

PIONEER JOURNALISM.

MR. ERASTUS JACKSON'S ABLE PAPER THEREABOUT.

A Reminiscence Treated Given to the Members of the Canadian Press Association—Vivid Sketch of Papers, Paper Men and Their Methods in the Early Days.

In preparing this paper on "Pioneer Journalism," I have been exercised somewhat to understand just the line of thought desired by the Executive Committee, or what would prove acceptable and edifying to the association. The more I considered, the stronger grew the impression that something comparative respecting the labors and methods of half a century ago, and to-day—including, in this connection, a little personal experience, would meet the purpose desired, and perhaps afford thought for reflection not altogether unprofitable.

The journalist of to-day, with all the varied advantages and facilities which the genius and progressive development of the age places at his command, can form but a very inadequate conception of what journalism meant fifty or sixty years ago—of the round of duties the journalist was called upon to discharge, or the functions he was expected to exercise in the community. My own recollections date back to the forties, about the time the Globe was first issued by the late Geo. Brown—when the old Examiner published by Mr. Leslie, was a power in this province, having such men as the late Sir Francis Hincks, and other vigorous thinkers contributing to its editorial columns—when the old Colonist under the direction of Mr. Scobie, was in the zenith of its greatness—when, a few years later, Hon. Mr. Macdougall entered the journalistic field with the North American, and having on his staff writers such as the late Mr. Ure, whom the old Parliament of Canada cited to the bar of the House on a matter of privilege—when Mr. Lyon Mackenzie talked loud and strong to men in high positions, demanding constitutional changes through his Message, and when the Patriot and Catholic Citizen were organs of the Orange and Green. These were the leading political journals in Toronto at that time. Later on the Leader, with Mr. Lindsay as editor, made its appearance; and after a time the Colonist and Patriot became incorporated with it; and the Examiner and North American amalgamated with the Globe. Most of these journals down to 1850 and 1852, were printed on Washington hand presses, and enjoyed a circulation almost equal to the extent of their ability to supply. The men conducting the editorial departments were giants in intellectual greatness. Important public questions divided political parties, and these talking to the country presented weighty arguments for thinking people to consider. As a result one or more of the journals just named, found a place in the homes of the educated and moderately wealthy everywhere, and a fair measure of success, financially, accrued to publishers. But the country editor, conducting what is familiarly termed the "rural press" did not fare quite so sumptuously. He had to unite in his own person the editor, the printer, the reporter, the pressman, and sometimes (failing the possession of a genial and considerate partner of domestic joys and sorrows as an assistant, to perform the task of inking the forms), he had to be both pressman and printer's devil. It was no bonanza to be a publisher under circumstances of this character. Those of you who have become identified with journalism within the last decade or two, go back with me to the days when, instead of receiving daily cablegrams from over the sea, furnishing the latest political, commercial and social events in the busy centres of the old world, we had to be content with the mails brought over in fortnightly steam-packets, bringing correspondence and papers 3 weeks old, from which to collate foreign news—when we had no telegraph as a means of communication in the country—before the genius of a later period, chained the lightning's power to obey an editor's behest and lessen his weary toil—before Edison's masterful mind conceived the marvelous method of inter-communication with the telephone service, and thereby enabling the news-gatherer of to-day to be almost ubiquitous—before lightning-express trains superseded the old mail coach in carrying daily papers from our cities in time for perusal by country journalists immediately after partaking of their morning meal, then compare the situation with the opportunities, facilities and appliances which modern inventions, mechanical genius, and the development of science, now places at a publisher's command, and you will be able to form some conception of what pioneer journalism meant even within the limited period of the past half century. At the time when I now speak, country journals were not so numerous, opportunities to scissor copy from contemporaries of neighboring towns, without giving credit as to source, were not then enjoyed, patent presses and outwards were unknown in newspaperdom, and boiler-plate had yet to be introduced to the publishing world; and of those that were published, I am free to admit, very few were conducted with the spirit and vim of many country journals of to-day. But at that early time it was difficult to secure local correspondents. Now, with the advantages our school system has given, almost every concession line can furnish as many scribes as the editor desires, who take delight in preparing a weekly budget of local gossip and happenings of the neighborhood—tell of the little stranger just arrived at Squire Jenkins' being a farm hand, or an assistant to the amiable lady of the Squire in her household duties, and such other incidents as are of special interest to country readers. In this regard the methods of conducting a local journal as compared with the past, presents a revolution, and the editor's personal duties and labors are very much lessened.

The pioneer journalist had another serious drawback in being handicapped in the matter of postage. The ordinary half ounce letter was taxed nine-pence (18cts), for the carriage of 100 miles—then graded down to four pence, according to distance; but now marked press correspondence is carried the length and breadth of the land for a cent only. Then, too, subscribers were taxed postage on their papers, and this outlay they reckoned upon as part of the paper's subscription. This led to agitation, and as the power of the press became more potent as a factor controlling public life, its demands for the removal of this import was felt in parliament. A

reduction in postage followed to subscribers making regular quarterly payments,—but this was unsatisfactory, and an undercurrent of sentiment prevailed that the people paid more money into local post offices than found its way into the Postmaster-General's department, and another change followed.

By way of making sure of collections the government transferred the import from the subscriber to the publisher. This was a serious matter to the latter. The credit system prevailed to a large extent in ordinary business and mercantile life, and the publisher had to follow this custom; but under the then existing postal regulation he was placed at a double disadvantage. In case a subscriber proved delinquent or moved away from a locality without intimating his changed address, a month or two after such removal the post-master would return a back number marked, "removed," or "out," in which case the publisher was not only "out" the amount the delinquent owed, but also the postage for conveying the paper to his address. Of course this led to further agitation, and finally the regulation was changed to free postage, a change largely brought about through leading journalists whose names stand connected with the early history of the Canadian Press Association. They presented, for the consideration of the government, the fact that the press was a public educator, doing a work that no other agency then existing could do, and also that through the press much gratuitous information respecting legislation and other matters along that line, of advantage to the whole country and important that the masses should be cognizant of, was being disseminated, and in this way the press was giving a quid pro quo for all the loss the country would sustain by the removal of this burden. The boon was finally granted, but all the same, while the tax was continued it militated against extended circulation in country parts, for a newspaper in those days was regarded more as a luxury than a necessity, by the middle classes.

Hence, newspaper readers were limited as compared to the whole population. A dozen or so, perhaps, at each local post office was about the extent, and the papers sent to these did duty for the entire neighborhood. Happily for the journalist of to-day the newspaper borrower who entertained no scruples of conscience in thus filching from the printer his hard-earned patrimony, has now become almost extinct in the dawn of a brighter intelligence. As an outcome of our noble school system, founded about the period of which I am speaking, by that indefatigable friend of education, Dr. Ryerson, a taste for reading was created, a thirst for knowledge developed, a desire to know what was transpiring in the wide world around was manifested; this desire the newspaper of to-day gratifies, so that now the family without its chosen journal is the exception rather than the rule. But from the very fact that the patrons of a journal were trusted, the sphere of the pioneer journalist was circumscribed. Those who took an active interest in the political questions of the day, comprised the majority of his readers. The editor, therefore, had to be a partisan politician first, local news was considered a secondary matter. Important issues then dividing political parties, served to draw strong and sharp the lines of divergence. Prejudices created by the outbreak of '37, still exercised potent influences at each recurring general election, and in dealing with such issues as the Secularization of the Reserves in Upper Canada, the abolition of Senatorial Tenures in Lower Canada, Separate Schools, etc., editors sometimes took off their coats and rolled up their sleeves, and their patrons increased to such an extent that, as I previously observed, it was found difficult, with the appliances then at command, to supply the demand. Fast double cylinder presses to enable the rapid issue of an edition numbering into the thousands per hour were then unknown. Most of the papers of the country were printed on hand-presses, on which eight to ten tokens per diem was considered a good days work. Possibility of numbers was therefore, limited; but to-day many country printing offices have a circulation that could scarcely be printed on a publication. Then, too, our printing offices were not furnished with addressing machines to enable rapid despatch in mailing, genius had not developed this important appliance; and oftentimes the country editor would take his turn at the press, run off a token or two, then by way of change and for a rest would busy himself folding, addressing and bundling, ready for post, the papers he had just printed, and through his weekly editions. It was quite a common thing for the editor to labor at the compositor's case during the day, and by way of change, toil on far into the night by the light of a tallow candle, preparing matter for the next day, posting books, answering correspondents, and cogitating over some scheme by which he could transform corn, wheat, lumber, potatoes, cabbage, turnips and other products of the farm or garden, into the wherewith to enable him to meet the pressing demands of a financial character, urged by his paper-maker, who then, in the generosity and kindness of his disposition, only charged from 10c to 12c per lb. for an article that to-day they will button-hole members of the Fourth Estate on the streets to make contracts for at one-third that price.

Advertisements were everything to a newspaper man in those days; but the real value of the press as an advertising medium was not so generally understood or appreciated. The merchant who ex-

pected \$25 per annum in the use of printer's ink, drew a long sigh when his bill was presented, and would facetiously enquire if the Knight of the Quill and Scissors intended starting a bank or some other financial institution, or desired to purchase a full partnership in the store; but he never failed, in his contra account, to charge a credit price for all the goods the editor had purchased while its advertisement was running. These were the days when quack medicine dealers got in their fine work. Halloway's or Swain's Pills and Sant's Sarsaparilla could secure a whole column for 12 months for from \$20 to \$25, one-quarter to be taken in goods, which the editor had to peddle out at various prices to local druggists and grocers, or take the amount. But there was another side to the picture. There were times when he had opportunity to play the role of Sir Oracle, and assume much importance. The picnic and agricultural fair seasons afforded more than usual opportunities for the Jones and Smiths to bestow patronizing attention; it was gratifying for the time, but this was about all the editor did get for a quarter column notice of the gathering in advance and a column of reported proceedings after it was over. During the party, he received special consideration, however. The best viands the fair sex had provided for the occasion was not considered too good for the printer, and the hearty generosity of the more elderly dames had much in it to compensate for what the editor had pleasure in repaying in full some but appreciative compliments through his paper. I remember an instance, away back in the forties, when the editor of a journal, who by the way, was a clergyman in orders, was called by the editor to discharge other duties not usually performed by members of the Fourth Estate. One day while the office janitor was alternating between the composing room and sanctum in anxious quest for copy, a young and hardy son of toil from the country, with a fair and blushing damsel accompanying him, entered the editor's apartments. After adding the time of day he presented to the editor a formidable official document, bearing an endorsement, which in those days cost \$5, but can now be procured by order of Sir Oliver Mowat's Government for \$3, and bashfully inquired if the editor could there and then tie a Hymenial knot. With a bland smile, engendered partially by the novelty of the situation, and partially, no doubt, from the fact that it meant also something towards replenishing a not over-flowing pocket book, he replied in the affirmative. The employees of the composing room, from the foreman to the character bearing the distinctive appellation of His Satanic Majesty, got an invitation to witness the ceremony. In due time the happy twain were made one according to the laws of Upper and Lower Canada, and left the office enjoying each other's smiles as happy as if the nuptials had been celebrated in a spacious cathedral; but the incident was the subject of little office jokes for weeks after. The clergyman editor referred to was the late Rev. Dr. Webster, who commenced his journalistic labors in 1845 on the Canada Christian Advocate, afterwards removed to Hamilton; and the office "Imp" aforesaid was your humble servant, let me add, all the printers who witnessed the ceremony, in good old fashioned style, saluted the bride on the occasion, according to the custom of the times.

Perhaps some of you may ask, "had the journalists of those days any newspaper cranks?" Oh yes; plenty of them, and quite as unreasonable as they are to-day. Literary cranks, who, in articles several columns long, endeavored to scale, or unravel, hidden mysteries, or storm the awful and impenetrable; poetic cranks, whose effusions were a sort of jingle, without rhyme or reason, and whose estimation of the editor went a long way below zero on account of declining their effusions. Yes, and business cranks, too, who declined to advertise because the paper had no circulation to speak of, and was without influence; nobody read it, but if they happened to get into some scrape, they looked around the editor's sanctum like a pea on a hot stove, beseeching him not to mention his foibles, as he did not want his name emblazoned all over the country to his injury. Oh! yes, he would then realize that the paper had not only influence, but circulation, and that people did read it. There were plenty of other cranks of this description, but I shall not stop to allude to them now.

A brief mention of the journals in this Province in existence previous to 1850 would, perhaps, not be out of place. I have already alluded to those in Toronto except denominational auspices. Kingston then had its Whig and Chronicle, and one of which the Herald was merged; Hamilton its Spectator and another previous to the Times, but of which I cannot recall; London its Citizen, and I believe another journal called the By-Town Gazette—but of this I am not certain. Then commencing with country journals in the east, Cornwall had its Freeholder; Prescott its Telegraph; Brantford its Recorder—long conducted by an old ex-President of this Association, Father Wylie, the Perth Courier looked after Lanark County; Picton had two papers, the Gazette and Times; Belleville had its Intelligencer, then published by Mr. Benjamin, and afterwards by Hon. Mackenzie Bowell; also its Chronicle, then conducted, I believe, by Mr. Washburne; Carleton Place had its Herald; Cobourg its Star by Mr. Chatterton; and for a brief period The Provincialist, by Prof. Kingston, and a third journal called The Courier, by Mr. Leonard; Port Hope its New Telegraph; Peterboro' Review by Mr. Romaine, and Examiner by Mr. Sawyer, whose chief writer was a genial son of Erin by the name of McCurrall—a vigorous controversialist; Streetsville had its Review, ably edited by Rev. Mr. McGeorge; Guelph its Advertiser and Herald, the former conducted by an old member of this association, Mr. John Smith, and the latter by Mr. Geo. Pirio, father of your Vice-President; Dundas had its Warder, with which Mr. Spence was then connected, if I recollect rightly, a gentleman who afterwards occupied a prominent position in the politics of this province. He was succeeded by Mr. Jones, later of Ottawa and the latter by ex-President Somerville, now superannuated with M.P. attached to his name; Brantford had its Courier and in 1851 the Expositor made its appearance; Paris had its Star; Galt its Reformer and Reporter, the former being conducted later on by ex-President Hon. James Young; Fergus had its News Record; Huron its Signal, then under a vigorous writer named McGuire; St. Catharines its Journal and Constitutional, the latter edited by an old member of this association, Mr. Seymour; Chatham had its

Planet, and Niagara a spicy paper called The Mail; Owen Sound had its Comet, conducted by Mr. Vandusen, and subsequently ex-President Campbell had some connection with it. There may possibly have been others that should be named, but if so they have slipped my memory. During the next decade from 1850 to 1860 the country press doubled its numbers, and all along the line the activities of towns and villages were quickened by the impulse and influence local journals imparted. The Barrie Advance was the pioneer paper for Simcoe county about 1851, and in 1853 the Newmarket Era made its appearance as the first newspaper in York County, and which I controlled from 1853 until it passed into the hands of its present publisher about ten years ago. It was my large privilege to be one of the jolly company comprising the first excursion under the auspices of the Canadian Press Association, the route being from Toronto to Belle Ewart by rail, thence per steamer over Lake Simcoe to Orillia and return. Many of the men connected with the journals named have passed away, but they are not forgotten. They left their impress on the respective communities in which they lived and toiled. Most of them were self-made men, in some instances lacking the culture and advantages which our present system of education affords, but their names will live in the memory of the people among whom they labored long after contemporary citizens in other walks of life will have been forgotten. They took an active part in all that contributed to the material and social well-being of their respective communities, filling important positions of trust such as school-trustees, members of municipal councils, directors of mechanics' institutes and agricultural associations, etc., and their names will be found enrolled in connection with various local organizations and benevolent enterprises, having for their aim the welfare of society and the uplifting of humanity. True, they were sometimes vehement in controversy—criticized with severity, possibly, and on occasions indulged in personalities in place of argument; but the influence of this Association, within a very few years after its organization, softened much of the asperity previously indulged in. The yearly co-mingling together at annual gatherings made members of the press think better of each other—and that influence is being felt to-day—a hopeful sign for the future.—Paper read by Mr. Erastus Jackson, of Newmarket, before the Canadian Press Association.

The Glasgow House.

Some hustle for business; others don't. But the firm that does it gets to the front.

We're on the hustle to catch your spring business, and we want to see everybody on the jump to get their share of the value we are offering in

Spring

Dry Goods,
Groceries,
Clothing,
Boots,
Shoes,
Etc.

JNO. BRETHOUR,
FIRE AND STOCK
Insurance Agent
WROXETER.

REPRESENTS:
Wellington Mutual Fire Insurance Co.
Waterloo Mutual Fire Insurance Co.
Perth Mutual Fire Insurance Co.
Economical Mutual Fire Insurance Co.
Mercantile Insurance Co.
Etina Insurance Co.
Give John A Call.

In Gents' Furnishings, Suitings, Etc.,
WE SHINE!

In Dress Goods we have better value than ever.
(Our Imported Goods are 15 per c. better value than ordinary. See our Lace Curtains.)

WHERE
ARE YOU
MOVING TO?
We are going to
CHIPPEWA
Co., Michigan, near Sault
Ste Marie.

In BOOTS AND SHOES
We are Rock Bottom.

YOU can't go wrong when you buy from us, because we have just one way of doing business, and that is to give a dollar's worth of Good Quality for a Dollar of any man's money.

WHY DO YOU GO THERE?
Well, we have five boys, we have sold the farm for \$5,000. We can buy 640 acres between Pickford and the Railway station at Rudyard, and have a good farm for each of the boys and have money left.

We have the
Newest Styles and Rock Bottom
Prices.

The Verdict on inspection is:

I saw their many bargains,
I nailed some on the spot;
There may be others just as good,
But

I guess
not!

What can a renter do there?
He can buy a farm on five years time, and pay for it with one-fourth of the money he would pay for rents in that time, and own his own home.

Is it good land?
As good as any in Huron Co., Excellent for Oats, Peas, Wheat, Clover, Timothy, Potatoes and all kinds of roots. Prices are as good as any on the lakes, owing to the nearness of the mines and lumber woods to the westward.

Any person whose Cash \$30.00 purchases aggregate gets their choice of any one of the Pictures on exhibition at our Store.

One-half amount of produce is allowed on above. Be sure and get your picture cards punched and get a picture. It will cost you nothing to try for one, as you will make money on every deal.

Produce taken.

E. C. DAVIDSON,
Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.

Jno. MONTGOMERY,
FORDWICH, Ont.
For Maps, Circulars and full particulars.

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