

upon all who come within the circle of their personal influence. It is a thing greatly to be desired, and would be of incalculable benefit to every community, if the same were true of all employers of labor, skilled or unskilled.

#### Secrets of the Printing Office.

Printers have never, we think, received due appreciation for the honorable confidence which they have preserved in regard to the secrets with which they have necessarily been entrusted. Such a case as this often happens. An article in a newspaper or magazine makes what is called a "sensation." It is entirely anonymous, and public curiosity is excited to the utmost to discover the name of its author. The writer may be a cabinet minister, a high official, a courtier, or any of the thousand and one persons who, if he were suspected of writing for the press, would at once lose his position—his office—perhaps his reputation. On the other hand, the writer may be a struggling author, a hard-working journalist, or a mere literary amateur. In any case his secret is preserved; his anonymity is safe as long as it is confined to the printers.

Some years ago there was a great stir made about a book entitled "Ecce Homo." It was a clever work, and had an unexampled success. "Who is the author?" was the question on everybody's lips. Some scores of persons were named, and they repudiated their participation in it. All sorts of conjectures were hazarded, and no doubt large sums would have been paid by several conductors of journals for authentic information as to the name of the author. Yet that name was known to a master printer, his overseer, and at least some of the compositors, but it was never revealed. When the name was published, it was not though the instrumentality of the printers, but entirely independent of them. They had faithfully kept their secret.

Going back a few years, the authorship of the "Waverly Novels" may be referred to as a remarkable incident of literary history. Sir Walter Scott's authorship, although known by twenty persons, including a number of printers, was so well concealed that the great novelist could not, even in his matchless vocabulary, find words of praise sufficient to express the sense of his grateful acknowledgment and wondering admiration for the matchless fidelity with which the mystery had been preserved.

There is another species of secrecy—that relating to the careful supervision of confidential public documents, books printed for secret societies, and the authorship of articles or pamphlets, as already referred to, which has been most honorably maintained. When treaties are prematurely published in newspapers, the copy is obtained from some leaky or venal official and not from any of the printers who set up or work off the original.

A case of this kind occurred a few years ago, in England, wherein the proceedings of a convention were sold and revealed to an evening newspaper. In connection with the foreign office there is a regular staff of printers always at work, and if these men liked they might let out secrets of the most momentous kind, any one of which would, perhaps, in these days of journalistic competition, be worth hundreds of dollars. But such a dereliction of duty has never yet occurred; it was a clerk, and not a compositor, who betrayed his trust.

Most honorable to the profession is the story of Harding, the printer, who bravely bore imprisonment rather than reveal the authorship of the celebrated "Drapier" letters. The printer sat in his cell calmly refusing the entreaties of his friends to divulge the name of the writer, Dean Swift, a church magnate, a great wit, who dressed himself in the disguise of a low Irish peasant, sat by, and listening to the noble refusal and the tender importunities, only anxious that no word or glance from the unfortunate printer should reveal the secret. Swift was bent solely on securing his own safety at the expense of the printer; he cowered before the legal danger which Harding boldly confronted. The world has unequally allotted the meed of fame to the two combatants. The wit and the printer both fought the battle for the liberty of the press, until the sense of an outraged community released the typographer from the peril so nobly encountered.

In thousands of other instances similar fidelity has been exhibited. In short, it is part of the professional honor of a printer not to disclose, either wantonly or from venal motives, the secrets of any office in which he is employed.

There is also the allegiance which printers pay to their chief in not divulging important intelligence. In some cases a compositor is necessarily entrusted with an item of news which would be negotiable immediately, and worth