



to the hills, the trees, the grass, the soil, our dwellings clustered about a social and cultural centre.

This way, Sleepy Hollow may come to life again. This way, there is a challenge to the *Bugle*.

Community centre projects are still rare in New Zealand. It happened, nevertheless, that our little weekly newspaper was published in a town which was helping to show the way. Let me tell you how we met the challenge.

*As it was.*—We had a newspaper, price 2d., circulation 750, published twice a week. It went into approximately 45 per cent. of the homes in our town and district. It suffered from most of the ailments which to-day afflict the smaller newspapers—in normal times, of course. Metropolitan competition was serious. Radio advertising had cut down the appropriation available for the smaller journals. An insufficient staff (the small newspaper must make every penny count) meant an overworked staff, and an overworked staff means journalistic necessity more than journalistic enterprise. To all those who, after hearing "Editor's Daughter"

on the radio, feel that it would be fun to produce a country newspaper, I can only say, try it, not once or twice, but every week year in and year out. You will have no spare time. Even keeping linotypes going when they are thirty years old requires unlimited ingenuity and is likely to produce grey hairs.

Put bluntly, the metropolitan morning daily could make it impossible for us to live, if it chose. We could hold ground only on the slender advantages of local preference, local emphasis, more detailed news-gathering, and the plain loyalty of our readers. We were down on circulation, and we were down in that important factor in news presentation—time.

But don't think it is like this with all country newspapers. We were still young, and we were still struggling. Newspapers are institutions and, like other institutions, they gather strength from the years. Some of them grow to be real old grannies, and even when they can no longer see very clearly they go on about their daily business, wrapped in a shawl of time and tradition and the affection of their subscribers.

We were rather too close to the city, and perhaps we were suffering more than is usual from that trend I spoke about. It seemed we could make no further headway, so we took the plunge.

*The Changes We made.*—In 1938 our town decided for a free library. Instead of the old subscription library, available only to those who could afford it, the new venture was supported from rates, thrown wide open to every man, woman, and child who cared to use it. A live association with the Country Library Service made the best books available to every member of the community.

Even before this, plans were materializing for the establishment of a community centre attached to the local high school. Carnegie grants had enabled a valuable collection of art prints and literature, music records, &c., to be assembled. Plans were drawn for the necessary buildings. Government assistance was promised.

We began to argue with ourselves. What is *our* place in all this? How can *we* play a useful part in this development of community life?