

## THE COUNTRY APPRENTICE.

THE EXPERIENCE OF AN EX-MEMBER OF THE FRATERNITY,  
AND THE FAULTS OF THE TRAINING THEY GET.

ONE frequently hears the statement that the compositor who learns his trade in a country newspaper office should be an all-round man, that the system of training apprentices in these offices is such that a man who undergoes it should be "thorough," that he should have mastered the "details" of the work.

This may be the case as far as those who have worked in some country offices are concerned, but the system of training which fell to my lot—a system I believe to be widespread—is not calculated to instil into the minds of apprentices either thoroughness or a mastery of details. Many good people are of the opinion that a man should be "called" before he enters the Christian ministry. It must have been a decree of fate that I should enter a newspaper office, for I was "called" to the work by a newspaper proprietor to whom I had never applied for a situation.

My work for the first ten months was that of the "devil," such as sweeping out, running errands, carrying the paper to subscribers, sawing the wood used, cleaning the presses, Gordon and power, and the engine—a dirty, greasy, coal-oil engine—after each time they were used. (I learned the "details" of this kind of work). Between odd jobs of "devilling" I was allowed to work at the case, and in ten months was able to set up three thousand ems in a day.

At the end of these ten months, one cold December night, "we" were burnt out, and the management decided not to start up again. It was a custom in this town that the boy who carried the paper to the subscribers, should on New Year's Day present to these subscribers a "Carrier Boy's Address," generally in verse, when he received from each some gratuity for his services during the year. Although "we" were out of business I was not, and had an address printed, the verse principally of my own composing.

As I now look at these verses, I wonder my friends ever allowed me to have them published, but they yielded me more cash than many a standard poem has yielded its author. Five months later I secured a position on the staff of one of the other papers in the town. As there were two apprentices who had not served as long at the work as I had there was no more "devil" work for me, and in a short time I was put on "stint."

This system of "stint" is the bane of many a country apprentice. Not that he does not like it! Oh, no! With a "stint" such as we had, we were gentlemen of leisure as compared with the fellows at other trades. "Stint" in a country office means giving the boys a certain amount of work to do each day and letting them go home when that amount of work is done. When an apprentice has been long enough in an office to distribute type cleanly he is given about 2,500 ems to set in a day, and as he improves his stint is raised till he is given 5,500 or 6,000 ems to set without distribution, equal to about 4,500 ems with "dis." On publication day there is no "stint," as there is some work for each boy to do in the printing, folding and mailing of the paper.

The usual time of apprenticeship in such an office is four years, leaving one year of apprenticeship in the city. This year is looked fondly forward to by the country apprentice as the

time when he will learn "job work," so he is satisfied with from one month's to six months' experience at that line of work in the country office.

After we were about two years at the trade we could set our "stint" in seven hours on an average, and on special occasions would do three days' work in two to get a holiday on the third. So we were contented—no thoughts of the future, no ambitious desires for a thorough knowledge of the trade we were supposed to be learning were strong enough to determine us to ask the proprietor for a "show" at job work. We were satisfied to go down to work at eight o'clock in the morning and in a happy-go-lucky way "rattle up" our stints, and get off about four o'clock in the afternoon.

The effect such an experience as this will have on a boy is varied—it depends on the bent of his mind, on the tendencies of his ambition, when he is thus at freedom from four o'clock. But one thing is certain, and this is the fact that this system tends to send a boy to the city more ignorant of than master of the details of his trade. When I came to the city I did not know there was any difference between long primer and small pica, nor how to place quoins in a chase to lock it up. This was not because I had not opportunity to learn these matters, but because I had no interest in job work, due to the pleasure of the short hours of the stint system.

We, the three boys in this office, used to sit down sometimes and calculate how much money we could make if we were to go to the city. We made all our calculations at 33½c. per thousand ems, the price we had learned was the city scale, and were each one confident we could easily make \$11 per week.

In the course of time we all found our way to the city. One of the three started work in Montreal at \$4.50 per week, and has, after eighteen months steady application to business, had his wages advanced to \$6 a week. Another was glad to find work in Toronto at \$5 a week. He also is now receiving \$6 a week. And these boys are steady, intelligent, industrious fellows, but who, unfortunately, like myself, did not know as much about printing as they thought they did.

As for myself—my experience in that office has made me so fond of leisure that I have been driven to find employment among the newspaper fraternity.

DONALD O. MCKINNON.

### TAKING UP REPAIRING.

Mr. C. J. Robertson, 588 Craig street, Montreal, who opened up a printing machinery supply store a few months ago, is going to take up the repairing business as well. Mr. Robertson has had a thorough training as a mechanic, and can be relied on to refit old machines, and make as many additions of the newest devices as it is possible to do. Mr. Robertson thoroughly understands his business, having designed several presses for some of the best houses in America.

### CHEVIOT COVER.

The "Royal Cheviot" cover offered to the trade by Buntin, Gillies & Co., Hamilton, is a new line of heavy weight cover paper which promises to have a large sale. As the name suggests, the finish is the same as that of the well-known Cheviot cloth; the colors are rich and the surface will commend itself to printers who desire effective work. Samples will be sent to the trade on application.