

We had a red-white-and-blue cat, of a pessimistic physiognomy, grimly gruesome with the scars of several nocturnal combats. Nobody would have taken him for a cat of literary tastes, yet he ate the mice that subsisted upon an unsold edition of "The Feast of the Gods: an Ode to the Great God Pan," by a local poet who also owed the printer, that in the course of years had become a cold collation, in which only the instinct of a mouse could find anything edible. The cat was named Japhet because he was always in search of his father, that he had seen jump into the ink barrel but never come out again, a mystery to the solution of which he devoted his declining days. He was born white, and might have continued so had he not in early youth been associated with printer's ink. It was one of my functions to provide him with a coat of many colours—one of the few duties which I performed with conscientious regularity. His tricolour tail was a thing of beauty and a joy forever—to me; to Japhet, who was colour-blind, it was a matter of indifference—except when he washed himself, and then he shook his head dubiously, the ink not suiting his epicurean palate. But he was not long for this world. One day, in quest of his sire, he meandered into a press running at full speed, and two impressions were taken of him before it could be stopped. One of the press-feeders—a wag in his way, and under notice to quit—rushed into the office with his face smeared with blood and breathlessly announced, "A catastrophe in the press-room! Nine lives lost!" The shock was so sudden that the proprietor fainted; but when he came round and learned that Japhet was the only victim, he smiled a sickly smile and tried to persuade the book-keeper that he had only fallen asleep, remarking that the next time any press-feeder made an ass of himself there would be a cataclysm, and he would be in it. Poor Japhet! he was a restless creature. Let us hope he now rests in peace—or, rather, pieces.

Of all artisans the printer is, without exception, most given to travel. In many instances, he becomes literally a journeyman as soon as he has served his apprenticeship. The conditions under which he pursues his vocation are favourable to a nomadic existence, and the number of itinerants who "carry the banner"—as tramping is called—is hardly surprising. Type-setting is in itself a varied education. The compositor is constantly picking up scraps of information about men and things and places here, there and everywhere. The monotony of his work is irksome to an active temperament, and little wonder if he picks up with other things a desire to see the world and gain a personal experience of the scenes with which he is conversant. The tools not furnished by the office he can carry in his pocket; the printing office is ubiquitous; for the newspaper hand there is always casual work to be had "subbing" (*i.e.*, working as a substitute for a regular man who wants a night off); and for the job printer temporary employment awaits him in one or another office in every city, while the country newspaper often helps him along with a few days' or a few hours' work—enough for bed and breakfast. And should he be "dead broke," he has but to make known his needs to be relieved, so generally recognized is the shiftlessness of the fraternity. Indeed, in England a union man could—and perhaps still does, for all I know to the contrary—draw from the funds of each union a mileage of one penny between the town he is in and the next.

The tramp printer—often a good mechanic, and alas! also often a tippler—has marked characteristics that call forth the raillery as well as the appreciation of his fellow craftsmen, many of whom have carried the banner in their time before settling down as family men. I remember one in particular who with the first Summer zephyr was wafted into our knowledge factory.

"Day, gentlemen! Any chance of a job?" was his greeting.

He had been preceded the day before by another of his ilk, and the milk of human kindness was dried up at its source. Although it is next to impossible to mistake the peripatetic printer, "the boys" pretended not to recognize him as such, and eyed him furtively as a peddler in disguise—a wolf in sheep's clothing.