

CHAPTER VIII

THE MILLVILLE DAILY TRIBUNE

The first edition of the Millville Daily Tribune certainly proved it to be a wonderful newspaper. The telegraphic news of the world's doings, received and edited by the skillful Miss Briggs, was equal to that of any metropolitan journal; the first page cartoon, referring to the outbreak of a rebellion in China, was clever and humorous enough to delight anyone; but the local news and "literary page" were woefully amateurish and smacked of the schoolgirl editors who had prepared them. Perhaps the Chazy County people did not recognize these deficiencies, for the new paper certainly created a vast amount of excitement and won the praise of nearly all who read it.

On the eventful night of the Tribune's "first run" our girls were too eager to go home and await its appearance, so they remained at the office to see the birth of their enterprise, and as it was the night preceding the Fourth of July Uncle John gave an exhibition of fireworks in front of the newspaper office, to the delight of the entire population.

The girl journalists, however, were not so greatly interested in fireworks as in the birth of their fascinating enterprise. Wearing long gingham aprons they hovered over the big table where the forms were

being locked up, and watched anxiously every movement of the workmen. It was exceedingly interesting to note how a column of the first page was left open until the last, so that copy "hot from the wire" of the very latest news might be added before going to press. Finally, at exactly two o'clock, the forms were locked, placed upon the bed of the press, and McGaffey, a sour-faced individual whose chief recommendation was his ability as a pressman, began to make ready for the "run."

Outside the brilliantly lighted windows, which were left open for air, congregated a wondering group of the Millville people, many of whom had never been up so late before in all their lives. But the event was too important to miss. The huge, complicated press had already inspired their awe, and they were eager to "see it work" as it printed the new paper.

The girls tolerated this native curiosity with indulgent good humor and at midnight even passed out sandwiches to the crowd, a supply having been secured for the workmen. These were accepted silently, and as they munched the food all kept their eyes fixed upon the magicians within.

There was a hitch somewhere; McGaffey muttered naughty words under his breath and plied wrenches and screwdrivers in a way that brought a thrill of anxiety, approaching fear, to every heart. The press started half a dozen times, only to be shut down abruptly before it had printed a single impression. McGaffey counseled with Larry, who shook his head. Fitzgerald, the job printer, examined the machinery carefully and again

McGaffey screwed nuts and regulated the press. Then he turned on the power; the big cylinder revolved; the white paper reeled out like a long ribbon and with a rattle and thump the first copy of the Millville Daily Tribune was deposited, cut and folded, upon the table placed to receive it. Patsy made a rush for it, but before she could reach the table half a dozen more papers had been piled above it, and gathering speed the great press hummed busily and the pile of Tribunes grew as if by magic.

Patsy grabbed the first dozen and handed them to Beth, for they were to be reserved as souvenirs. Then, running back to the table, she seized a bunch and began distributing them to the watchers outside the window. The natives accepted them eagerly enough, but could not withdraw their eyes from the marvelous press, which seemed to possess intelligence almost human.

Each of the three girl journalists now had a copy in hand, scanning it with boundless pride and satisfaction. It realized completely their fondest hopes and they had good cause to rejoice.

Then Uncle John, who ought to have been in bed and sound asleep at this uncanny hour of night, came bouncing in, accompanied by Arthur Weldon. Each made a dive for a paper and each face wore an expression of genuine delight. The roar of the press made conversation difficult, but Mr. Merrick caught his nieces in his arms, by turn, and gave each one an ecstatic hug and kiss.

Suddenly the press stopped.

"What's wrong, McGaffey?" demanded Patsy, anxiously.

"Nothing, miss. Edition off, that's all."

"What! the entire four hundred are printed?"

"Four twenty-five. I run a few extrys."

And now a shriek of laughter came from the windows as the villagers, slowly opening the papers they held, came upon the caricature of Peggy McNutt. The subject of the cartoon had, with his usual aggressiveness, secured the best "standing room" available, and his contemplative, protruding eyes were yet fixed upon the interior of the workroom. But now, his curiosity aroused, he looked at the paper to see what his neighbors were laughing at, and his expression of wonder slowly changed to a broad grin. He straightened up, looked triumphantly around the circle and exclaimed:

"By gum, folks, this 'ere paper's going to be a go! I didn't take no stock in it till now, but them fool gals seem to know their business, an' I'll back 'em to the last ditch!"