

## THIRTY YEARS IN JOURNALISM.

Read before the "Wednesday Morning Club" of Pittsfield, Mass.

It was Charles Dudley Warner, in a recent "Drawer," who told of a country clergyman, who, when his sermon was poor "hollered it up, good and loud." The sentiment was, however, forestalled by Crabbe, whose "village" sermon is "*loudly praised if it is preached aloud.*" I am afraid I cannot make up even in this simple way for my shortcomings, but must trust wholly to your goodness, and knowledge of the fact that such poor work as I have been able to do has been put hurriedly and silently upon paper, not "hollered" from pulpit or platform.

I well remember the sunny Sunday morning in early summer, just thirty-two years ago, when my father and I stopped at the post-office, on our way home from church, as was our custom; and I received, instead of the thin document I expected, a bulky package, containing a voluminous letter of my own. This letter had been sent the week before to a newspaper friend in New York, and described an event which had some importance, and seemed interesting enough to me to warrant a detailed account of its incidents and personages. My friend had been struck with what he was pleased to call the "good newspaper style," and read it to Mr. Charles A. Dana, then managing editor of the *New York Tribune*. Mr. Dana confirmed his judgment, and said: "If the author will revise it, taking out some of the personal allusions, I will print it." These momentous words were copied on a regular correspondence slip, which was all the formidable envelope contained besides my own letter; and can you imagine the thrill, the sudden opening wide of the whole universe which they occasioned?

It is not much now to write for newspapers—the ordinary "newspaper" man, and especially the "newspaper" woman in our large cities, has become so numerous as to be a very common thing, and is sometimes so unscrupulous as to be considered most undesirable for companionship or association. But in those days it was very different; there were then no "society" columns, no women correspondents, no woman's department in any newspaper. Barnum's Museum, *Arthur's Magazine*, and *Godey's Lady's Book*, were the recreations and the authorities of women, and they were all semi-religious and highly moral in tone and character, as befitted the literature and amusements for women and children.

The *Tribune* was a national power; it was a city of ideas set on a hill; it lay piled up by the side of the big Bible on the low, broad shelf of the bookcase in the sitting-room; it occupied this place in my father's estimation, and it was an even more real source of hope for the human race in mine. The world of aspiration in the direction of journalism was not entirely unknown to me. I had been the *Star*—the *Evening Star*, written on four pages of foolscap—of the Village Lyceum. I had spent weeks at the home of C. C. Wright, the artist and art critic, in New York. I had visited the studio of William Page; had been one of the crowd at the *Art Union* on Saturday afternoons; had met Albert Brisbane at a "Breakfast;" knew Fourier by heart, and had been "brought up" on Robert Owen, of whom my father was a disciple. Radical meetings had been held in our house in England; radical leaders had found a home there,

until it was considered worthy of being attacked and nearly demolished by a conservative mob, which is just as blood-thirsty as a radical mob; and then my father turned his thoughts to his *Mecca*; to the refuge of the crushed conscience of the Old World—to America; and we felt that we were a part of that multitude, whose voice is the PRESS.

Thirty years of experience have brought some realization with the decay of many hopes, but never could I feel again the sudden thrill that opened and transformed the whole world for me, and must have illumined my face, as we emerged from the old post-office on that lovely June morning; for my father said, "Remember, the sun will rise and shine just the same, whether your letter is printed in the *Tribune* or not."

It would, perhaps, be too much to say that I married in order to get on a newspaper, but I may say, that I certainly should not, if it had not been to a newspaper man. I had tried for a regular position on some one of the New York dailies, but was everywhere laughed at for my answer. "There was no place for women," I was assured, on a daily paper. They might do occasional "outside" work, but they could not be reporters, because they could not go where news had to be gathered, and they could not be editors, because they knew "nothing of politics." Current social topics in those days had no place in newspapers, social interests were limited to sentimental paragraphs, by the city editor, heading his half column of "items," of what he knew about the "first snow," "St. Valentine's Day," Good Friday, Shrove Tuesday, or the like.

The three great dailies in New York represented three great men, who in different ways had each impressed his personality upon his journal in an almost equal degree. Horace Greeley, James Gordon Bennett, and Henry J. Raymond. Always there is found some one man, or woman, behind anything which becomes a power; the gradual realization of this fact makes one a believer in a God—only a supreme intelligence could have developed, could maintain the order of the universe. The individuality of these men impressed itself vitally upon their papers, and the public, who followed their leadership. James Gordon Bennett represented the enterprise and foresight of the immediate future, Horace Greeley its advanced thought and unselfish spirit, Henry J. Raymond its policy and statesman-craft. Of the three Mr. Raymond had the truest journalistic instinct, and more of the formative spirit, but Mr. Bennett was supplemented by an intelligent man, and naturally skillful journalist, Mr. Frederick Hudson, who made the *New York Herald* a news-paper—the first one this country, or any other, had ever seen.

The first newspapers, small though they were, filled their miniature pages with moral aphorisms and pious sentiments. The news was crowded in a corner, briefly summarized, or neglected altogether, unless it found its way in the form of an advertisement. Mr. Hudson recognized the value of news, the *Herald* was poor, and could not afford to pay, nor was there any cable or telegraph lines to transmit it. Philadelphia was a more important port of entry in those early days than New York, but the Philadelphia papers, like those of New York, re-

corded the arrival of a vessel from England, and the interesting news it brought, in three lines, often out of sight, and without editorial reference. Mr. Hudson made a business of disinterring these items, amplifying them, spreading them out in double lead, making a vast number of head-lines, in every variety of big type, until the despised item became a column, which excited the attention and talk of the city, and was perhaps copied back, head-lines and all, into the paper from which it had been originally obtained; its editors being blissfully unconscious of the theft, and giving the credit to the New York journal.

Let me here say, the *Herald* would never have lived and become a power, had Mr. Bennett been only, or chiefly, the mean, unscrupulous man he has been so often described. In his way he was conscientious, ambitious only for his paper and his son—to found a name and a paper that should live. He was illiterate, but shrewd, and would do anything for any one who had the wit to attack him on his weak side.

As an evidence of this I may mention the case of an actress, which occurred about 1857. The artist had won her reputation outside of New York, but she wished to have it confirmed by the New York public; and she came under a three weeks' engagement to play a round of good, old, "legitimate" parts. She was not pretty, but she was clever, and she went at once, on her arrival, to Mr. Bennett, obtained a personal interview, cried a little, played a little bit of the friendless stranger in a great city, and declared she did not care a straw who was with her, or who against her, if she could only obtain the support of the New York *Herald*. Of course she did not want it to go against convictions, or speak of her as she did not deserve, but she had obtained a favorable verdict in other places, and if the *Herald* confirmed it, this was all she wanted. This tribute to the superiority of the *Herald*, as an *authority*, delighted Mr. Bennett. He issued immediate orders that a long, appreciate notice of this particular actress should appear every morning, during her engagement, in the columns of the paper; and Mr. Croly being then "city editor" and dramatic critic, when there was more of such work to be done than Mr. "Ned" Wilkins, the regular critic, could attend to, the every-night visit to the theater, for three weeks, fell to his share and mine, principally mine; for after the first three nights, the mention of her name was enough to make him forget all his early Christian training, and the fifteen remaining notices were my first individual effort in the field of dramatic criticism, which subsequently, for five years, was part of my regular journalistic work. Another evidence of the form that bribery and corruption took in those days was invented by a famous pie-woman, a Mrs. Horton. One Saturday a dozen immense and excellent apple-pies were left at the office, as a little contribution from kindly Mrs. Horton to the editorial-room "luncheon." But as the members of the staff all went out to lunch, there was a general order that anybody could take home a pie that wanted one. Mr. Croly not being proud, and knowing that I had a weakness for apple-pie, brought one home, and it was duly cut at table. But when the knife struck the center it encountered something hard, and further investigation discovered, quietly reposing in the midst of the rich, lemon-flavored syrup, a bright, new, silver fifty-cent piece. We did not know whether this

was by accident or design until, upon comparing notes, it was found that every pie contained a silver coin of equal value and equal newness and brightness.

No sterner school exists than a well-conducted newspaper office for aspiring young spirits who wish to air their ideas, and who believe the public is waiting to learn their opinion before it makes up its mind definitely upon a subject. Such ideas and opinions are usually at variance with those of the editor, and are set aside, cut remorselessly, or so ridiculed as to disgust the ambitious mind, and make it always wonder how a paper can be found to live with such a donkey at its head. But it does live and prosper, and so does the "donkey;" it is the opinion that is sacrificed. This fact illustrates Coleridge's saying that we may safely take every man's opinion of the value of that which he knows, but should distrust his opinion as to the worthlessness of that of which he is not capable of judging.

Those days of "rooms" and restaurant, of lunch on an olive and supper on an oyster for two, were not dark days by any means. I was happy at being, not on one, but several newspapers, for, in the very first year of my work, I initiated the system of duplicate correspondence, and have maintained my connection with some of the papers ever since. But my husband was a man of opinions, and while I was building castles he was nursing grievances. These resulted in the purchase of a weekly paper at the West, a Douglas Democratic organ, in a town of good Republican inhabitants, which had four weekly papers already, and where the fifth was naturally considered, although we did not know it till we got there, as the fifth spoke in a wheel.

But we had relinquished much, and sacrificed much; my husband did not wish to return, at least until all the money was spent, so we started a daily paper, to my great joy, as I knew that would use up the money faster, and bring us back to New York quicker, and we ran it merrily for a year and a half, at a time when it was said you could "buy up the whole North-west for fifty cents in specie," for the West was encountering three years of failure in crops, which meant failure of everything else, and almost all business was transacted by means of "orders" and a "wild-cat" currency. I could never get used to the "order" way of doing business, and never presented one but once, and that was for a pair of shoes. No thief ever entered premises with greater trepidation than I that shop, and before asking for shoes, I desperately laid the bit of paper before the proprietor, explaining that I had been requested to present it, but if he felt any reluctance, etc., stopping with what I had to say half said, and crimson with actual shame. But the good man only laughed heartily, said it was easy to see I was new to the West, and that I should get used to it, and in the meantime my paper "orders" should be received as if they were gold, fresh from the mint.

If we did not make money by our venture, we had lots of fun. We determined to make the Rockford *Daily News* intensely local, and I had two columns per day, of fresh news to gather and write, in an office from the window of which you could look across the bridge, which divided one side of the town from the other, for two hours, and not see a sign of life, in the shape of man, woman, boy, or hand-cart. I was, besides, the proof-reader, made up the headlines for the telegraphic dispatches, and conducted the New York and foreign correspondence. It was

a happy day for me when some thief stole the wooden bowl of prepared hash from the kitchen window of the hotel where we lived, and partly paid our board by printing the daily bills of fare, for I started with an item which stretched into half a column upon hash in general, and the Holland House hash in particular.

It may be imagined that I was reduced to sore straits, so that sometimes I would nominate some preposterous person for governor or other office, in order to get letters of remonstrance, which I would judiciously edit and print. Then there was always the Hon. Elisha P. Washburne, the standing Republican candidate for Congress, to "pitch into," notwithstanding which we were great friends, and continue to be so to this day. In fact he once assisted in the passage of a Working-Woman's Bill, because I represented that he had never half repaid me for the abuse I lavished on him. Of course, social events were chronicled, but it had not yet become fashionable to catalogue the cushions and tidies received as wedding presents, and these occasions, therefore, were compressed into paragraphs.

The social features were, however, a great part of the life of a Western town, and I remember well my consternation at the spectacle afforded by the first grand party I attended, and which it must be said, to properly understand the situation, was given in my honor. I had one party dress, only one; it was not gay, but it was handsome, and I had also a regulation opera-cloak. In those days ladies wore their opera-cloaks at all evening "dress" entertainments. I wanted to wear my one dress and my opera-cloak, but Mr. Croly vetoed. He said: "This is a little town, and they will call dressing in that way 'putting on New York airs;' go in as plain a dress as you have." I bowed to his superior judgment, though I doubted its correctness, for every one of my callers had been armed to the teeth with gloves immaculate, card-case, and handkerchief tip-tilted on the point of the forefinger, but I went in a plain, dark dress; went to find a beautiful house a blaze of light and color, grounds lit up with colored lanterns, every lady present except myself in white, pink, or blue satin, and I counted seventy-five white opera-cloaks, every one of them handsomer than mine.

It took us just sixteen months to spend all our money, and then we came back to New York, notwithstanding a public meeting called in the Town Hall of Rockford, at which the cost of running a daily paper for a year was guaranteed, if we would remain, but we wrote back: "No, gentlemen; thank you very much, but there is not a contributor of twenty-five cents who would not feel after that that he owned the paper, and had a right to dictate its opinions and policy, and we must work independently or not at all."

My first living child was three weeks old the day I returned to my post, which had been kept open for me, and which was our one resource until Mr. Croly found a position, which he fortunately did, upon the New York *World* from its start, it being then in embryo. Under these circumstances it was not the "World" to me, it was *Providence*, and remained so, for it was on the eve of the breaking out of the Civil War, the air was thick with rumors, and every one full of dark forebodings of unknown evil. In my office three persons constituted the editorial force—Colonel Du Solle, Spencer W. Cone, the father of Kate Claxton, and myself.

Mr. Cone was theatrical critic and contributed to the editorial columns; he received the munificent sum of fifteen dollars per week. I was mail editor, contributed a department of my own, wrote what were called minor editorials, and contributed also to the regular editorial columns, for ten dollars per week. On the breaking out of the war, the "flush" times which resulted from the immediate issue of abundant paper money, and the formation of a great debt, were not anticipated; newspapers especially looked for disaster; the force of our office, like that of many another, was reduced. Mr. Cone was dismissed, his work added to mine, and my salary raised from ten to twelve dollars and a half per week. The columns of the paper were very long and wide, the type small. I occupied this double place five years, contributing five columns of original matter per week, from one and a half to two columns of which were musical and theatrical criticism, besides a column of mail "siftings." At this same time I edited and wrote the whole of a fashion journal, was the fashion editor of the New York *World* and *Daily Times*—for thirteen years of one and eight years of the other; was the correspondent of numerous papers, and executed much order work; among other things got up a cook-book, after ten o'clock at night, in ten weeks, and did much book reviewing. Excepting once, for a short time, I never had any help in my work, neither secretary nor amanuensis—the pay did not admit of it. I had also set my heart on buying a home in New York city and getting rid of rent, and the rapid rise in real estate during and at the close of the war seemed to continually put the object farther out of my reach.

But the war did more than raise prices; it changed the whole aspect of American journalism. It brought the war correspondent to the front; it created individual reputations; it introduced the signed articles into newspaper columns, and, in short, laid the foundation of modern personal journalism.

Up to this time the American newspaper had represented its proprietor, but was otherwise like the English newspaper, strictly impersonal. Military exigencies demanded that writers on war topics should shoulder their own responsibilities; and in this way Mr. Whitelaw Reid, Col. "Tom" Knox, Richard T. Colburn, George Alfred Townsend, and other famous journalists were developed. The war also sharpened and stimulated the public appetite for news, but the news of twenty-five years ago was of a more questionable character even than it is now. Three columns to a prize-fight, a paragraph to a discovery. The social and scientific aspects of affairs were hardly touched. It is something more than twenty years ago since a New York paper, the *World*, with many misgivings, published Professor Huxley's paper on Protoplasm, and a lecture by Professor John Fiske on Positivism; to the astonishment of everybody they scored a success. There was an immense demand for the paper, on account of these particular features, and together they furnished the cue for the features of the *Sunday World*, the father of the later Sunday paper—a marvelous outgrowth, epitomizing all the work of the magazines, and giving us history, science, literature, biography, and the progressive movements of the universe in brief.

The worst side of the newspaper—the worst side of personal journalism is this—that it gives us the

exceptional side, and makes it seem the real and normal side. Crimes are made interesting, criminals heroes, and their doings chronicled as if they were kings and queens. It is the ambition of many persons to see themselves in print; and if a girl will get married to see her name in the newspaper, as one admitted she had done, why it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that a man would commit a murder in order to be the reigning newspaper sensation, and that he would exercise ingenuity to make it brutal as possible, knowing that this increases his sensational value.

We copied from the French the paragraph and the pun; but the French have not yet acquired our faculty for news. A well-known New York journalist was in Paris and in the immediate vicinity when a great fire occurred. He rushed off to the nearest newspaper office and volunteered to sit down and write two or three columns of details "by an eye-witness" for next morning's paper. The editor coolly informed him that a few lines would be sufficient about such an occurrence, but if he should hear a lively bit of scandal or personal gossip about any well-known personage, or a clever *bon-mot*, they would pay well for it. Since that time numerous country papers have built up a reputation on humorous paragraphs, consisting generally of pen-and-ink caricatures of personal or social characteristics; a sort of fun akin to that which was extracted, for a time, from the dislocation of words, but which seems now to have lost all point and force. The American newspaper joke and joker has, however, a flavor of its own, which is distinctly recognizable. Mr. William Black thought this faculty for seeing the funny side of every-day life, and epitomizing it in a brief sentence, peculiarly American, because so universal in American journalism. He said, at a dinner given him in New York, that the train never stopped at a station, when he was traveling in this country, that he did not try to buy a neighborhood paper, and it was rare that he was not repaid by finding some odd and quaint bit of wisdom or pathos under a comic mask, to add to the collection of newspaper wit and humor which he took home with him.

Newspapers develop in the public whom they address many curious phases of thought, which he who runs may read, and be admonished by, if he will. It does not want science that has been hung up to dry, or school-book facts and figures. But science that takes a new departure—that stimulates ideas; that opens the door to practical work; that enlarges our outlook, and suggests firmer ground for religious and speculative philosophy—is welcomed, and finds a large and eager circle among newspaper readers. The general public, too, represents the advocacy of a cause. It will not pay for being preached to, and resists any attempt to convert it to special ideas. Where a strong public opinion existed or has been created, an "organ" of it may enjoy a certain amount of prosperity, but it only reaches those who are already believers in the doctrine it advocates. A paper that starts to represent a cause must be sustained by individual effort, and often at great sacrifice, or fail altogether.

The latest modern idea is illustrated journalism. I was connected from the start with the first illustrated daily in the United States; and saw that the difficulty in the way of success was the effort to pour the old wine of politics and the police court into the new picture bottles. They could not stand it.

It took the pencil of Hogarth to make the rum-shop interesting, and even he could not make it so to-day. Dogs, prize-fights, police news, are bad enough in type, but how much worse, spread over whole pages in a coarse picture! Had the editors set aside their traditions; had they been trained to a knowledge of the requirements of the new field; had they cultivated the picturesque, the emotional, the romantic, and the social; in other words, presented the "inner" side or subjective transfer of life; made a bright, beautiful family paper, that every man would have wanted to carry home with him, the story of the first ten years of the first illustrated daily paper would have been different.

The second great difficulty was of a mechanical character. No good picture can be produced upon the "turtle," that is the rounded press. If the lithographic stone is ever rounded, so that pictures can be printed directly from it instead of the printing-press, it will cause a revolution in the newspaper. It would abolish the compositor, and bring the artist and scribe into direct relations with the reader. The London *Graphic* and *Illustrated News* are a prophecy of what our daily papers may be, if the circular lithographic stone becomes a well-rounded fact.

It is said that a process has been invented, and is now being developed, by which pictures in color, as well as in black and white, can be printed without the intervention of the stone. If this is true, the day is not distant when we shall have the beautiful and picturesque journal, one that will arouse the sympathies, stimulate the imagination, and satisfy the taste; as yet, they are little more than sensation-mongers, or tails to some ambitious politician's kite. The exceptional facts, that is, the crime and the scandal, will be relegated to a corner and put in small close type; the discovery, its relation to existing circumstances and conditions, the noble act, the great piece of work will, it is to be hoped, be put in colors and occupy the places of honor.

The novel of to-day gives us a truer picture of life as it is than the daily newspaper. The former may be inane, frivolous, but it is not more so than average society; the latter would make us believe that the race is composed of criminals and politicians, and that there is no difference between the two. Yet the newspaper is the most important and intimate element in our daily lives, except eating, and sleeping, and breathing. It is into this element, so cruel and dangerous in evil, so powerful in its possibilities for good, that art is coming to soften, to illumine, and we hope ennoble. What other great changes may take place in journalism in the near future can only be predicted from those we see occurring now. The telegraph is killing correspondence and discouraging fine, descriptive writing. People are too much in a hurry, they will no longer take the time to read it, all they want is the "facts." The great papers, like the great churches, represent wealth and its interests, and the small papers represent their advertisers. Mere news is becoming of secondary importance, for news slips, political news, financial news, sporting news, and the like, all that men are supposed to care for, are distributed all day and in the evening by messenger-boys in every broker's office, every great business house, and every bar-room in the great cities, and is all known before the morning paper is printed. What the newspaper seems to be prin-

cipally valued for just now is for doing individual gossiping, scolding, and backbiting on a large scale, and in a way that relieves the individual from responsibility.

Whether we have too many papers or not is an open question. Certainly the eternal iteration to which they are forced, in order to fill their pages, is wearisome beyond telling, while the multiplied repetition of personal gossip, usually untrue, is simply disgusting. The "old women" of the past, have been royally revenged for all the sneers and slights put upon their spectacled talks and tea parties, for back-door tittle-tattle of the meanest, most reckless sort has been made a business, has become the staple of some journals, and the indulgence of nearly all, while there is nothing apparently so low or so venomous that it cannot find a publisher.

That people read such stuff does not seem to me reason enough for printing it. Gossips and slanderers find listeners, but their listeners do not respect them. Descending to trivialities and the repetition of them *ad nauseam* lowers, has already lowered, the whole tone of the newspaper press, so that many avoid it and lose their interest in and con-

nection with its progress and its activities, because they cannot stand the slums they must wade through, or come in sight of, to get to them. I used to buy an evening paper on my way home from the office, until it took away my appetite, veiled the sunshine and made the whole universe a pest-house of living, breathing vileness and corruption. I changed it for the better, but my second venture is a purely *man's* paper, and in a chronic state of ill-temper. Shall we not have a daily paper, some time, that is at once bright, clear, pure, honest, and strong? One that works upward instead of downward; that has its hold upon the best things, and inspires us with new faith in them, and in their power to work out race redemption?

What part or lot are women to have in this new era? The future will tell that. Women have always done their share; they not only keep step, they furnish it to the march of the ages. They do what the time demands of them, whether it is grind the corn, spin the thread, pick the lint, or edit the paper; and like the typical fates of Michael Angelo, they are always engaged in weaving the web of continuous life and destiny.

JENNY JUNE.

## GOD'S ACRE.

In Germany, in an old churchyard,  
Is a grave where riotous roses nod,  
Sheltering close in its earthy bed  
The remains of a woman long years dead,  
A slab of granite shut over her head.

A slab of granite solid and gray,  
Bordered with blocks of stone that lay  
Fastened together firm and strong  
With iron clamps that should last for long,  
Long years, they were so firm and strong.

No Christian woman was buried so.  
An infidel countess she was. And, lo,  
On the slab were these words that all might see:  
"This burial-place, bought for eternity,  
Must never be opened." Aye, all could see.

The months went by and summer came  
Once more with its roses and lilies aflame;  
The grasses swayed in the old churchyard,  
And, lo, thro' a crack in the granite hard  
An acorn, sprouting, had broken sod.

Slowly and surely the rain and sun  
Helped on the growth when 'twas once begun.

The weeks and the months went round and round;  
To the churchyard was added many a mound,  
But the seed that had sprouted was growing sound.

The rain-drops slipped in between the blocks,  
Moistened the roots and rusted the locks;  
The sunlight sifting between the trees,  
Shot tiny arrows, like fairy keys,  
At the iron clamps till they shattered these

And burst them apart; while the granite blocks,  
With their iron bands and heavy locks,  
Were lifted, and lo! in the open space  
Was a sturdy oak in the strength and grace  
Of a patient growth that had won the race.

'Tis a century since this woman died,  
Defiant and hard in her infidel pride;  
But the blocks that were locked for eternity,  
The iron clamps that should find no key,  
The graven words that all eyes might see,

Where are they now? A sturdy tree,  
Its branches loaded with greenery,  
Stands firmly rooted above the grave,  
While over the granite wild roses wave,  
And tangle and riot around the grave!

J. K. LUDLUM.