

From Newspaper Serialization to Book Publication:  
Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*

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Brevity being the soul of wit, it stands to reason that humorous and satiric fictions have often found first success serialized in newspapers. The element of surprise is essential to the pleasurable response to humour's presentation of incongruity, and a joke of whatever kind loses its force with its freshness. Newspaper serialization served thus to prepare the way for the eventual book's celebrated reception, whether for Stephen Leacock's model Charles Dickens' *Sketches by Boz* (1836) or Leacock's own *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912). Although there are a number of books on the history of serial publication (see Richard Altick 1957, 1991; Graham Law 2000; R.M. Wiles 1957, 1965), the transition from newspaper serialization to book publication has not received similar attention. Yet the revisions made in the move from serialization to book publication can show much about authorial intention and comic vision. My paper will prove that thesis by illustrating the process in the most important work of Canada's best known comic writer, Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches*. The series of comic stories that comprise the *Sketches* was published serially in the *Montreal Star* from 17 February 1912 to 22 June, and in book form the Fall of the same year. Of particular interest will be the major structural changes that Leacock made, but also some of the minor revisions he made in response to the objections (and even threats) of various individuals to thinly veiled characterizations. It is fascinating to recognize the ways the various revisions from serialization to book brought into clearer focus Leacock's comic vision of the coming modernity.