



Spring-Clean Talk

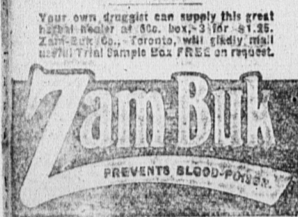
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Reminiscences Of Boyhood Days In P. E. Island.

(M.A.M. in the Oakland Maple Leaf)

At one time in the '70s, Prince County, Prince Edward Island, boasted three weekly newspapers: The Journal and The Progress in Summerside, and The Pioneer in Alberton.

Early in the '80s The Progress ceased disseminating local, foreign and political news to an intelligent reading public. Thomas F. Gorman, the publisher, left the province to accept a governmental position, and passed away several years later.

The first number of The Pioneer was issued in Alberton on July 4, 1876, one hundred years after the signing of the Declaration of American Independence. John L. McKinnon, William Walsh, who was at one time foreman of The Progress, became office manager and foreman of The Pioneer when that paper was first published. Walsh was brought up in Charlottetown, learned the printing trade there and then went to Boston previous to the Civil War. He enlisted and held the rank of first lieutenant, was wounded, and after his recovery returned home. He was a kind and industrious man, careful and capable, but not being blessed with robust health, died in Alberton at the age of 39 years and was buried in the old Catholic cemetery at Charlottetown.

Early in 1879, owing to the small pox epidemic in Alberton which isolated that town from the outside world, The Pioneer suspended publication. The following summer Mr. McKinnon moved the plant to Montserrat and continued the paper there for about a year. In September, 1880, he made another move with his printing plant, this time settling in Summerside, where The Pioneer has been regularly issued ever since.

Among the first printers employed on The Pioneer after coming to Summerside were William Woodside and James Hedley Brehaut, the latter going from the Journal. Louis Taylor, who was a printer about this time, was with The Pioneer for a long time, and regarded as one of the all-around printers of the island.

For a time the office was located on the second floor of a building on the south side of Water Street, near J. A. Gourlie's store, and from the two front windows the compositor stood and watched the street. The printer, on the other hand, sat at his desk, and the editor, on the third floor, looked out from his window at the street.

One morning when the boys came to work they found the front windows covered with a heavy coat of brilliant white paint. This was done in the hope that composition might be "speeded up." A "strike" committee was formed with Hedley Brehaut as spokesman, whose duty it was to interview the proprietor, Hedley, waited on Mr. McKinnon, demanding, while pointing to the windows: "You will please eradicate that paint or we will evacuate!"

The reply from John L. came quick and emphatic. Standing straight up in all his dignity, his grey mustache bristling upward, while he, too, pointed toward the windows: "You may evacuate, but I do not propose to eradicate!" The "strike" the first recorded in the town, was not a success. John L. was a school teacher, a bachelor and well along in years, and did not quite grasp his employee's view of the situation.

Mr. McKinnon, in 1887, sold the paper to The Pioneer Publishing Company and devoted his remaining years to special writing. In 1915 he published "A Sketch Book" comprising historical incidents, traditional tales and translations.

"Will" Woodside left shortly after for Massachusetts and for a time published a paper in East Boston. Hedley Brehaut, after leaving The Pioneer, went to Charlottetown, where he remained two years. He then went West and worked for a time in St. Paul and Duluth, Minnesota, and finally settled in Boston in 1884, in which city he became an outstanding member of the printing fraternity. His genial nature, considerate disposition and companionable ways endeared him to those who came within his circle. He married a charming young woman, Miss Gertrude M. Nourse, and this happy and congenial couple made their home for many years at 28 Codman Park, Roxbury. Hedley held the position of proof-reader on the Boston Post for over 28 years, up to the time of his death, which occurred in a hospital in Roxbury, following an operation on the foot-board, and we were all ready to go.

One boy stood on an elevated platform feeding the sheets up to the galleys while his less fortunate fellow worker, with both hands firmly clamped around a wooden handle, turned the wheel which gave to the world the knowledge they otherwise would have been denied. Little he knew at the time what a benefactor he was to humanity as the perspiration rolled off his honest brow. We look "turn about" until the whole edition of several thousand was printed. I will admit that I became an accurate "leader" in a short while, and my presence on the platform was almost indispensable. Someone else had the task of turning and perspiring ever after.

Turning the wheel of the press was a man's job, and occasionally John Moore, Morris or Sylvan would be induced to come around and help the boys out, but seldom would they sign up for a return engagement.

While the press hummed along, the whole force would assist in the folding, addressing and mailing, which was completed about 11 p. m. It was not until after the fire which destroyed the Central street building, and the rehabilitated plant was located at the corner of Queen and Water streets, that the presses were run by steam power.

The job presses up stairs were run by foot power, and after ten hours of this kind of work a boy did not require sleeping powders to induce slumber when darkness enveloped the old town.

George Huestis, if he reads this, will perhaps remember the habit he had of whistling while running the job press—not that the music of the "Gordon" and the whistling harmonized at all, but he had that habit to prove how happy one could be under the most trying circumstances. One day while Mr. Brennan, Sr., was endeavoring to write an editorial on Free Trade or Reciprocity, or some other momentous question of the day, with nothing between the whistle and the editorial desk but a light partition, he became extremely impatient as the music seemed to be never-ending. Getting up from his chair he walked around into the press room and demanded that the whistling cease at once. It did—that day. The old familiar tune: "Where is My Wandering Boy Tonight?" was never finished.

The year 1880 passed rapidly, as many other years have done since, and I found I had completed twelve months of my apprenticeship. What the future might bring I knew not, but I was determined to try and reach the goal still far in the distance—to be a journeyman printer. A raise in wages was now in sight. How happy I was when, at the beginning of the new year, I found my salary had been doubled.

As previously said, we all had to start "from the ground up," but I was inclined to think some of us commenced down in the cellar. The prevailing wage for every boy (or girl) who entered a printing office in the days that are now but a memory, was \$1.00 a week for the first year; \$2.00 a week for the second year; \$3.00 a week for the third year, and so on until the limit of \$8.00 a week had been reached—and there we stuck. Like the others, I received each week of 60 hours and over my \$1.00, the total revenue at the end of the year amounting to \$52.00. To show how times have changed, may I here remark that this amount is \$2.00 less than the pressman, who makes The Maple Leaf look so well every month, receives every week of 44 hours.

But money was not everything then, nor is it today. The friendships formed around the odor of printing ink seem to be everlasting. Gold cannot buy such friendships, neither can it destroy them.

A Strength-building Food For Feeble People SCOTT'S EMULSION

Rich In All Cod-liver Oil Vitamins

adon, February 1, 1915, at the early age of 51. With the passing of James Hedley Brehaut the writer lost one of his dearest friends. Brehaut was born to Mr. and Mrs. Brehaut, Henry Bourse Brehaut developed into a brilliant young man, and a graduate of Harvard University. His future success in the business world seemed unusually bright, but death claimed him at the age of about 24 years, on October 31, 1918.

Among the boys who applied for a position in The Progress office as far back as 1873 was Peter F. Hughes. He went from a country school to learn the printing trade and remained at the "case" about three years. He then went across the street and "caught on" at The Journal office for a while. Perhaps he got an increase in pay—which was nothing to brag about in the old days. The Journal was then owned by Graves & Murray, with David Hickey, a teacher in town, occupying the editorial chair. After a time Peter returned to the farm; but the lure of the "stick and rule" were too much for him, and we find him again at the "case" in the office of the New Era, Charlottetown, owned by P. R. Bowers; later on he worked in the Moncton Times, but he did not remain long. He gave up the business which made Benjamin Franklin famous, returned to the Island, and for the past several years has been conducting a general merchandise store at Emerald Junction.

Erasmus J. ("Ras") Baker, whom the writer had listed in a previous issue as "retired" says he is still making books as in the old days. His place of business is at 4866 Long Branch Avenue, Ocean Beach, San Diego County, California. "Ras" says "we should not give the Island boys the impression that printing, binding and allied trades produce opulence, or these trades may become overcrowded"; and adds: "Your boyhood reminiscences touch a tender chord as you draw memory pictures of our early days in The Summerside Journal office, where, when barely fourteen years old, I started to be a binder. I can remember your advent when you came into the composing room as a 'P.D.' but cannot recall the color of your necktie, as we were not so fussy in those days as we are now."

"Ras," after graduating from The Journal, worked in Boston, Providence, New Haven, Richmond, Va., Yarmouth, N. S. and is now living happily in Southern California with his loving wife—his companion of many years.

One of the most popular young printers in the old Progress days was Rufus W. Sharp. "Ruf" had a sweet singing voice and was often called upon to take part in entertainments in Ludlow Hall, located down the alley from Water street. "Ruf" was Summerside's boy warbler at that time, and his favorite songs were "Old Nellie Gray" and "Down in the Diving Bell." During the "blue ribbon" movement and D. Banks McKenzie's temperance crusade, his specialty, which often brought tears to the eyes of the audience, was "Father, dear father, come home with me now. The clock in the steeple strikes one; You said you were coming right home from your work As soon as your day's work was done."

"Ruf" went to Duluth, Minnesota, many years ago and I believe that city is his home today. Setting type and making up forms in the composing room were only part of the duties connected with the publication of a paper. There was still another operation before The Journal was delivered to a clamorous host of readers who were always anxious to get the latest news. When the "forms" were ready they were taken down stairs in the afternoon of publication day, which was always Wednesday. Standing in the middle of the floor was the big drum-cylinder "Fairhaven" press. In winter a red-hot stove stood near to make the place comfortable. In summer the doors were thrown wide open to let in the pleasant breeze.

The ink fountain was filled (and so were the oil holes), the rollers adjusted, gauges set, the "forms" carefully placed on the "bed" of the press and locked, the paper rolled

out on the feed-board, and we were all ready to go.

One boy stood on an elevated platform feeding the sheets up to the galleys while his less fortunate fellow worker, with both hands firmly clamped around a wooden handle, turned the wheel which gave to the world the knowledge they otherwise would have been denied. Little he knew at the time what a benefactor he was to humanity as the perspiration rolled off his honest brow. We look "turn about" until the whole edition of several thousand was printed. I will admit that I became an accurate "leader" in a short while, and my presence on the platform was almost indispensable. Someone else had the task of turning and perspiring ever after.