

CORRESPONDENCE.

The "Art Preservative of all Arts."

PHILADELPHIA, March 10, 1877.

To the Editor of the Miscellany :

SIR,—Did it ever occur to you that the above quotation, so often used at typographical banquets, printers' conventions, etc., by many persons in their speeches, and authors in their writings, is a misnomer, a delusion, and a cheat? To me it has, and I often wonder why it is so "oft quoted." I will endeavor to give my reasons therefor, in as few plain words as I possibly can, and hope to make myself fully understood in the matter.

I am a journeyman printer, and from that stand-point I take my observations. When I take a casual survey of the typographical field of the United States and Canada, and, in fact, the world over where types and the printing press are in use, what is to be found? Do I find the large bulk of the working printers in a better condition, financially or socially, than the carpenter, the mason, the plumber, etc.? Assuredly it cannot be answered in the affirmative. Are printers better paid for their labor, taking all things into consideration, than any other mechanic? I think not. Do printers, on an average, get more employment, the year round, than other workmen? No. In all the large cities where the bulk of the work is performed, what is the *status* of the printer? Is he found in the enjoyment of better advantages in life than his neighbor? That is easily answered in the negative. Look around in any city, no matter what time of the year, and you will always find a large number of printers out of employment. It may be said that it is their own fault. In some instances that assertion may be true, but in the majority of cases it is not, for work cannot always be had. Now, if journeymen printers do not stand on a higher plane than other mechanics—and we know they do not—why use the oft-quoted words: "The art preservative of all arts." Surely, if it cannot protect its own toilers, and lift them higher up in the scale of life than other mechanics, and better reward them for their labor, then, indeed, are the words inappropriate, misused, and led to deceive. It does not take a very penetrating mind to discover the fact, that the printer, no matter where found, is in no better condition than his co-laborer in other fields of industry. Indeed, in many cases, he is far below them. Take the bulk of the printers, from the time they enter a printing office, until they reach the age of manhood, and for many long years after that, do they not have to plod along the weary way of life, eking out a scanty subsistence by toil, wherever and whenever they may have the good fortune to secure it, simply because they are so illy paid for their labor and talents? It is even so, and cannot be gainsaid. Now, if printing is the "art of all arts," why don't it do something for its followers, and lift them out of this drudgery, and place them above the level on which they are found to-day? These are significant queries, and need an explanation from some one of those who delight to quote the words that heads this article, and it is to be hoped that some one will be found capable of elucidating, to my mind, and perhaps to many others, the question now opened for discussion.

• Having given a mere outline of the condition of the printer as found to-day, from a journeyman's stand-point, let us look a little, and take a running glance into the employer's position.

If it is true that printing is the "art preservative of all arts," perhaps we may find the employer (so long as we could not be the journeyman) enjoying all the advantages that this quotation signifies. But here on the very threshold we are brought to a standstill, for on the very first peep into their business, we find that they are contending continually against adverse circumstances, such as ruinous competition, low prices for their products, etc. Take into consideration their invested capital, and the low returns for the same, it can almost be safely asserted that their financial condition is not much greater than the average journeyman. How many, out of the thousands engaged in the business, retire with a competency, after the cares and labor of years? Few, indeed, they be. Do not the large majority of them toil year after year, decade after decade, and only make a respectable living, just a little above the workman, while few make what might be termed a respectable showing. Here, again, we ask, if printing is the "art preservative," why does such a state of affairs exist among the employers when better things might be looked for? Have they not the remedy in their own hands? And if they have, why don't they use it? In truth, they have not the power to remedy the evil under which they labor, any more than the journeyman has. They must submit to the inevitable. Competition must be met, low prices must be accepted, and many other troubles must be reluctantly embraced. One would suppose that none of these evils enumerated ought to exist in a trade, whose boast is that it is the "art preservative of all arts." Knowing these things, and looking at these facts as they present themselves, before us, clear and transparent, we are led to exclaim, that the quotation so often used, is a delusion and a mockery, and there is no truth in it.

Having taken up the cudgel against the misused quotation mentioned above, it is to be hoped that some one will be found to avail themselves of the use of your valuable columns (as you inform your readers that they are free to all) to combat the position I have taken in a feeble way, on this subject. A little friendly discussion may be beneficial, and result in much good. At any rate, no harm can come of it. I trust I shall see the columns of the *Miscellany* deluged with communications on this subject, no matter what side is taken. If a spirit of friendly interchange of views can be engendered and quickened among the typos, on this and other kindred topics, a great deal of good may be accomplished. You have paved the way, Mr. Editor, in giving the free use of your columns, let others accept the proffered gift as I have done.

Yours fraternally,

HAIR SPACE.

News from Norwich, Connecticut.

NORWICH, CONN., March 20, 1877.

To the Editor of the Miscellany :

SIR,—Having received an invitation through the columns of the *Miscellany*, in common with the rest of the "boys" abroad, to forward you some items relating to the trade, etc., I herewith enclose the following, which, perhaps, will be of some interest to your readers:

Saturday evening, the 10th ult., Typographical Union, No. 100, elected its delegates to the next session of the I. T. U. at Louisville. The Union has also reduced its scale for morning paper composition to thirty-five cents.

Willard, who formerly worked in your city and who stole a march on "Mother" E. of this place by march-