

(Written for the *Miscellany*.)  
**The Manufacture of Wood Type.**

Comparatively few people outside of the place (except printers) are aware that Norwich, Conn., has the largest manufactory of its kind in the world—that of the Wm. H. Page Wood Type Company—although its reputation is world-wide, and visitors from all parts of the globe make it a point to inspect this establishment before taking their departure from the city. Mr. Page,—a practical printer, an artist, and a gentleman of unequalled taste in all matters pertaining to the printing business,—is always ready to pilot a stranger through the works and volunteer such information as may prove interesting and instructive to the visitor. In his absence, Mr. George Setchel, the worthy foreman of the establishment, takes charge, and it will not be his fault if one is not wiser on leaving than on entering the works. In fact, it seems to be a part of the duty of all the employes to make a stranger feel perfectly at home while witnessing the various operations in the manufacture of wood type at this concern; and if they are unsuccessful, it is the visitor's own fault.

The "type shop," as it is called in the vicinity, employs some forty men and girls, is located on the western bank of the Shetucket river one mile from the centre of the city, and is easily accessible by horse cars at almost any hour of the day. It is an immense brick building, with office adjoining and a wing in the rear for the engine room, drying room (for seasoning the lumber, which requires, for maple two to three years, and for box-wood three to four years,) coal bins, and the various adjuncts of steam power.

After seasoning thoroughly the lumber is sawed sectionally, or at a right angle with the grain of the wood, the blocks coming from the saw about an inch and a quarter in thickness. They are smoothed on one side by passing under a swiftly revolving planer, and are then treated to a thin coat of shellac held in solution in alcohol, which penetrates and fills the pores of the wood that would otherwise show themselves in every printed impression. After a thorough sand-papering the block goes to the "buffer" for a polish, when its glassy surface is ready for the "cutter."

The type-cutting machine is the invention of Mr. Edwin Allen, a resident of Norwich; and it is said that he conceived the idea of applying

machinery to this line of work while visiting the printing office of the Hon. John Dunham, in this city, a number of years since, when he noticed a jour. whittling out some wooden letters with a jackknife. It is a very ingenious affair, and although many and various improvements have been made by the practical tests and experience of years, the main idea of working from a pattern remains the same as produced by Mr. Allen.

The blocks having acquired the proper surface and thickness, are placed in the machine under the vertical cutter, while the pattern previously prepared is placed under the opposite arm of the machine, which follows around its edges like a cam, completely guiding the needle-like cutter in its every movement, and producing a fac simile of the pattern in almost "no time." The rapidity with which these "men of letters" turn out wooden ideas is perfectly astounding; and could the ghosts of Faust, Gutenberg and Schaffer visit this establishment and witness one of the results of their invention, doubtless they would feel amply compensated for their accused complicity with the devil.

After the letter has been cut, it sometimes needs a little trimming—a burr has to be taken off, or a corner sharply cut by hand, or an interstice made between the ends of two hair lines as in the top and bottom of a cap H, etc.,—after which it is thoroughly oiled to prevent its being affected by moisture of the atmosphere, and is then packed up in fonts, marked as to style and size of letter, size of font, etc., and is ready for the printer. An idea of the variety in sizes may be obtained when we state that they range from two picas (about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch) in depth up to about eight feet, this being the depth of the largest letter shown.

Borders of an almost infinite variety are made at this establishment, and must be seen to be fully appreciated; no words can describe them or their beautiful combinations of colors, which Mr. Page has made a life specialty, (we need hardly say with success—his work shows that,) and probably no living man better understands the theory and practice of color printing. Even the writer of the able article on that subject in the June *Miscellany* might gain information were he to visit the Norwich Type Shop. In this connection it will not be out of place to state that the "Specimen Book" of this concern lately issued, showing samples of each style and size