

Practice picking each letter from the highest few in each box, and with as little disturbance as possible to the others. In a word, be "light-fingered." Keep the nails short, so that the *first contact* of a letter with the fingers will be felt. Train the eye to leave one box for the next the instant the fingers have closed on each letter. *The eye* has as much to do with rapid composition as the hand.

One more simple aid, and I have done. Push down all spaces (except the last, which must of course go tight) with the thumb of the left hand. This may seem to many like unnecessary advice; but I know the majority of compositors do not practice it, and I know its habitual practice is a great help to speed.

Any apprentice, who has sufficient life in him to *ever* make a type-setter, and who will, during his term of service, follow up these simple instructions, *day after day* (and it is just as easy as to not do it), will as certainly become a rapid compositor, as he lives. And all the time he will have an end and an aim in view, other than a selfish desire to kill his three years time, which will sweeten all his labor.

### Speed in Composition.

Almost every compositor would like to become an expert, but how few take the trouble or pains to become such. They all would like to become adepts in the art of picking up type, but how few have the backbone to come down to dry, hard, practical training—the only pathway to success. There is no medium or half-way halting-place. Old habits and eccentricities in setting must be stopped at once. Start right; no matter if a little time and money are apparently lost in the start. It will be just like removing the earthy covering of a gold mine—the gold cannot be reached without some little trouble and seemingly loss and waste of time and labor. So the gold mine at the bottom of your case cannot be reached without divesting yourself of all bad habits and false motions in composing. It is easily done; all it needs is firmness, perseverance, and patience to master details.

At intervals, during the past fifteen or twenty years, compositors, noted for extra quickness in type-setting, have had several trials of speed to ascertain who could set up the greatest number of "ems" in a day of ten hours. These trials have demonstrated the fact that some compositors are born with an unusual supply of that famous lubricant, "elbow grease," whereby they are enabled to put type in line at more than twice the speed of ordinary compositors. For instance, a journeyman (of the New York *Times* office, we believe), in competition with a rival belonging to another office, set up about seventeen thousand ems of minion type in ten hours. What number his competitor tucked together, or what size of type was in his case, we do not recollect. Now, the average day's work of ordinary compositors is about eight thousand ems—hardly that number—including distribution.

Fast compositors, we believe, are seemingly slow in their movements; whereas, those who are in reality much slower are *apparently* models of activity. The movements of some compositors while at the case are very *outré* and comical. A "howling Dervish" could hardly avoid looking at them with some degree of interest. Some compositors will enter the composing room an hour or so later in the morning than the rest of their brethren,

will hang their hats and coats on their accustomed stands with a good deal of deliberation, and then proceed leisurely around at their cases and copy, they take "sticks" in hand and commence work. But they make no feints—they waste no "tissue" unnecessarily. Every reciprocating movement of their arms means one more type or space in their sticks. It is pleasant to listen to the steady, precise "click" of each type as it "touches bottom" in the stick, as though it were in unison with the beat of a pendulum. When Saturday afternoon comes round, compositors of this style have as large bills present as any others, albeit they have worked at least a day less in the week than their compeers, who make a greater show of activity—superfluous activity, however, as it adds nothing to the sum total of their work. Most compositors, after picking up a letter, give their wrists and forearm two or three twirls before they deposit the type in the stick. These "extra flourishes," of course, waste time. When this manual eccentricity is combined with a semi-wriggling and teetering movement of the whole body, we have a picture not very graceful, to be sure, although it is sometimes provocative of a harmless smile. It was Mr. Clowes, the celebrated London printer, entering his composing room one day, that noticed among the rows of men at work in front of the stands one compositor whose movements seemed to him comparatively slow. Turning to the foreman of the room, he inquired whether it would not be well to discharge that man, pointing him out; but the foreman, with a smile, informed the proprietor that that identical man was "the fastest compositor in the whole room."

### "Printer Wanted."

There is unfortunately "more truth than poetry" in the following, which we take from our scrap book. We trust none of the boys who are readers of the *Miscellany* will allow themselves to be classed with the "runaways." Rather let them resolve to qualify themselves to "take charge of an office" after their apprenticeship expires. "This heading meets our eye every few days, in both city and country exchanges. 'One competent to take charge of an office' is the usual specification in the country newspaper. There are few such printers to be found. They are not 'on the tramp.' They seldom answer such advertisements, because they have no difficulty in finding work where they are known. A 'good printer,' and one that can be depended on, is a rare animal. A boy of fifteen goes into an office, learns the boxes, and is taught the mysteries of 'following copy.' He acquires a little speed, gets the big head, has a fuss with his employer, quits the office and starts on a 'tramp' as a full-fledged journeyman printer. The country is overrun with such fellows. They meet with rebuffs, become discouraged, reckless and dissipated, and thus bring odium not only on themselves, but the art which they falsely claim to represent—for one of those roving botches comes in contact with hundreds of people, while the stay-at-home, competent workman is known to but few—and the public have made up their verdict that printers, as a class, are a graceless set of scamps. The fault is as much with the employers as the employees. When publishers resolve to employ no runaway apprentices, boys will not run away after a few months at the case and none will start on a tramp until they are competent to take charge of an office."