of loved ones beautiful and to make the cemetery a lovely spot was one of the things close to his heart. He was also a member of the Knights of Pythias. Nor were his interests merely local or his worth unrecognized in the larger affairs of the country. For several years he was a director of the Canadian Weekly Newspaper Association only retiring from that position in 1923. He was always present at their conventions and his popularity was evidenced by the fact that he was always spoken to by all the members by his first name and that they all sought him out. Whether on the train or in the numerous automobile trips they all did their part in making him as comfortable as possible. He was a contributor to newspapers and magazines and his ready pen always made his writings worthwhile.

In religion he was an Anglican and an appreciation of him by his pastor, Rev. W. P. Haigh, is here given:

"With the passing away of Mr. F. H. Stevens, Holy Trinity church loses one of its best supporters. Mr. Stevens was not a churchman by birth, but by conviction. He was a man who would not commit himself to anything without careful study, but when he arrived at a decision he had the courage to hold it, and if necessary to fight for it. He did not join the church in its most prosperous days, but when, in his home town, it was a weak, struggling body with no resident priest, no beautiful church, but only the old faith of our fathers to bring its teachings in touch with the people. Ever since he joined the church he has been keenly interested in its progress, and at all times ready to best his share of the work, and more than his share of the financial obligations. For eleven years he held the position of Churchwarden, and for a number of years sung in the choir. During his period of office a beautiful church has been erected, the services of a resident clergyman secured, and the church membership more than doubled. In all these works he took his part, and never at any time did his interest fail. He was at all times loyal to his rector, and many times his intimate knowledge of the minds (Continued on Editorial page)