

The Toronto Specimen

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About Apprentices.

EMPLOYERS frequently complain now-a-days that the young men are not as good printers as in the past. The reason is not hard or far to seek. It may be said we have no apprentice system at the present time, and this is the source of the whole trouble. Young fellows are employed in the country printing offices and learn to set type. As soon as they have acquired a fair speed they are off to the cities, and readily find employment at a higher rate of wages than they are paid in the country.

We know of one office not far from Toronto which has been deprived of four of its apprentices within a year by the bait of more money for their work. They all gave promise of being good printers, and had a splendid opportunity to become expert in all branches of the business; the office referred to doing all classes of work, and turning it out as well as the best of our city establishments. These boys in the city occupy the places of four men, and while they may be able to crowd up as much type, yet they lack a thorough knowledge of printing, and will never acquire it. They are, and will always be, simply type-setters.

"In the days of our youth" from five to seven years was thought to be a short enough period of apprenticeship, but now from one to three years is the period of probation. Is it any wonder, then, that the trade is over stocked with poor printers?

The city offices are to blame for the prevailing downward tendency of the class of printers of the present day. The only qualification they ask for is that applicants for employment can set straight matter. Country publishers are becoming tired of breaking in colts for the city offices, and in consequence teach their apprentices less than they did formerly. They are learning the art of getting the most they can out of the apprentices while they remain in their employ, and keep a boy steadily at what he takes most aptly to.

What is the remedy for this state of affairs? Will some of your readers take the subject up, and suggest a feasible scheme that will meet the views of city and country publishers? It is easy enough to say a proper apprenticeship system would solve the difficulty, but

how is any system to be carried out successfully if there is not an understanding which all parties concerned will adhere to?

At present one compositor out of ten cannot set up a twenty line displayed advertisement properly, and there is not one in a hundred who is a good general compositor and job hand. This should not be, and we sincerely hope some method may be devised by which a vast improvement may be brought about without delay. We would like to have the views on this subject of old practical printers, whose experience with the apprenticeship problem would be valuable in bringing about a desired change. Undoubtedly nothing can be worse than the present want of system.

T.

The Government Printing Bureau at Ottawa has just adopted a regulation requiring that hereafter the spelling of such words as "honour" shall conform to the English usage and be spelled with the "u." This is hardly in accordance with the spirit of the times, the tendency being in favor of brevity. The word "honor" is a Latin word, and those dead and gone people spelled it without the "u."

Calculation and Miscalculation.

RECENTLY an experienced printer, a shrewd, practical business man, proprietor of a large office in one of our cities, prepared an estimate for a big job. Upon this estimate he expended much care, and thought he had it correctly estimated. But after his tender was in he found that he had entirely forgotten the item of paper. This was an error, not of ignorance, but memory, and similar mistakes are of frequent occurrence. To guard against errors of this class, let me recommend the use of an estimate form. On the form mention every item which may, by any possibility, enter into the cost of work upon which you are likely to be asked to estimate, as paper, composition, press-work, ink, binding, engraving, ruling, stereotyping, etc. By having these various items printed before you on your forms, you will be constantly reminded of them, and the danger of forgetting will consequently be reduced to a minimum.

But the miscalculations which cause the most loss in printing offices are not the result of failure of memory; where forgetfulness slays its hundreds, ignorance slays its thousands.

Said a machinist: "I will give you an instance of the manner in which the bosses make exorbitant profits, while workmen get but a bare living, and the

public are robbed: In our shop they put a piece of iron worth \$2 in the hands of a man whose wages are \$2.50 per day, he has a helper at \$1.50 per day. The finished work, representing a cost of \$6 is sold for \$10. The bosses have a clear profit of \$1." That workman had never thought of such items of cost as rent of buildings, interest on cost of machinery and stock, depreciation and wear of machinery, repairs, taxes, insurance, book-keeping, office expenses, supervision of foreman or manager, selling goods, etc., and knew not what to say when his attention was called to them. Equally ignorant are numbers of printers.

Unfortunately for the typographical art, many master printers imagine that they have correctly estimated the value of a job when they have computed the cost of paper and wages, and added to the sum an advance of 20 per cent. or 25 per cent. This, they think, will yield them a satisfactory profit. Is it so? Let us see: Where workmen are paid 30 cents per 1,000 ems what is the cost of composition? Having kept careful records and made comparisons with others of a committee who thoroughly investigated this matter, I am prepared to say that an addition of from 30 to 50 per cent. to the amount paid the compositor is necessary to cover the cost of the items of proof-reading, imposition and revision. The variation, as most printers will readily understand, is due to the difference in the character of copy and the various styles of make-up. The average will not be less than 33½ per cent. This brings the cost to 40 cents per 1,000. If 25 per cent. be added to this, the amount for composition would be 50 cents per 1,000. But let us note the fact here that this charge will not give us a profit of 10 cents per 1,000 ems, as some may suppose. Out of this must be paid rent, taxes, interest on capital, insurance, book-keeping, office expenses and other incidentals before there can be any net profit. Nor should it be forgotten that the material is constantly wearing away, for which there must be an allowance of from 10 to 20 per cent. per annum.

But, says one, I have a small office and read the proofs, impose the forms and attend to the revision myself, and keep my own books; besides, my plant is all paid for and I have no interest to pay. Well, then, are you not entitled to the interest on your capital? And if you do the work of a proof-reader, a stone hand or a foreman, should you not charge your customer for it the same as if you had paid the money to an employee? If you do the work of two men you should have two men's