

THE EDITOR'S EQUIPMENT.

A WESTERN MAN'S POINTED REFLECTION ON THE QUALITIES REQUIRED.

UNDER the title "The Make-Ready," W. H. Bloom, of The Sutherland, Ia., Courier, contributed a paper to a western press association. He said:

Technically, this expression refers to a part of the regular, everyday work of a printing office, and in that sense is a proper subject for discussion at such a meeting as this. No doubt, such a discussion might result in decided benefit to all, but for some time the idea has been running in my mind that there is another sense in which the term, "make ready," might be used, and that, possibly, we pay too little attention to that sense of the term. For that reason, perhaps, more than any other, I have concluded to turn your thoughts as well as I may toward the "make-ready" of ourselves for our profession; and I would limit the discussion to editorial work as a profession, and not as a business.

Should the subject be taken up as a business matter, it would probably be easy to say what preparation should be made. If you would succeed you should store your mind with the knowledge of a Gladstone, your pocket with the wealth of a Vanderbilt, your soul with the patience of a Job, and have within your being the inborn wisdom of a Solomon. Then, when thus equipped, you should—go into some other business.

Seriously, however, men in any and every line of business are likely to advise you to do something else. But we can't all follow this advice. There are some successful people in all lines of work—except, possibly, that of running a threshing machine; that is said to be sure to ruin the man who keeps at it. But there are successful editors, and, as "hope springs eternal in the human breast," we all think that we, too, may enter the charmed circle.

But would it not be well for everyone who thinks of trying to tread the editorial path to success to first make an invoice of what he can use and what he absolutely needs; next, take an inventory of what he actually possesses, and then carefully and critically compare the two and decide as to the wisdom of tackling the job?

The first thing one naturally thinks of is educational qualifications. What should these be? Undoubtedly, you should have a collegiate training, if you can get it. It isn't absolutely necessary to get your knowledge at a college; it can be gotten, we all know, right in the midst of work for daily bread. But getting it that way is slower, and sometimes we are confined to narrower limits, and we are very likely to get some erroneous notions; for we do not often have the advice and aid of trained and developed minds, as the collegian has. We are more likely to waste time in working out ideas that are not worth the effort we put on them. Then, too, the self-made man is sometimes too prone to religion—to worship his "maker" too much.

But, whether our education is obtained in school or out, let it be as broad and thorough as we can make it. The nearer we come to knowing everything, the better we are equipped for editorial work. The next best thing to universal knowledge is the knowledge of where to get any information we may lack.

So far, what has been said will apply equally as well to the consideration of any profession. But there are things that apply more forcibly to the editor's work than to that of any other.

The editor should have such powers of observation that nothing escapes his notice, and he must have a real interest in everything he sees. He should be able to hold his mind closely to everything that comes within reach of his senses, from a prayer-meeting to a baseball game; from universal gravitation to the latest slang. He should have the power to observe clearly, consecutively, logically, completely and discriminately. Clearly, that he shall not misrepresent; consecutively, that he shall not confuse the order of a series of events; logically, that he shall not attribute results to the wrong causes; completely, that he shall omit no important point; and discriminately, that he may omit non-essentials.

He should know the English language so that he can use it correctly, clearly and powerfully. He should understand the meaning and force of the words he uses. He should know, for example, that when he says "It rained during the day," he has stated that the rain lasted through the entire day; that when he says, "We will be glad to hear from him again," he has informed his readers of his purpose or determination to be pleased—whether he would naturally like it or not. The English language is a wonderful instrument with which to express thought, and the editor who uses it should have the best knowledge of it he can possibly obtain. And his knowledge should include the ability to spell, capitalize and punctuate correctly. Punctuation is one of the most elusive and yet most powerful aids one can use to express what he wants to say. The editor should also be able to read proof accurately. In this he must have good powers of observation as to form, and the ability to see a large number of things at once and note anything that is out of harmony with the rest.

But all this can have but little effect, so far as we here are concerned. We are already in the harness, and have determined already that we are properly qualified and equipped for editorial work. Yet, there is something further left for us to do. In choosing our apprentices, we can study them better than they can study themselves, and can take an inventory of their qualifications and judge whether they are as well prepared as they should be for the work. In the country office the boy who starts to learn the mechanical part of newspaper work is likely ere long to try the editorial part also. If we are convinced that a boy has not the natural ability and is not likely to get the necessary training for successful editorial work, are we not doing him an injustice by encouraging him to go on? We should by all means encourage and help every willing youth, but let us not encourage him to attempt that for which he is not, and is certain not to become, properly fitted. If we would benefit the profession, let us pay more attention to the editorial "make-ready."

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