

THE QUALITIES OF COUNTRY CORRESPONDENCE.

By Hale Bros., of The Orillia Packet.

IN the course of an interesting circular which the editors and publishers of The Orillia Packet have issued to their correspondents, they define the value of news in some pungent paragraphs. Messrs. Hale admit that they have set up what may be considered a strict standard, but this they are quite prepared to discuss and defend:

"Our definition of news would include the doings of public bodies of every kind, the movements of prominent people, meetings, sports, improvements, accidents, births, marriages, deaths, all happenings, in fact, which are not either petty or purely personal and private. But perhaps we can more easily define what we do not consider to be news. First and foremost in this category we wish to place personals regarding women. We cannot see that it is any business of the public, nor even that it is of interest to the world at large, that Miss Sally Smiles last week paid a flying visit to her friend, Miss Dorothy Dewdrop in the next township. At least, Packet space is much too precious for us to open our columns to the innumerable host of these trifling paragraphs that would pour in week by week. We are aware that in this respect The Packet differs from many papers, and, between ourselves, it is one of our chief difficulties to keep clear of this class of news. But we do not want it. At the same time we do not wish to exclude all paragraphs bearing on the travels of women. If a lady is visiting friends at a distance, in Quebec or Nova Scotia, or has gone to the Old Country, or if someone has lady visitors from farther away than the next county, the chronicling of the fact will make an excellent item of news. We have no wish either for paragraphs announcing that some man has come over from a neighboring village for a day, or that a commercial traveler has been in town. We make the distinction between men and women solely on the ground that the travels of the former are more seldom of a purely private nature, and are, therefore, as a rule, of more widespread interest. By observing the column under that heading, correspondents will be able to gather what is our idea of 'personals.'

"'Mysterious' items, personal innuendoes, etc., understood only by one or two, or having a sting for somebody, are, of course, outside our definition of news. A newspaper, in our opinion, should never be made the vehicle of private revenge, either by the editor or his correspondents. We may add that we are seldom called upon to eliminate such paragraphs from the 'copy' of our correspondents, though in some papers they make up the bulk of the 'news.'

"After some consideration we have come to the conclusion, too, that school honor rolls are not of sufficient interest to justify the large amount of space they consume.

"There are also one or two classes of legitimate news upon which we should like to say a few words. The first is general news—of which the weather is the best example. When there is a general rain it is hardly necessary to mention it under twenty different headings when one two-line paragraph would cover the whole ground. At the same time, if it damaged the crops or damaged one class of produce and not another—did anything out of the ordinary—it may make an excellent paragraph. Then there is politics. The discussion of general political questions we prefer to have left to the editor and the columns devoted to that purpose. But items of local political news are

always acceptable, and should be made absolutely fair, no matter with which side of politics they deal. There is also the matter of advance notices of entertainments, etc. For all such in town we have a uniform charge of ten cents a line. But with our district correspondents we are not so strict, and we are willing to mention the date, character and objects (not the admittance fee and such details, which should be reserved for the bills) of an entertainment in the country. We do not think it fair at the same time that such free notices should take the place of bills, or some form of paid advertising. We would ask that it be borne in mind that advertising is the very life-blood of a paper, and that announcements of concerts are advertising pure and simple. In this, as in the other matters referred to in this paragraph, we trust largely to the judgment of our correspondents.

"Correspondents may sometimes be annoyed at the exclusion of paragraphs which do not violate any of these rules, without apparent reason. The editing of all correspondence is the privilege, nay it is the duty, of the editor of every newspaper. Scarcely half of the matter that is received can be accepted. An item may not be printed for any one of numberless reasons. Sometimes space or time may be pressing; sometimes the news may have been sent by someone else; sometimes it may happen that a perfectly innocent piece of news may appear suspicious—may appear to hit somebody or seem likely to cause trouble. An editor is always more or less afraid of libel suits, and if he is wise he will try never to give offence unnecessarily. So that he should err on the safe side. We trust as far as possible to our correspondents to steer us clear of such pitfalls. Yet we wish it to be understood that we claim the privilege of editing all copy for The Packet. But if at any time you think you have reason to feel aggrieved we should like to have you say so, and we hope that we shall be able to give satisfactory explanations.

"A word before concluding, as to regularity and punctuality. We like to get something every week from each of our correspondents if possible. To our readers in each section the home news is the best news, and they nearly all look first for it, and are disappointed if there is no correspondence. Then, the earlier correspondence reaches us the better, and, unless under unusual circumstances, it should never be put off so as to come to hand later than Tuesday. A second envelope may be sent if anything important happens after the first has been dispatched. The reason for this will be evident when we tell you that just as soon as one Packet is in the post-office, we begin work on the next, and that two pages are printed on Monday. Some people imagine that a paper is made up on the day before publication, whereas the fact is that only pressing matter is accepted on that day. Envelopes containing copy should not be sealed. When they are closed it costs us four cents each to get them out of the post-office."

The circular concludes with a courteous expression of thanks to correspondents, and the desire at all times to receive suggestions.

FORMERLY A PRINTER.

Mr. John L. Bittinger, the new United States consul-general at Montreal, was previously engaged in the printing business. He began at the case and worked his way up to the manager's chair of a large paper. He belonged to the typographical union at St. Joseph, Mo., and the union there has sent to the Montreal union a warm commendation of the new consul-general.