

Curator's Corner . . .

To an avid newspaper reader, since the age of twelve, the evolution of the Fourth Estate is one of its most interesting aspects. Evolution, by the way, attracts interesting commentary. To some it means coming down (out of the trees). Others think of the day man stood erect on two feet, and it could be that the idea of Heaven being "up and above" came along with this supposed day. In any event it can be generally accepted to mean development.

In my boyhood, an editor was really someone, and, in my estimation, still is. Then, however, if it was printed, it was regarded as something of an oracular nature. And a book—ah, only the great could produce a tome. But the editor was a leader because he was a worker with words. He gave expression to many for he was widely quoted. His thoughts became guides for admirers and, for that matter, vice versa. A strange thing about words and ideas is that no matter how long they are in your mind they never become a part of you until spoken or written.

Boys flying kites haul in their white winged birds,
But you can't do that way when you're flying words.
Thoughts unexpressed may sometimes fall back dead,
But God himself can't kill 'em once they're said.

Being, in a sense, the common denominator for expression, things the editor espoused, if right, became community projects. Occasionally, there developed a columnist whose epigrams and quips became slogans. Their influence became widespread. Franklin P. Adams, Bert Leston Taylor, and others provided some of my most interesting reading. The closest I ever came to being a columnist was inheritance of the desk on the Council Bluffs *Nonpareil*, on which George Fitch wrote his column, "Frolic of the Types." Now a newspaper, that is a newspaper, has one or more columnists. The

daily column is one of the most popular features. Read by more people than editorials, it is easily more influential. I prefer the column in which each paragraph is a complete item. Consequently, columnists are at their best when they come with twelve or fifteen individual paragraphs. One of the interesting humor columns is "Air Pockets" by Harold and Glen Ellis in their Marengo paper.

The city daily paper has seen much of its influence wane due largely to nonresident ownership. Consolidation of county seat papers has produced a similar result. While many may welcome this as progress, others deplore it as they see in it the decadence of the editorial seer. But newspaper publishing in large, or small, places has become big business.

My father purchased the first hay loader in our community in Union county. How well I remember its being unloaded and hauled to our farm. Next came the men to set it up. Then the great day when it was hauled behind the hay wagon rack to the north forty, where mown hay was cured ready for loading. People came from miles away—five miles was a long way then—to see it—not work, but fail to work. But it did work. I can see those "giraffe" minded men yet, following along, picking up the hay it left before properly adjusted, as proof of its failure. There were times later when I was taking away the hay it pushed up that I could have wished it had not been so successful.

There is a successful challenge to the statement that all men are born equal. They are not—but they do all die equal. At least even more accurately speaking, they are equally dead.

A truism about war is that it demands shortening of lives.

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