Woman in Journalism.

By

Emma Finley '97.
Contents.

I Journalism as a profession.
   What it comprises.
   Necessary preparation
   Field covered.
   Hindrances encountered.
   Advantages gained.

II Woman's place in journalism.
   First woman writers
   Different styles.
   Composition.
   Life and work of Miss Hamm.
   Compensation.
   Good accomplished.
Not many years ago there were in the popular mind, but these professions—law, theology, and medicine, more recent thought has added two more, teaching and journalism. The latter is included because the times demand that not only the pulpit and bar, but the journalist's chair as well, shall be filled by men of education.

The reader of Mr. Frederic Hudson's entertaining history of journalism in the U.S. from 1870 to 1877 have learned, long since, what the modern newspaper is, how it originated, and where it is tending. It is a common saying in England that America is governed by newspapers and this by way I mean. But long ago Jefferson anticipated and met this approach, when he said, "I would rather live in a country with newspapers and without a government than to live in a government and without newspapers."

Nowadays it has been found easier to overthrow a government at Paris—Madrid, Mexico, or Rome, than to stop a well managed newspaper. The steam press, the electric telegraph, the enormous development of commerce and industry in the last half century have given newspapers a position and a responsibility but little understood, even by those who have the most to do with them.
Journalism in America is something, has been nothing, and is to be everything. There is no limit to the ambition of enterprising editors, to the future power of the American newspaper. It must regulate the minutest detail of our daily lives, be our schoolmaster, minister, judge, lawyer, and jury in one grand combination. We find it enthralling and interfering everywhere. It does not, however, confine itself entirely to the past and present but deals largely with the future. There is a German play which represents in one of its scenes, Adam crossing the stage on his way to be created and much of the news gathered by our dailies is of this anticipatory sort. Sydney Smith was fond of relating events before or after the invention of common sense, and certainly the common sense that confines the modern newspaper does not go back many centuries.

The field of research once entered on, we may expect to see a large amount of competition between rival journals, in the prosecution of battling enterprises having no special or necessary connection with journalism. It has hitherto been considered the proper function of newspapers to hear, see, and report, but competition is now driving them into producing proofs for the facts which
they record—a process not unlike that which exists in all lines of business. The proudest position imaginable for a journalist is that of one who makes his own news, in the homely phrase and which seems to be no limit to the prosecution of this peculiar species of candidating. Mr. J. S. Mill years ago compared the relation of the newspaper to society, to that of the Hebrew prophet, and Mr. Ford said it was like the church of the Middle Ages. Further than this it would be hard to go. It is not surprising that the talk of educating young people for journalism should become louder and louder each year at the season when collegiate education is most under discussion. All the first-rate colleges are anxious at this time to produce journalists and many of them give notice that they are busy reinventing machinery for this purpose. The process may seem difficult to outsiders, but highly educated men declare that nothing is easier. Take an intelligent young man give him a course in History, Political Economy, Metaphysics, and Sociology and what more does he need? Here is your journalist all ready for his office; and what could be more simple?

A young lawyer, doctor, engineer, or merchant
must work on for years in obscurity and isolation before he can win success. Their prosperity must be based on a good foundation of experience and character. The journalist may and often does find at the very outset his way entangled with highly educated men and the most profound of thinkers. He is likely to find his opinions largely sought and his approval largely courted, and in fact he may find himself carried into fame without any more honest labor on his part than it would take to conduct a single difficult case at the bar. This being the case, it is no wonder that the career sometimes looks attractive and the only thing that keeps it from becoming completely hopelessly crowded is that it is unproductive financially. There is probably no industry of modern times by which it is so hard for the laborer to elevate to the position of the capitalist, and it is this fact which will prevent it from being a career for which men and women will prepare at college. If no one could practice law or medicine unless he were employed at a salary by a corporation with an enormous capital, we should find the ranks of these professions very scantily filled, and yet this is a condition which every journalist has to face.

Journalism is drawing into its ranks every
year more and more of the intellectual ability of the country. Clergymen are leaving their pulpit, lawyers their briefs, schoolmasters their desks, scholars their studies, to ply the pen for the daily and weekly newspaper. Add to these the multitudes, without leaving their profession, as correspondents or occasional contributors for the press. The number is enormous. It includes not only the men, but women of genius and culture.

There is, however, no more a royal road to journalism than there is to any other profession. Success is based on hard and continuous work, rather than on literary attainment. A high ability is demanded, but it is an ability to labor long and effectively. No profession demands such an accurate use of eye and ear, of speed and thought, of perception and memory. Set any one who can not if necessary toil twelve hours a day outside the portals of the press. But even in view of all this there is no haphazard calling for one who has the needed physical and mental energy. The office of a great daily is a first rate college or first graduate school. The dictionary, the cyclopedia, and the latest scientific text books are in constant use. Politics, local, state, national, and international, domestic and foreign, are discussed.
year in and year out. It is a grand field for men; it is a grand field for women. It was not always thus. Some ranks remained. Not so long ago bright women wished to enter the newspaper ranks, but there was little or no room for them. When Mrs. Child wrote her letter from N.Y. and Margaret Fuller went to the same city to help Greeley edit the Tribune, how daring and strange their venture seemed to their countrymen. Now their successors may be counted by the thousands. Nothing so surprises and delights a young editor as to find that a rich store of moral and talent he can draw on to enrich the columns of his paper. Every editor now regrets for want of an immense amount: practical from feminine hands that 20 years ago would have been thought out and proudly printed—only 20 years ago it did not exist.

In the last thirty years a revolution has been wrought so peacefully as to be unnoticed. The press today wants women in its service. Before this there were perhaps hundreds of brilliant thinkers and writers like Isai Hamilton, Kate Field, Harriet Bunker Stone, Alice Cary, Phoebe Cary, and Anna Alden who were never employed. But the growth of modern
Society has made them a prime necessity, and there is hardly a morning or evening paper of any prominence that does not employ them in some capacity. From the lowest position, that of stenographer and typewriter, up to the highest, that of proprietor, publisher, and editor-in-chief, they are to be found in ever-increasing numbers among many who have gained a worldwide celebrity as publishers and editors-in-chief — such as Madame Adam of Paris, Mrs. Jack Johnson of London, Mrs. Frank Leslie of New York, and Mrs. Eliza Nicholas of New Orleans. To the class of editors and editorial writers belong Mrs. Margaret Sullivan, Mrs. Mary S. McClellan, Miss Frances E. Willard, Mary Saugant Hopkins, and Ada Trafford Bell. This is a class of women writers whose highest talent is humor, wit, poetic and dramatic ability. This class includes such clever writers as Mrs. Kate Martyn, Madeline Bridge, Miss Mary E. Huntley, Katherine Howard, Miss Beatrice Whigles, and Miss Betty.

Margherita Allina Hamm deserves especial mention and credit, for she is one of the most successful women journalists that this century has ever produced. Though still a young woman, Miss Hamm is already recognized in the journalistic world as standing at the very
Head the profession, her work embraces every variety of journalism from her everyday work for the leading newspapers at home and abroad; her humorous writing appearing weekly in size, truth and other periodicals of humorous intent; her verse and more serious productions which are published in the best magazines of the month, occasional articles in the scientific, legal and medical journals of today.

Miss Hamm comes naturally by her chosen profession, as she is the granddaughter of Bishop Spencer, of England, a well-known writer, and is related to St. Bert Spencer, the great philosopher. Her natural gifts have had long and thorough training for she began her career as a newspaper woman at the age of thirteen, when she filled the position of proofreader in the office of a newspaper in Boston. Her first accepted article was published in the Boston Herald, when she was fourteen, and her first poem in the Youth's Companion when she was fifteen. At the age of twenty she was filling an editorial chair on the New York Sunday Times. And now, although she has but recently attained the age of twenty-five, she has written for every important newspaper syndicate in the country, for many magazines, to the English and American, she has capably filled
the position of editor and associate editor for various magazines, and is now the editor of the Woman's Arena and the New York Mail and Express, and her department in this paper clearly reflects the ability, energy, and capability of its conductor.

As an interviewer, Miss Hamm again stands at the top round of the ladder, and her notable interviews she conducted, one with the late James G. Blaine and the other with President Cleveland, exalted her to an enviable position in the feminine newspaper editors.

With all the varied work which calls for more than the ordinary courage of a woman, Miss Hamm remains a sweet and gentle mannered woman. She is extremely attractive in personal appearance, with the charm and freshness of youth and perfect health. Most women would, justly feel themselves more than ordinarily successful and deserving of special honor to stand at the end of half a century of life in the Miss Hamm stands today. She has got a life time before her with all in her favor and those to know her, either by personal contact or through her work, look for more than ordinary achievement from one who, in her short life through the splendid use of the talents with which she has been endowed, has already done
such rich and ripe fruit.

There is little or no comparison between the stores in the newspaper world. In late years women's views have become a recognized feature of the press, and this alone requires an army of brains elsewhere to put it into good reading and readable form. Besides this there is a large field of women's work and achievement which is dihome to the general public. It is quite evident that a woman can give a more comprehensive, if not a better account than can a man, of dresses, fashions, household furniture, equipages and decorations of teas, receptions, weddings and other social events. On the other hand, a man is better qualified than a woman to report the proceedings of a convention or a presidential campaign. To the differentiation in social and educational growth is necessitating a similar differentiation in newspaper work and in newspaper workers.

To young women intending to enter journalism, a little special knowledge on the subject is of great value. Under this head may be specified familiarity with the signs and abbreviations used by the editor and proofreader. Any one can master them in a single day. Good newspaper English
is the best English. Brevity and precision are the skeleton of good composition.

The rewards of the press are based on merit. In cities of the first class, the average earning of the newspaper woman is $20 per week: in those of the second class $15: and in those of the third class $10. In the small towns and villages the wages fall as low as $4 per week. Very high salaries are rare. The most prosperous newspaper women are those who hold a good position on a first-class paper and readily sell special articles to weeklies and magazines. Besides earning a livelihood, a newspaper woman enjoys these advantages. She is independent and exercises an influence proportionate to her ability and character. She can do good with the pen and with the voice. She can right many wrongs, she can aid struggling individuals, groups or movements. The higher her ideals and the more altruistic her life, the better is her work and the greater her power to furthering the right.