

[Written for the Miscellany.]

**A Word about Apprentices.**

It is undeniable, that to preserve good order and system in any establishment, the boys as well as the men must be of such a stamp as will ensure their punctual attendance at the appointed hours, and a faithful attention to their individual duties during the day. In every printing office such a system is indispensable. There are, however, numerous instances where quite the reverse predominates, and though some honorable exceptions exist, still it is quite apparent, that many apprentices of the present day do not know their proper positions. This evil generally prevails in second and third class offices, where the "boss"—a most despicable substitute for the terms "master" and "foreman"—has to depend on boys to get the work done. As the employer cannot always be present, a system of loafing and neglect during his absence is adopted by his apprentices, and the result is, to make up for lost time, the work must be hurried and consequently executed in a dirty and slovenly manner. Such boys become habitually careless, generally making very inefficient journeymen, and, in a mechanical point of view, are seldom trustworthy. Many of these evils might be avoided if the employer would be more particular in selecting his boys; but this is seldom the case. He wants an apprentice. A boy applies; says he wants to "learn to print," and is at once installed as "devil;" but unfortunately for both, the master in a few months finds out that his youthful majesty possesses little or no learning, and much less of that natural capacity which is absolutely requisite to make a thorough practical job printer or "type sticker." However, in two or three years time, with some coaxing and a great deal of pushing, this young aspirant learns to imitate, in a sort of way, the work of others, and can even set up a half-sheet poster. He has now reached the height of his ambition, imagines he has learned the trade, looks upon himself as A 1, and as something magnificently essential to the office. Being quite sure his employer cannot get on without his services, he becomes careless—is generally the last one to make his appearance in the morning and the first to leave off in the evening—knows more about the business than older hands—is (in his own eyes) just as good a workman as any jour. and thinks he ought to get just as big wages. This is no fancy picture, and it is much to be regretted that solitary

cases of this kind exist in some offices of greater pretensions. Now, the question naturally arises, Who is the greatest sufferer in the end? Unquestionably the boy is; for, no matter in what class of office he may be, the evil habits he has contracted will always stand against him. His employer may, owing to circumstances, possibly overlook them for the time, but he never forgets them, and is well pleased to get rid of the too precocious youth when he dons his freedom suit. Every foreman has his place and knows it, and his position and authority should decidedly be respected; every journeyman has his place, and *should* know it; every apprentice has his, and should be MADE know it. If this plan was generally adopted there would be less waste of time and material, less slovenly work, less insolence to superiors in office, and good order and regularity would reign triumphant. If boys wish to excel as printers—not mere "type-stickers"—they must attend to their respective duties and constantly take a real, solid interest in the work of the office to which they are attached, cultivate a taste for the best styles of work, be willing and anxious to learn, and never be too big or too old to take advice and receive instructions from others. This method, if adopted, would be beneficial both to themselves and their employers.

EVERY employing printer should make a gift of a year's subscription to the *Miscellany* to every one of their boys, if not to their journeymen. They would appreciate it and would no doubt receive enough instruction from its pages to amply repay any employer who would show such thoughtfulness about their welfare. Besides, the boys are our future journeymen, and every available means should be laid hold of to elevate them mentally and socially. Any boy who delights to read and study typographical literature must become, in time, an ornament to the craft. It not only trains their minds to do good mechanical work, but it has a subtle influence on their moral character which can not be overestimated, and which goes a great way towards fitting them for a more exalted position (if there is any such) than a printer. If employing printers will only look at the suggestion in its proper light, even as to dollars and cents, they will not fail to make the boys if not the men, a present of one year's subscription to the *Miscellany*, with the full assurance that it will be returned to them a hundred fold in good and reliable work.