

# The Printer's Miscellany.

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## Uniformity in Composition.

[Selected from our Scrap Book.]

Uniformity in Composition is of great consequence in the setting-up of type; for by attention being paid by the compositor to this matter, the pages of a work are often improved in appearance, and the time of the reader saved to a considerable extent. It is a good practice, where any particular style is to be observed, for the foreman to issue printed or written instructions to the compositors as well as to the readers. Some houses have a totally different style of using capitals and points to another; some, again, prefer wide spacing, while others maintain that an average thick space is sufficient throughout the line. Oftentimes, where a volume is to be reprinted, and the type is somewhat thicker in set than that used by the previous printer, the order goes forth to space close, so as to get it within the required limits.

We knew of a printer who would rather see a widely-spaced line than submit to a word being divided; and preferred leaded matter to be double-thick-spaced, or even as much as an en quad and thick space between the words. Within sight of this office was another, where any division of a word was allowed—provided it was a legitimate one—rather than the line should exceed thick spacing. Even such a word as "John-ny" was considered passable, with the "ny" turned over into the next line. We were brought up in the first-named of these two houses, and had been so accustomed to wide spacing all through our apprenticeship, that it became quite natural to us to adopt the same system elsewhere; but circumstances led to our being employed in the last-named office, and the first "take" of copy which fell to our share was about two and a-half pages of 12 mo. long printer. Judge of our astonishment, when the proof came out, to find that we had to over-run every line and reduce the spacing between every word—causing us to re-make-up two-thirds of a sheet by the less number of lines the "take" then made; and yet there were not a half-a-dozen literal errors in the whole of it. The worst part of all was a note that was appended to the proof, to the effect that whoever had set-up the matter thus, "with so many pigeon-holes between the words," was to be dis-

charged as soon as he had rectified it. However, upon an explanation being offered, we were allowed to continue in the establishment, and rose in the estimation of the employer whose anger had thus been aroused; but we took great care to study the style of the house and act up to it. We have mentioned this circumstance to show how varied are the regulations of different offices.

With regard to *Capitals*. Some houses keep the caps down as much as possible, whilst others will use them very frequently. Houses where religious books are printed, make it a rule to cap. such words as He, His, Him, Whom, &c., when alluding to the Deity; in addition to these capitals, High Church Works especially are found with GOD, CHRIST, HOLY GHOST, and all words referring to the Trinity, in small caps, and, sometimes, where extra emphasis is desired, a copious use of italic and capitals is indulged in; but it causes the page to have more the appearance of an advertisement, instead of the neatness which should always grace the text of a volume.

Then as to *Figures*. How frequently do we see the age of a man in figures at the commencement of an article, whilst further on it is put in words. This arises from the carelessness of both the compositor and the reader. Some houses prefer the ages of persons, or any other numbers, unless in statistical matter, in words rather than figures. Others prefer a liberal use of figures to save space. Some, again, adopt the plan of putting all numbers under a hundred in words, and all over a hundred in figures. But newspapers generally stick to the plan of putting all numbers under ten in figures: this often has a very disagreeable look to a person of taste. Now figures, unless in tabular matter, do not improve the beauty of composition; on the contrary, like a too liberal use of capitals, they produce a certain ugly prominence that destroys the effect of the page. What can look worse than the following example, which is similar to others frequently met with in the columns of a newspaper, and is a style which we decidedly object to. After giving the details of a dreadful accident and loss of life, the report gives a list of persons who perished, with their ages, viz:—

Esther Thompson, 42; Joseph Thompson, four; Esther Thompson, nine (children of above); George Jones, 62; Ellen Smith, 10; Cornelius Smith, eight; Arthur Smith, two. There were 10 others injured, nine of whom are but slightly hurt.

Why not have put all the ages in figures? The paragraph would have been more uniform, and looked far better. Our opinion is, that figures should be avoided as much as possible, excepting in such *pars.* as the one we have quoted, and other statistical matter and tables; but if they are used, the system should be adopted throughout an article—in fact, throughout a work—whatever the number may be, whether one or a thousand.

We have been led to make these remarks from the various styles which we find casual hands adopt when occasionally called in to assist, and the careless manner in which the majority of them perform their work. It shows plainly, that for a man to be a thorough composi-