

The Printer's Miscellany.

AN EXPONENT OF PRINTING AND ALL THE KINDRED ARTS.

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PRACTICAL MATTERS.

The Unnecessary Movements Practised by Compositors.

An old-time writer on this subject once said that "the movements practised by many compositors were ridiculous, purposeless, and time-wasting," and he was right. Let us pass through the composing-rooms of any of our city or country printing offices, and we guarantee that we shall not fail to find—anywhere and everywhere—specimens of the kind referred to.

Look at one compositor, who accompanies the necessary movement of his right arm with a continuous shuffling of his right foot; at another, who clicks and knocks each type he picks up over and over again—2, 3, 4, 5 and more times against his composing-stick; or at a third, who makes a deep reverential bow towards his cases whenever he lifts a type from them:—in fact, these purposeless movements are of so great a variety, and mostly so ridiculous, that we will not waste time in enumerating them, lest, by so doing, we should give to a few words, which we desire to render impressive and earnest, a stamp of frivolity.

To expect the same speed in his work, and the same cleverness, from every compositor, is an utopian and never-to-be-realized hope; yet what can be—and ought to be—expected, is the same quiet and thoughtful way of doing the work. And here it is not the ability,—it is the will of the man we have to deal with. Some may say: "But what if a compositor has been spoiled during his apprenticeship?"—to which we reply: If he will—earnestly WILL reform bad and pernicious habits acquired when an apprentice, or through the bad example he had, in journey-men, before his eyes, *he can do so!*—nay, *he must do so!* Of course, what an earnest and sensible remonstrance would have prevented in the beginning, will, in later years, require more or less time to amend, always supposing that the good and earnest will to do so exists.

Then, besides the ridicule and the loss of valuable time, these purposeless movements will—some of them, certainly—affect the compositor's

health, his chest, his legs, his feet; they will, indeed, greatly fatigue him before he has done half a day's work.

Before proceeding further, let us see *how a compositor ought to do his work*. This may be said in a few words:—standing perfectly upright before his frame, soldier-like, heels and knee-joints together; the upper part of the body erect, not curved; looking at a type before his right-hand thumb and finger grasp it, and then bringing it into the composing-stick with a simple, short movement—no curves, no clicking, no turning it up and down; not following with the whole body the advancing right hand towards an *f* or a *g*, an *s* or a *k*, but mere inclining just as much as is absolutely necessary towards that point of the case or cases where a type is to be taken up. The more quietly and with the less affectation or haste all these movements are practised, the better for his exchequer will be the result ultimately; for his work will be all the more regular and "measured," and he will soon gain, in ems, in lines, in galleys or sheets, what he formerly spent in bows, in clicking, and in shuffling. He will be considerably less fatigued at the end of his day's work; and will thank us, rather than laugh at us, for this—he may call it "sermon" if he likes.

There are compositors who set 6—8—10—12,000 ems in a day—from the same quality of copy or MS. One will do a day's work of 6000, another of 8, or 10, or 12,000 ems. Very well! Where are, mostly, the reasons to be sought for that will account for this striking difference in productive power? In nothing, believe us, but in the style of working, *i. e.*, in the manner (so different) of picking up type. One who causes a type to make two, three and more curves through the air before he places it in the stick; or one who knocks it repeatedly (or even once only) against the stick, before he finally puts it down into the line, etc., is an evident loser in time, against one who, having grasped the type, places it quickly, in the shortest way, and without any further ceremony or reverential inclination, where it ought to be, looking out at