

overwhelmingly Freesoil, as the forerunner of the Republican party was then called; the Whigs had hardly gathered themselves together since the defeat of General Scott for the presidency; the Democrats, though dominant in State and Nation, and faithful to slavery at every election, did not greatly outnumber among us the zealots called Comeouters, who would not vote at all under a constitution recognizing the right of men to own men. Our paper was Freesoil, and its field was large among that vast majority of the people who believed that slavery would finally perish if kept out of the territories, and confined to the old Slave States. With the removal of the press to the country-seat there was a hope that this field could be widened, till every Freesoil voter became a subscriber. It did not fall out so; even of those who subscribed in the ardor of their political sympathies, many never paid; but our list was nevertheless handsomely increased, and numbered fifteen or sixteen hundred. I do not know how it may be now, but then most country papers had a list of four or five hundred subscribers; a few had a thousand, a very few twelve hundred, and these were fairly decimated by delinquents. We were so flown with hope that I remember there was serious talk of risking the loss of the delinquents on our list by exacting payment in advance: but the measure was thought too bold, and we compromised by demanding two dollars a year for the paper, and taking a dollar and a half if paid in advance. Twenty-five years later my brother, who had followed my father in the business, discovered that a man who never meant to pay for his paper would as lief owe two dollars a year for it as any less sum, and he at last risked the loss of the delinquents by requiring advance payment: it was an heroic venture, but it was perhaps time to make it.

The people of the county were mostly farmers, and of these nearly all were dairymen. The few manufactures were on a small scale, except perhaps the making of oars, which were shipped all over the world from the heart of the primeval forests densely wooding this region. The portable steam saw-mills dropped down on the borders of the woods have long since eaten their way through and through them, and devoured every stick of timber in most places, and drunk up the water-courses that the woods had once kept full; but at that time half the land was in the shadow of those mighty poplars and hickories, elms and chestnuts, ashes and hemlocks: and the meadows that pastured the herds of red cattle were dotted with stumps as thick as harvest stubble. Now there are not even stumps: the woods are gone, and the water-courses are torrents in spring, and beds of dry clay in summer. The meadows themselves have vanished, for it has been found that the strong yellow soil will produce more in grain than in milk. There

is more money in the hands of the farmers there, though there is still so little that by the city scale it would seem comically little, pathetically little; but forty years ago there was so much less than fifty dollars seldom passed through a farmer's hands in a year. Payment was made in kind rather than in coin, and every sort of farm produce was legal tender at the printing-office. Wood was welcome in any quantity, for the huge box-stove consumed it with inappeasable voracity, and then did not heat the wide low room which was at once editorial-room, composing-room, and press-room. Perhaps this was not so much the fault of the stove as of the building; in that cold lake-shore country the people dwelt in wooden structures almost as thin and flimsy as tents; and often in the first winter of our sojourn, the type froze solid with the water which the compositor put on it when he wished to distribute his case; the inking rollers had to be thawed before they could be used on the press, and if the current of the editor's soul had not been the most genial that ever flowed in this rough world, it must have been congealed at its source. The cases of type had to be placed very near the windows so as to get all the light there was, and they got all the cold too. From time to time the compositor's fingers became so stiff that blowing on them would not avail; he passed the time in excursions between his stand and the stove; in very cold weather, he practised the device of warming his whole case of types by the fire, and when it lost heat, warming it again. The man at the press-wheel was then the enviable man; those who handled the chill damp sheets of paper were no more fortunate than the compositors.

The first floor of our office-building was used by a sash and blind factory; there was a machine-shop somewhere in it, and a mill for sawing out shingles; and it was better fitted to the exercise of these robust industries than to the requirements of our more delicate craft. Later, we had a more comfortable place, in a new wooden "business block," and for several years before I left it, the office was domiciled in an old dwelling-house, which we bought, and which we used without much change. It could never have been a very luxurious dwelling, and my associations with it are of a wintry cold, scarcely less polar than we were inured to elsewhere. In fact the climate of that region is rough and fierce; and the lake winds have a malice sharper than the saltiest gales of the North Shore of Massachusetts. I know that there were lovely summers and lovelier autumns in my time there, full of sunsets of a strange, wild, melancholy splendor, I suppose from some atmospheric influence of the lake; but I think chiefly of the winters, so awful to us after the mild seasons of southern Ohio; the frosts of ten and twenty below; the village