

at the exchange desk, or some of the very few lines of special work where agility of mind and limb are not prime requisites.

Sometimes a man is fortunate enough to acquire knowledge on certain lines valuable enough to keep him from the universal fate when he can no longer hustle. He may be able to "do politics," or may have acquired so wide and valuable an acquaintance among "old timers" that the paper sees its way to give him a meagre living in return for the knowledge which it has taken him years of the most active and unremitting labor to acquire.

The chances, however, are considerably against this, and sprightliness of legs is as universal and essential a requirement in the local room as is sprightliness of mind or pen. The ghost of coming old age is in the closet of every local room, and, for that matter, every editorial room.

One of the most pathetic figures to be seen in a big city is the "old reporter," who is still trying to keep up with the young men and ward off the fatal day when he will be forced out of the ranks of active workers. Unlike even the betrayer of the Saviour, he then finds that there has been no place prepared for him.

In contrast to this situation, which has been mildly drawn, let us look at the country newspaper, the rewards and the opportunities which it offers.

Independence, individuality, honor and an indefinite tenure of service are among the most alluring of these. Here the man of the most modest means—and in some cases of no means at all—may become his own master, or at worst his own slave, which is infinitely better than being someone else's slave, under the lash of a hired taskmaster—which is the best thing that can be said of service upon the big city daily.

If he has a spark of originality or talent he has an open field for its exercise, and no blue pencilled "copy-reader" to hew his work down to the requirements of a cast-iron "policy," and nip the promise of originality in the bud as promptly as a council of Puritan elders would pluck a heresy.

The positions in the esteem of the community held by the editor of an average country paper, and the average worker on the staff of the metropolitan daily are not comparable. The former is universally recognized as an important factor in the social and political life of the community, and it is his own fault if he is not a leading factor.

The social standing of the city newspaper man, in nine cases out of ten, may be accurately described as a cipher. Perhaps the very nature, and especially the hours of his work, account very largely for this. They peremptorily deny him any participation in social life. The same is also true, in a large degree, regarding political preferment.

A chance slip may possibly put it in his power to unmake an alderman, a judge or a governor, but the chances are against it. And if he does, *en bono*? What does it profit him? Nothing, or so near to nothing that he will never be able to distinguish the difference.

If there is any profit in the transaction it seldom gets higher than the counting room. He has simply done his work as a cog in the big machine. The only honor which he enjoys is to be envied by those in positions under him and hated by those above him, who fear that he may ultimately displace them.

The only honor? No! When he goes back to the old country home to spend Christmas, if he is lucky enough to get

so long a holiday, he is received with no small blast of trumpets by the country editor and his sympathetic constituency.

Age has no fears for the country editor, other than those common to all humanity. The longer he has been identified with the community, the broader and closer is his hold upon the people which compose it. Years strengthen rather than weaken his grasp upon the vital sources of income and influence.

In the meantime he lives—not as a floating nonentity, but as a permanent and established factor in community life—and in most cases he enjoys comforts to which the city newspaper man, though the latter may receive twice his income, is a stranger.

He may have a home in which he is something more than an occasional caller, a late nocturnal visitor.

If the country editor has literary talents, as many of them have, his situation is ideal, as compared with that of the city newspaper man, for the realization of his hopes. Freedom is the great essential in literary work, and this he may have to a broad degree, for his work is such as may be delegated to others at a profit on their labor.

Moreover, he comes in close contact with those about him. He "rubs elbows" with them, as the expressive saying goes; and may enjoy a peace and leisure for character study, and the working out of that which is in him, which is an impossibility to the metropolitan newspaper slave, who owns neither his hours nor his soul, and who is possessed by the chronic fever of unrest, which renders him a hopeless exile to habits of thoughtfulness and contemplation.

This spirit of intemperate craving for artificial excitement is the one thing which prevents many a jaded city newspaper worker from going back to oft-envied "green pastures" of country newspaper life.

A VIEW OF ONTARIO'S WEEKLIES.

THE Toronto Telegram says: "One sign of national progress is the improvement in the quality of the country papers. Perhaps American commonwealths, equal in population to Ontario, have more papers, but no American state is served by a weekly press equalling in merit the weekly papers in Ontario.

"The improvement is in the spirit and purpose of the journals rather than in the typographical appearance, which was always good. The increasing attention which these journals are giving to the life that is being lived around them is to be praised. The work of the every-day historians who record the movements of great personages at the Corners is not to be sneered at. Canadians of common sense and true sympathies see something deeper in the paragraphs than any oddities which arouse laughter.

"Superior persons may discourage this tendency of country journalism to dignify the commonplace and emphasize the unimportant. The work of correspondents is increasing the value of local life. It is an amiable vanity, that of people who like to see the movements of themselves and their friends in print. The news that Bismarck had dined with the Emperor William interests the readers of the Oakville Star less than does the authoritative statement that 'Tom Brown is back from the city. Shake, Tom.'

"The difference is that Tom, the hero of this reference, was, in the days prior to his success in the city, part of the lives of