

Apprentices, Worthless Advertising, and the Law of Libel.

At the twenty-third annual meeting of the Canadian Press Association, held at Port Hope, Ont., August 2nd, the President, Mr. J. B. Trayes, delivered an eminently practical address from which we would like to make copious extracts, but, owing to the limited space at our disposal, we must content ourselves for the present with giving his opinions and suggestions on two or three important subjects. We quote:

"I was greatly pleased in June last to meet at Toronto a large number of delegates attending the National Typographical Union, then in session in that city, and in the course of discussion with several of the principal officers of that body, I cordially concurred in one subject which they thoroughly debated, viz., the prevailing apprenticeship system, which is most faulty. Now a boy goes into a printing office, learns to set type, and in one or two years goes out in the world to swell the ranks of the already large mob of blacksmiths who call themselves printers. I think a little attention given to this subject by our members would lead to good results, for a regular system of apprenticeship, which should cover a period of five years, could be devised which would tend to make the 'Art Preservative' one that could be profitably followed. * * * * *

"I beg to suggest the addition of another office in connection with our Association, one which, in my opinion, will serve a most useful purpose, namely, that of a 'Corresponding Secretary.' It would be the duty of that officer to place himself in communication with similar Associations to our own in every part of America, which would lead to an exchange of addresses, correspondence, etc. This could not fail to be beneficial to us all. This officer could, too, at times, be of great service to publishers in securing valuable information regarding the responsibility and standing of advertisers, as such an officer would find channels of information open to him that would be both difficult and costly for us individually to inquire through. It would be his duty on receipt of an enquiry from a member of the Association to secure reliable information of the person or firm in question, and publishers would thus be saved the making of numerous bad debts, for it frequently happens that we receive an order to insert an advertisement for six months or a year,

and on completion of the term find the advertiser worthless. A postal card sent by the publisher to the Corresponding Secretary would bring him the desired information promptly, and it could be relied upon.

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"There is another matter which I would very strongly urge upon the attention of the Association, namely, the necessity of a thorough revision of the law of libel. At present the only thing we or the public know about the matter is that we are at the mercy of any penniless blackmailer who chooses to institute an action against a responsible publisher. There are several members of this Association who have good reason—or rather disagreeable reason—to complain of the present state of the law. The fact is, not one of us is safe from annoyance and possible loss. A clever practitioner called by some characterless scoundrel to bolster up his case can put an honest publisher to any amount of annoyance. The plaintiff has nothing to lose, in most cases; the defendant has nothing to gain, and after dangling about the court house one day after another is fortunate if he escapes with the payment of costs. It is high time the Association took this matter up and, by the use of its many pens, forced the enactment of just laws. It is a strange thing that the law of libel should be such a quagmire as it is; there is no reason in the world why its requirements should not be as clear as day."

A Conductor's Printing Office.

It appears that German railway conductors are made happy by the addition to their equipment of a paper mill and printing office, the invention of a Berlin engineer, to be hung around the neck, which, according to an exchange, is to completely manufacture passenger tickets before the eyes of the wondering public. The apparatus is said to be somewhat complicated in construction, but its manipulation is as simple as its working is correct, for, should the operator not proceed in the way required by the mechanism, it will not print all the figures and words wanted, but the word "Falsch" (wrong) in the place where the fault was committed. At the same time this portable printer checks the number of tickets issued, so that any given moment the money in the hands of the conductor can be compared with the value of the tickets printed and taken.—*Scientific American*.