

Prominent Island Editors Of Years Long Past

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tion separated them as it did many other life-long friends, and for ever after each gave the other a "wide berth" whenever they chanced to meet. Mr. Arbuckle was an exceedingly sociable man and always addressed me familiarly as "James" and invariably spoke of Hon. Fredk. Brecken as "Fred" and Hon. T. H. Haviland as "Heath." He was a great friend to the newspapers, and in his day furnished them with more gossip than any man on the island.

Another gentleman who wrote a great deal for the newspapers in those stormy days was the late Archibald McNeill, C. H. A. He took an extraordinary interest in politics and was an active champion of Confederation, the Railway, and all the measures instituted by the Conservative party. Mr. McNeill was not a polished writer. He paid little attention to the rules of composition, but dashed off anything he had to say in a careless and perhaps rather slovenly manner. But he possessed untiring energy, ready wit and splendid gifts as a platform speaker. His fine presence, powerful voice and ready flow of language made him a valuable acquisition at political gatherings. He enjoyed a joke, and while not a humorist in any sense, had still the faculty of producing a laugh when he so desired. Few men had greater power of invective, and many an opponent was made to wince under it. Mr. McNeill was one of my earliest teachers, and although he often handled me without gloves, yet he was so affable and agreeable at times that he always occupied a prominent place in my affections.

I have a distinct recollection of a meeting that was once held in the old Athenaeum to discuss a question of "Better terms" that had been offered the Island by the Dominion Government. Mr. McNeill and the party to which he belonged were in favor of accepting them. Hon. L. H. Davies and the Liberals were opposed to them. Both parties rallied their forces for the occasion. After several hot speeches Mr. McNeill succeeded in gaining the platform. He began by roasting the anti's in his best style. He at length paused and said, "I will now ask you anti-confederates a question. Are there any terms that can be offered that you will accept?" There was no answer. Everything was as silent as a grave-yard. Raising his voice again he repeated the question: "Are there any terms which can be offered that you will accept?" I pause for a reply. Silence again reigned. And then in louder tones than ever he thundered, "Ah, ye dumb dogs!" This expression set one half of the house in the wildest rage and the other half roaring and shouting. The uproar became so great that the meeting had to be adjourned without coming to any vote of the question.

About this period there were published at Charlottetown, The Examiner, edited by P. R. Bowers; The Islander, edited by the late Judge W. H. Pope; the Patriot, by Hon. D. Laird; The Herald, by Edward Reilly, Esq. Shortly after the Islander became the property of Mr. A. E. McDougall with Mr. Jos. F. Brennan as editor; The Herald passed over to Professor Cavan and The Examiner to W. L. Cotton, Esq. Mr. Bowers then established The New Era, and the Reverend Stephen G. Lawson appeared above the journalistic horizon with The Presbyterian. When Mr. Laird was appointed governor of the North West Territory, Mr. Henry Lawson succeeded him as editor and publisher of The Patriot.

On the death of Mr. Edward Reilly, Professor John Cavan became editor of The Herald. The Professor was a native of Scotland and a recent arrival at that. He was a ripe scholar and a versatile writer. His longer articles, however, were better adapted for the magazine than for the ordinary newspaper. He was a fine logician, a careful thinker, and many of his productions were conspicuous for their vigor and erudition. Moreover, he wielded a sarcastic pen when he chose to indulge in that vein, which, under the pressure of party excitement, he sometimes did. Yet one of its brightest ornaments was notwithstanding his college training and circumspect bearing, he was as "full of fun as a kitten." He enjoyed a joke and actually fattened on a keen piece of satire. He never troubled himself with

figures but relied more upon his power of sarcasm, irony and fine analytical skill in demoralizing an antagonist than by any manipulation of the multiplication table. The professor had a tender heart and a kind disposition. He was also a most jovial and entertaining companion, and island journalism lost one of its brightest ornaments when he left it for college work. Henry Lawson, now deceased, was a well-known newspaper writer in my day, and when I left the island was editor of the Patriot. When the Argus first started he was editor of the Summerside Progress. While on the island, Mr. Lawson always belonged to the Liberal, or Grit, party, but when he removed to Canada, he became pronounced Conservative. When I knew him most intimately he was a devoted follower of Hon. David Laird. Mr. Lawson was a very poor public speaker but he was a very smooth and versatile writer. For several years we published papers side by side. Sometimes we saw eye to eye, and sometimes we did not. When we did we were as sociable as lovers; when we didn't we quarrelled like strange cats. Now that our fighting is over, and he has gone to join the "great majority, I desire to go on record as testifying to his nobility of soul and honesty of purpose. I once thought he was a dangerous man, but when I saw his attachment to his home and family, and love for children, I knew he could not be a bad man.

He prized a good book above rubies and riches. His style of writing was elaborate and graceful, racy and smooth, but neither particularly vigorous nor original. But he was unquestionably one of the most prolific editorial writers in the Maritime Provinces. His make-up was intellectual rather than spiritual. He possessed an extraordinary capacity for literary drudgery, and was never happier than when poring over a bundle of exchanges.

Mr. P. R. Bowers played a rather important part in Prince Edward Island journalism in my day. I understand that he went to live in Newfoundland. He was at one period Printer to Her Majesty the Queen, which gave him some standing in the community, and he sought to take advantage of it by running for the Legislature on two occasions, but was defeated each time. Mr. Bowers was a writer of con-

siderable merit, but lacked energy and the will to work as hard as he might. If his willingness to work had been equal to his intellectual capacity, he might have become a man of considerable power and influence. He was a well-read man, and passionately fond of music. He was not an industrious gatherer of news, but relied upon his ability as a writer of editorials to produce a popular newspaper.

My article would not be complete if I omitted to mention another light that appeared at this time like a comet in the journalistic sky—I refer to the Rev. Stephen G. Lawson. He was Liberal in name, but a Tory in actions. He founded a Presbyterian newspaper with the avowed object of setting the world right. He was going to purify politics and make all men Christians according to his ideas of Christianity. He wasn't long at work until he discovered that the party he supported was as "rotten" as the other, and that the church he adhered to wouldn't adhere to him when he thundered his philippic against others. Mr. Lawson was a singular compound. He was hard to understand. His convictions were sincere, but he took a strange way to impress them on others. He had no love for Catholicism, and yet his best friends were Catholics. He was a faithful disciple of John Calvin, and if he had been present when that odd gentleman burned Sorretins, he would have stood by and joined in singing, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

Mr. Lawson was a large man, powerful and courageous. Physically, he was a prodigy; intellectually a curiosity and religiously a conundrum. Although he would pursue a political rival with an unrelenting severity, yet he was not without the "milk of human kindness." He believed in "muscular Christianity" and looked upon every man who opposed him as "an enemy." Some one insulted him at a public meeting, and the late Chief Justice (1900) afterward said to him in the way of a joke, "Mr. Lawson, I am surprised that a big man like you would take that insult."

"Well," replied Stephen, "if it were not for the love of God in my heart I would have put a hole through him in a minute."

On another occasion, when a political meeting was held in the Uigg School-house, Mr. William Welsh, afterward a member of Parliament, publicly pledged himself to whip Mr. Lawson when he returned to Charlottetown, if he did not retract a certain statement which he made through his paper. Mr. Lawson heard of this threat and anxiously waited the return of



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Mr. Welsh. As soon as he got back Mr. Lawson went over to Mr. Welsh's office and said: "Mr. Welsh, I hear that you pledged yourself, at a public meeting at Uigg, to whip me if I did not retract a certain statement which appeared in the Presbyterian. Now, sir, I wish to inform you that I have no retraction to make and that you will never have a better opportunity to begin your whipping operation than now. You can draw your whip and strike me on one cheek then I will turn the other to you, but when that is struck I shall have complied with the command of Scripture and then it will be 'let slip the dogs of war!'"

Mr. Welsh did not think it best to carry out this threat and the battle ended. As a writer, Mr. Lawson was rough and vigorous. There was no polish in his sentences and no order of symmetry in his style. It was strong, rough—hewn and bitter. He was not particular in the choice of his language but generally used the first word that occurred to his mind. I do not know that I would criticize Mr. Lawson in this manner if I lived near him, but at this distance it is a safe undertaking; therefore I speak freely.

When I concluded to leave the Island for good I sold the Argue to the Examiner, then managed and edited by W. L. Cotton, Esq. who at that time was coming into prominence as a writer, and good all-round newspaper man.

WOMAN'S DANGEROUS JOB
Katherine Nelson, of Jersey City whose earnings run as high as \$30 a day, is considered one of the most expert welders in the United States. Mrs. Nelson, as a bride eighteen years ago, learned the machinist's trade by helping her husband in the garage and when he died she became a stewardess on an ocean liner. Eventually she went to the United States. She obtained a machinist's job in the Erie Railway Shops in Jersey City and learned welding in her odd moments, and about three years ago obtained regular employment with a big welding company. She is, so far as is known, the only woman in the country regularly engaged at her trade. She is frequently called on for jobs which men have decided as too difficult or dangerous—in tunnels and ships, on bridges, towers—anywhere and everywhere.



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Him: Yes, I know—but I live next door to her!