

The Country Editor

Standard

January 25, 1840

A Country Editor

Is one who reads newspapers, selects miscellany, writes articles on all subjects, sets type, reads proof, works at press, folds papers and sometimes carries them, prints jobs, runs errands, cuts wood, works in the garden, talks to all his patrons who call, patiently receives blame for a thousand things that never were and never can be done, gets little money, has scarce time or materials to satisfy his hunger or to enjoy the quiet of nature's grand repose, "sleep," and esteems himself peculiarly happy if he is not assaulted and battered by some unprincipled demagogue who loves puppet shows and hires the rabble with a treat of cider brandy to vote him into some petty office. A man who does all this, and as much more not here recorded, you know must be rather a busy animal, and as he performs the work of so many different persons, he may justly be supposed their representative, and to have an indisputable right when speaking of himself, to use the plural number, and to say "We" on all occasions and in all places.

Beacon

May 21, 1891

The man who could run a paper to please everybody is said to have been left out of the ark.

Beacon

May 10, 1894

The Country Editor

The woes of the weekly newspaper publisher, or "country editor," as the daily papers sarcastically term him, form the theme of a readable sketch by "Octave Thanet" in the May *Scribner*. "Octave Thanet," who is known in private life as Miss Alice French, is a lady of charming manner, and gifted and observing withal. When at home her address is Davenport, Iowa. On one occasion she visited St. Andrews, and so

pleased was she with the manner in which the *Beacon* championed the cause of the place, that she became a yearly subscriber. Whether she has drawn any inspiration for her article from reading the pages of the *Beacon* we know not, but she certainly appears to possess an intimate knowledge of the trials and tribulations that the editorial flesh of a weekly paper is heir to. For the weekly editor has troubles that the city writer wots not of. The idea the city man possesses that life with the "country editor" is one perpetual holiday exists only in his imagination. The successful "country editor" has to have an "all-roundedness" about him that is not required of the toiler on the daily press. He must be acquainted with every department of his profession, and be a combination of editor, reporter, printer, proof-reader, press-man, engineer, financier, circulation-boomer and "devil," all in one. When the city writer sends his "copy" to the printer that is the last he sees of it until it appears in print, but not so with the "country editor"; he has to follow it through all of its stages. Frequently he has to "set up" the matter himself, and frequently he has to "grind" the press himself. He is expected to be able to indite editorials equal to any of the gilt-edged writers on the city press. His "locals" must be written up spicily, and when he descends to humor he must supply something equal to the best that Mark Twain or Bill Nye has produced. Being brought into closer contact with his readers than the city writer, he has to be more circumspect in his writings, otherwise he will be in perpetual hot water. If he says a good word for the "Grits," his Tory subscribers, who are thin-skinned, at once elevate their spinal columns and intimate that they will stop their paper and withdraw their advertising, and if he should err in the opposite direction, a like disaster is threatened by his "Grit" readers. If he keeps on the even tenor of his ways, and does not allow these trifles to disturb his serenity, he is accused of being too blamed independent for his own good. He is expected to publish all the local news of the neighborhood, but Heaven help him if he should tread on anybody's corns in so doing. If a leading citizen misbehaves, the editor is expected to overlook his offence or deal lightly with his "eccentricities," but if some poor devil who has not a groat nor a friend in the world commits a misdemeanor he must be "lashed" within an inch of his life. If John Brown gets drunk



Robert Edwin
Armstrong
(1858 -
1931), editor,
publisher,
typesetter,
and roving
reporter of the
*St. Andrews
Beacon*.
Charlotte
County
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(detail)

and destroys his neighbour's property, the fact must be written up in such a way that none of the aforesaid Brown's friends will take offence. If the opposite should happen there is a vacuum on the subscription list at once. If Bill Smith breaks into a store and steals everything he can lay his hands on, the editor will be blamed by Bill's friends if he takes any notice of the fact, and if he fails to do so, a score of others will be after him. The editor is expected to expose all the humbugs, denounce all the wrong-doers, hold up to public view all misdemeanants, censure all public officials who fail to do their sworn duty, do all the "dirty work"



The St. Andrews
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Feb. 9, 1911.
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of the community, subscribe to every scheme of benevolence, be patient with all the cranks who daily assail him, fight for the community in season and out of season, and all this for the honor of it, a few shekels in advertising, and \$1 a year.

Yet there is a bright side to the "country editor"'s life. Perhaps "Octave Thanet" will write it up in her own charming manner. If not, we may do so ourselves on some future occasion.

Beacon June 13, 1895

The editor wrote in his obituary notice that "the deceased was mild-mannered and big of heart," but the intelligent printer made him say that "the deceased was wild-mannered and big of head." And now the unfortunate quill driver has taken to the woods. His physicians say that his brain will never recover from the shock.

*Beacon***March 28, 1897**

"There's a divinity which shapes our ends rough, hew them how we will." It was a country editor who placed the comma as above.

*Beacon***April 8, 1897****A Tramp Printer**

He was a tramp printer - as poor as Job's turkey, and as proud and independent as an Indian prince. His breath had about it the perfume of gin and garlic, and his garments savoured of the box car and the barn. All his worldly goods were represented by two weather-worn and sadly wrecked grips, strapped together for the sake of convenience - pillows by night and companions in arms by day. He looked as if he had floated in with the tide when he struck the *Beacon* office, but it was soon learned that he had come by rail. At St. Stephen he had ensconced himself in a boxcar bound to Saint John, but the car was side-tracked at Watt [Junction], and he had to hustle out and seek for grub. Somebody let him tackle a wood pile, and by this means he got the cravings of the inner man satisfied and a chance opened up to get to St. Andrews. He made a beeline for the printing office the first thing, and the editor, recognizing in his weather-beaten countenance an old St. John typo, [prior to his editorship of the *Beacon*, Armstrong worked for the *St. John Evening Globe*] offered him a chance to lay in a store of provisions. But he wouldn't accept. "I'm as independent as a hog on ice," said he. "I'll work for my grub, or I'll starve. I've been feeding on wind pies and snow pudding for the last six days, and I can get along a day or two longer."

Seeing that he could not be moved, a "stand" was assigned him and, his sun-burned proboscis decorated with a huge pair of spectacles, he went to work. He was coaxed to take a lunch, and finally accepted by saying it would keep his stomach from rubbing too hard against his backbone. Under the influence of the food and drink he became communicative, and said that after the fire of '77

he left Saint John and struck out for Galveston, Texas. He labored there until he got a little pile together, when he began travelling, and he has been travelling ever since.

He worked the afternoon out, and then having received his wage, hustled off after a store of provender and a "little stimulant." Tuesday morning, he was on the sleepers again with his nose turned in the direction of St. John.

Beacon

April 17, 1902

A modest little dandelion reared its yellow head in front of the *Beacon* doorway on Tuesday, as if inviting newspaper recognition.

Beacon

Jan. 26, 1905

One of our upriver editors played in hard luck the other night. Just as he was about to step into his new \$5,000 car, two of his bed slates broke and he woke up.

Beacon

May 19, 1892

No one knows the amount of genuine, side-splitting fun a newspaper editor has during the course of a week. Monday morning he starts out, humming a psalm tune he has heard in church the day before, and before he has traversed two blocks he meets a man who wants to take his life because his name appeared in the paper the week previous. Tuesday finds the editor with the old, placid smile, but the day is not ended before a fellow with "blood in his eye" stops him and wants to know why in "scheol" his name is not good enough to be published in "your blankedly-blanked paper." By Wednesday morning the traces of the precious day's conflict have been dispelled from the editorial countenance, and its former seraphic appearance has returned. He greets his subscribers smilingly, but in one case the smile is not returned. "Stop my paper," says the disgruntled subscriber, "You put in a paragraph about Mrs. So-and-So's cow having died, and you wouldn't say anything about my cow, which was a better cow than Mrs. So-and-So's ten times over." Then on Thursday, the light-

hearted man of paper is dragged over the coals by somebody because he has not given a column to describing an entertainment which he has served up in a half a dozen lines, and all sorts of sinister motives are hinted at. On Friday, the editor is waylaid by another, who has discovered that an opinion expressed by the paper does not agree with one he holds on the same subject, and he wants to argue the editor out of it. Saturday is "pay-day." There are the usual number of kickers to be met with, but the newspaper publisher is so absorbed in trying to solve how it is possible to get \$50 out of \$20 and have any left that the complaints pass unheeded through his ears. On Sunday, he goes to church - like all good editors do - to pray for these who despitefully use him and persecute him, and he catches "fits" there at the hands of the preacher, because he, the aforesaid editor, is no better than he ought to be. Thus the days slip by, and the weeks roll around, and the years pass away - each day, and each week, and each year, adding to the newspaper man's large and growing stock of fun. No wonder he is such a happy mortal.

Beacon

Aug. 10, 1899

Maine Press Association Conclude Very Pleasant Outing by Calling upon St. Andrews

The Maine Press Association - a distinguished-looking party of ladies and gentlemen - invaded St. Andrews on Thursday morning last. They were out on their annual excursion, and as no excursion "down East" would be quite complete without a visit to St. Andrews, they determined to come hither and enjoy for an hour or two the bright and balmy sunshine and the pure, invigorating air of Canada's famed watering place.

On arriving here the newspaper men and women "distributed" themselves about the town, getting their "cases" full of information about the place. Some visited the churches, others explored the courthouse and jail and paid their devoirs to the lion and the unicorn, [Courthouse] while the remainder through force of habit, instinctively meandered towards the newspaper office.

All hands, however, were ready for the “make up” when Manager Harvey, of the Algonquin, announced at 12:30 that luncheon was awaiting them. As they disposed their “forms” about the well-filled tables, one and all were agreed that the Algonquin’s dining hall was “nonpareil” and its fare the finest and “fattest” that they had ever struck. The pretty, white-aproned waitresses smiled as they saw the quantity of “inside matter” that the pressmen and women “edited.” Some took “takes” of “solid” matter; others favored it “leaded” with a few “scareheads” thrown in. The “Roman punch” proved a great favorite. Some insisted upon a first and a second “proof” of this delectable dish, while one bolder than the rest requested a “revise.” Even some of the presswomen with white ribbons “at top of columns,” could not resist the charms of the confection with the “roman” head. Though generally opposed to “pi,” the knights and ladies of the quill were generous patrons of the Algonquin pastry. They kept the “galley” busy for a few minutes in attending to their wants in this line. The clock had almost reached the second hour before the diners felt “justified” in abandoning their “takes.” Then they repaired to the office, where they dropped their “coins” into the hotel “coin box.” After this very necessary performance was completed some of the visitors adjourned to the roof for a “period” to enjoy the delightful view that the hotel affords. “Exclamation points” were then in order. Some of the pressmen ran completely “out of sorts” in their efforts to find adjectives to fittingly describe the magnificent panorama that was spread before their astonished gaze.

The appearance of the carriages at three o’clock warned them that they must start on their “run” to the Eastport steamer. This they accomplished safely, though one veteran though he had left his “stick” behind.

At 4 o’clock the *Jeanette* arrived at her wharf, and the visitors with their “furniture” hastened on board in “single column” and were soon speeding towards Eastport, taking with them many favorable “impressions” of St. Andrews-by-the-Sea. Owing to the “press of matter” at the Eastport hostelrys the excursionists had to go to Hotel Ne-ma-ta-no, North Lubec, to get their “forms imposed” for the night. Their itinerary called for their return home on Saturday.