

❁ ❁ THE PRINTING DEPARTMENT. ❁ ❁

THE COUNTRY PRINTER AND THE APPRENTICE

Written by one who knows.

IN this advanced age in the art of printing, it is remarkable the number of printers in the small towns in this country who apparently ignore all progress in the way of turning out up-to-date printing and make a profit thereby. As a result he is often chagrined to see some of the printing of his town sent to the city printers. Without any thought or consideration of the cause of this, he complains of the lack of support to home industry shown by the business men of the town. If, instead of grumbling, he would go to work to find out the cause of this, he would often find that the fault lay at his own door.

The work turned out by the country printer is often done in a rather slipshod style, and not in such a manner as would be likely to draw trade. Too often his journeyman is a half-educated printer with little or no knowledge of the art of setting up a good job as it is done in the modern printing office. In order to obtain the best results, the country printer should have at least one good practical printer, with the trade at his fingers' ends; a man with original ideas and able to turn his hand to any branch of the business. The results in the quality of the work turned out would more than compensate, by the increased orders it would bring, for any extra salary paid. Not only this, but a man who knew his business could turn out almost double the work that a poor printer would. The advertisements in the paper would also be of a higher order, if placed by an experienced hand, and would bring better results to the merchant, who would be more likely to increase the size of his space.

The stock would be better taken care of and being utilized to the best advantage would give the public a higher opinion of the class of work turned out.

Another consideration is that of the apprentice who has started in to learn the trade. Too little attention is given to the proper education of the apprentice in the country printing office. He is generally taught to set "straight matter," and is given no insight into job work, or any of the other important branches of the trade. When he has served four years he is turned out to seek his fortune elsewhere, and, as a rule, he does not travel far till he finds out that he comes far short of being a practical printer, and if he has force of character enough to keep him from becoming disgusted, and seeking employment as a common laborer, he is compelled to go in as a "two-thirder" into some good printing office. Here he gets remuneration enough to pay his board and clothing and nothing more, and too often a poor show at the parts of the trade he is lacking in, and is generally the first man laid off when the slack season comes. When he has served a certain number of years he is compelled to join the printers' union. He can't work in a union shop for less than the scale of wages set by the union, and the employers are unwilling to give him employment at the same rate of pay as an educated printer, and thus handicapped he travels from one shop to the other till eventually he picks up enough knowledge of the art to become foreman of a country weekly. He becomes a menace to the progress of the craft all through the greed and

selfishness of the man with whom he was supposed to learn the trade

PROFIT FOR THE SMALL PRINT SHOP

One of the problems that continually faces the master of a small print shop is the doing of large work on a small cylinder. He has to do it at a price to compete with large cylinders, and he cannot put it on a large cylinder because he hasn't one. The best way to put the small cylinder on a par with the large one is to increase its speed. A pony press, well built, and set on a good foundation, with the springs properly adjusted, and kept well oiled, will bear a lot of rushing without injury. To get the speed it is necessary to train feeders especially for the work. The average feeder thinks he is doing well to put down the sheets at 1,500 an hour, but feeders can be trained to put them in at 2,500 an hour, without material loss of register, and, with care, a pony press should stand this as a permanent speed. When so run, the results are as economical as when presses of twice the size are used at nominal speeds. Few pressmen appreciate what there is to be gained by training feeders, or realize that men can be got to put in sheets hour after hour at the speed named. Of course, it is hard work, but it can be done, and by young fellows who are not specially gifted. They simply require to be taught the niceties of speed-getting, and to have the speed of the press increased for them regularly, say by gains of 50 an hour, until the limit of their capacity is reached. Most offices are not equipped for such small changes in speed. The step-pulley in common use are, perhaps, graded to give speeds of 500, 1,100 and 1,400, and the feeder who cannot jump 300 at once and get on to the higher speed continues to run at a lower rate. It will pay any proprietor of a small print shop who has a pony cylinder to put in a new set of pulleys or an electric motor, and speed up his press to the limit of safe running, training the feeder gradually to the work.

There is a feeder in New York City who shoves blotters into an eighth Gordon at the rate of 4,200 an hour. That is too fast for either the press or the man to maintain, but such small job presses may be run at 2,000 to 2,500 an hour without injury, and the writer once employed a feeder who used to run a quarto at a belt speed of 2,500, feeding a full-sized sheet to the press. Of course, there are those who will tell you that it is simply breaking up presses to run them so fast, but a pressman who knows his business will keep all bolts tight and allow no cutting of bearings, and reduce the speed when the jar is too great. It is not the speed that wears out the presses; it is the unfavorable conditions of springy floors and poorly oiled bearings. If these are looked after properly, there is little to fear from high speeds.

Every small printer wants to be a big printer, and to enlarge and develop his business. Perhaps, one in a hundred of them may succeed in doing this. In the very nature of things, it is impossible for many to secure such growth. Thirty-three years ago, Joseph J. Little, president of the New York Typothetæ, was a small printer: to-day, he controls one of the finest printing establishments in the world. This could not have been the