Printers' Edition

The Mirror

Printers' Edition

OUR MOTTO:—"It Is Never Too Late to Mend."

Established 1887 | Stillwater, Minnesota, Thursday, June 18, 1914. | Vol. XXVII: No. 46

REMINISCENCES OF GOOD OLD DAYS

Printer Relates Some of His Amusing Experiences as a "Devil" in the Old Time Print Shop—And he Sure Was a Typical "Devil."

AN EDITOR'S TROUBLES

By H. S. McD.

Seventeen years ago, learning the printing trade was very different from what it is at the present time. There were no linotypes, especially in the small towns and villages, during those happy, memorable days. All type setting was done by hand, and the paper, in many towns, was printed on the old Washington hand press. Such was the case with the weekly Journal where I was learning to set type and numerous other things that fall to the lot of the "devil" in a printing office. The editor and owner, Mr. Geo. Jones, paid me the munificent sum of fifty cents per week, and I was supposed to run errands, set and distribute type, cut and fold papers, and handle the Armstrong bar on the press. It was thought nothing unusual for me to pi a column or more of type, or spill the ink all over the paper just as we were ready to go to press. However, I want to state that such accidents on my part always created an irresistable desire to leave the printing establishment, for the time being, in a hurried and very undignified manner, due to the near presence of ye editor's number twelves. I never paused to argue the whys and wherefores at such times; I always went outside and whistled a few bars of "Johnnie Get Your Gun" in order that the editor might have time to "cool off" a little before I made any attempt to tell him how I come to pi the type or spill the ink.

He told me on one occasion that I could make more pi in fifteen minutes than would be required to start a bakery, but when I asked him why he didn't start a bakery, he heaved the proof inker at me and told me to go to the harness shop and tell them that I needed some strap oil.

A Large Editor

The editor was a man of large proportions, moon-faced and almost bald-headed, and was encumbered by an avoirdupois that would have done credit to any two ordinary men. On warm summer days he was invarably employed at mopping his overheated brow, and cussing ye "devil". Throughout the long winter days he was always planning, and telling the office force, which generally consisted of the foreman, the devil and the office cat, how he intended to own all the newspapers in the United States as soon as he had money to buy them. He always paid his help every Saturday noon so as to give himself a chance to borrow it back before six o'clock. The foreman told me one time that the editor did that because he was afraid we would save enough money to start a paper of our own, and he didn't want to be forced out of business.

Then the Spanish-American war broke out and the foreman decided that he could make more money and win more glory at the front than he could in the printing business, so he accordingly resigned his position. The editor advertised for another printer but the job remained vacant, and, you may be sure that ye devil had his hands full. Finally the editor rolled up his sleeves, grabbed a stick and said he would set the type himself or "bust" the shop trying; and he came mighty near wrecking the shop when he attempted to rest his 300 odd pounds on the top of one of our old rickety three foot stools. I was under the make-up stone picking up a recent batch of pied type when the catastrophe occurred. The first intimation I had that anything was amiss was a crash, a howl, and another crash followed by the sound of falling type. I arose to my feet and immediately burst forth in a roar of laughter at the sight I beheld. On the floor in many pieces lay the remains of the stool; among these, and buried by type cases, lay the editor beating a tattoo on the floor with both feet, and yelling alternately for the police and fire department. Noting my laughter he managed to gain his feet and with a roar, bore down upon me. I saw the need of speedy action, and in less time than it takes to tell it I had vanished through the back door, leaving behind me my cap and 25 cents for three days wages. Although I succeeded in recovering my cap a few days later, my wages are still coming. I worked no more for Editor Jones of the Journal.

He told my father that I was a blood-thirsty villian and had no sense of feeling for the misfortunes of others, and destroyed more type than a legion of devils. He closed up his printing plant and I found a position on the Times at one dollar per week, which, at that time, I thought a very large sum of money for a boy of my age.

The editor of the Times, Mr. Van Liew, was also a preacher, and made many trips about the county and state lecturing on temperance and the evils of the drinking habit. He was something like six feet and a half tall, weighed about one hundred and forty pounds, and when walking threw his shoulders back so far that one was always under the impression that he was about to fall over backwards. We set all the type in the Times building, made up the forms, locked them ready for the press, and then it was the duty of ye devil to take them on a two-wheeled cart to the Herald Office, where the Times was run off the press. There were many occasions that I arrived at the Herald with a large amount of pied type in the bottom of the cart, but the editor never raved about it and always said that "accidents were bound to happen or the world would stand still from dumb surprise." We were constantly teaching new compositors, and it was only a matter of a few months before I was the oldest employee on the Times. I was now doing job work as well as soliciting want ads and making collections. The Times carried no liquor ads of any description owing to the prejudice of "Preacher Van Liew," as we called the editor, against the liquor traffic.

An Editor Horrified

The Fourth of July, 1899, rolled around and editor Van Liew was called away to a distant village to speak to an admiring populace, and I was left in charge of the Times. Being always a lover of practical jokes, I decided to "put one over" on the editor, so I hied myself to the saloons, and before night I had secured four quarter page advertisements setting forth the delights of various kinds of wines and liquors, each of which I agreed to run in one issue of the Times at $5 per ad. The paper was already on the press when the editor returned. He had not seen one of them yet, and I handed him $20 and told him I had secured four good advertisements during his absence, and he immediately raised my wages to three dollars per week. We had just concluded our agreement when we received a telephone call from the Herald that our paper was all printed and ready for us. I generally took the mailing list with me and mailed the papers direct from the Herald office, which did not require a great amount of labor as we only had about three hundred subscribers.

I remember very distinctly that I was busily engaged at folding and wrapping papers, when the front door was thrown violently open, and in rushed editor Van Liew. Was he angry? Oh no! he had ceased to be angry, he was mad, and mad clear through. I noticed that he carried a copy of the Times, saloon ads exposed, in one hand, and a job press inking roller in the other. It suddenly entered my mind that if I expected to continue in life as a printer, it was time to move and move quickly; so I plunged through the door just as he caught sight of me and sent the inking roller flying in my direction. His aim was poor and I gained the street safely. I went home and waited until late the following afternoon, before I decided to "beard the lion in his den" and then forthwith started for the Times office. Not caring to take any chances, I took the opposite side of the street and passed just across the way to see if the editor was in his sanctum. He was there alright, that is until he caught sight of me, and vanished to appear quickly in the front door. No, he didn't invite me to come in and make myself at home, but he did mention something about his wishing that I was a man, and, that preacher or no preacher, etc., etc. However, he mailed me my wages and also enclosed a polite note wishing me success on any newspaper except the Times.

MANY GREAT MEN FORMER PRINTERS

Some of World's Most Noted Characters Have Sat at the Cases.—An Interesting Story of the Career of "Kelley The Wanderer."

OLD BEFORE HIS TIME

By General Stonewall

"He is only printer." Has been an oft repeated remark, that I have heard from those who were of the aristocracy—the codfish quality at that.

"Only a printer." Thousands of the most brilliant minds of this or any other country were and are found in the publishing houses and upon the great papers, working at the case. It is not every one who can be a printer—brains are absolutely necessary.

Who was the earl of Stanhope? He was only a printer. What were Prince Edward William and the Prince Napoleon? Proud to call themselves printers. The late czar of Russia, the crown prince of Prussia and the duke of Battenburg, were printers. William Caxton, the father of English literature, was a practical printer. Dr. Benjamin Franklin who bottled up the lightning was an all around printer going from "devil" up to the very front ranks of journalism of his day, both in America and the old world. C. P. Morris, Brand Whitlock, N. P. Willis, Henry George, Innis Gates, Henry Watterson, Bill Nye, Uncle Remus, Charles Richardson, Gov. John A. Johnson, Igatius Donnelley, John W. Hayes, Ret. Clarkson, Wm. J. Bryan, Winn Powers, Ralph Wheelock, James Parker, C. A. Vasaly, Whitelaw Ried, Simon Cameron, Schuyler Colfax, were all printers—and practical ones at that. Mark Twain, Artemus Ward, Amos Cummings, Bret Harte, Petroleum V. Nasby and Sit Lovingood were all printers. Many members of the United States Senate and of Congress were practical printers.

I have met and known so many tourist printers in my time, that it is impossible to remember them all. I will here recall only a few of the most noted.

About James Keeley

James Keeley before he became connected with the Chicago Tribune held cases on many different papers, and I remember when he walked out of Muncy, Indiana, on his uppers, heading for Chicago with just $18, in his pocket, and with this vow on his lips "Boys! I have cut booze for all time and when I get to Chicago I am going to buy out one of the large dailies and show you what a sober man can do." Arriving in the village by the side of the lake, he soon secured a position as night police reporter, and today he owns and operates not one but several daily newspapers in Chicago, and James Keeley is only a printer.

But talking about printers, and old timers at that, Charlie Church, at one time the champion typesetter in the United States, frequently toured the principal towns and cities of this country as well as many in Europe He would often drop into—a 20 or 30 cent town; in which it took, I assure you, a champion to earn a decent day's pay at that scale, but Charlie was the man could do it. I don't go out of Minnesota to verify this statement, for there are many old printers and newspaper men who have measured his string in this state yet, and know his record, it was 2,100 ems an hour for ten hours straight.

"Kelley the Wanderer"

Then last but not least, there was John Kelley, who was known all over the United States as "Kelley the Wanderer." He was the most devoted and loyal printer I ever met. To know John Kelley, was to know a man of clean, upright habits, and no man was ever more devoted and loyal to the memory of his girl wife, whom he buried in Cincinnati in 1859, and which made Kelley a nomad. When I last saw him in 1896, he had spent more than three decades traveling, hither, thither, with never a final destination in sight, or in mind.

Kelley was a printer, and, during the years of his wandering, became one of the best known tramp printers,(and yet he always carried letters of credit, for he had money deposited in many banks), in the whole world, and especially west of the Mississippi. There are many of the older shops in the west and the world who will join me in saying Kelley was a real artist. He was the best all around printer and newspaper man I ever worked with or knew. He was in every way different from the usual old time tramp printer—in fact he was not a real tramp, but the boys used the word tramp, because he was always on the move. He did not drink, never used profane or vulgar language, kept himself clean both in body and mind, attended church regularly in whatever place he happened to be, was a great reader, and in manners as courtly as a Chesterfield.

Before Mr. Mergenthaler brought out the linotype, there was always an army of tourists, and John Kelley was among this number, and for many years after, Kelley swung up and down a path from the Gulf states in winter to the Canadian border in the summer, working his way cheerily along, always welcome wherever he called. For years I saw him twice a year, in the early summer, as he followed the migratory birds to the north, in the fall as he preceded them toward the milder clime. In his earlier years on the road he had traveled the east and had made one or two tours through Great Britain, France and Germany.

Had Lovely Whiskers

Kelley wore luxuriant whiskers. Like his abundant hair they were snow white, when I first met him, though in fact they should not have been. He had an air of reserve about him, but after hours he talked most entertainingly about places he had been if he was in company of congenial souls. If he was working with a roistering crowd he always managed to get away when work was done.

One night he told me his story, one I was afterward able to verify, in nearly all particulars. Then I knew why his hair was white, why he turned from roistering companions and chose to walk alone or spend the evening in a park.

Kelley grew up in Cincinnati and was a printer, holding cases on the old Commercial before the war. Like many others, he fell in love. It so happened that the girl did not suit the fancy of his relatives. They objected strenuously to the marriage, but it took place just the same. None of his relatives attended the ceremony, and they did not recognize the girl wife.

A year after the wedding, during an epidemic, the girl was a victim. She was sick only a few hours and her case was hopeless from the start. None of his relatives had ever called on her, and not one came during her illness. They were missing from the crowd of mourners. Stunned by the loss of his wife and hurt by her being ignored by his relatives, was more than he could stand. After the burial he vowed, standing by the new-made grave, he would never again speak to a blood relative whose actions had caused her pain and sorrow. Then he went out into the world. From that date he was a tramp.

Visits Wife's Grave

Once a year, through more than three decades, he had traveled over to Cincinnati, journeyed out to the cemetery and spent long hours beside her grave. He had provided for the care of her grave, and there was a marble slab in place. Thirty-seven annual visits he had made to that grave, he told me, and thirty-seven times renewed the oath of loyalty to her memory.

There was not a note of bitterness in the story he told me, not a word of hatred against those whose actions—caused his troubles. He harbored no grudge. He had turned his back on a name and all who were tied to him with ties of blood, to be loyal to the girl wife of his boyhood years. He was happy in that he had been loyal, that he had not forgotten her or the vow. Those whose actions he held were the cause of sorrow for her, he had forgotten; he had been so long separated from them; they were not a part of his life. He had never received from one of them a letter or a message in all those years. And he had kept his whereabouts concealed from them in so far as he was able.

He did not know when he told me the story that one of his brothers was a public man widely known through the west. He had not heard of him although he had often visited the city where his brother lived. When I told him of it he seemed not a particle curious or interested. The last time I saw Kelley he said he had

(Continued on page Two)

"FUNNY EDITORS I'VE WORKED FOR"

This "Knight of the Stick" Tells About His Wanderings and the Peculiarities of a Few Minnesota Newspaper Men —Blows Up Engine.

FIRST PRESS IN STATE

By "Buck"

I have worked for some peculiar and funny editors in my wanderings around the state of Minnesota, but probably the queerest of these was Old Jack M——, of the Times in the village of P—— in the southwestern part of this state.

When Old Jack bought out the Times in 1896, for the purpose of running it as a gold democrat sheet, he proceeded to advertise the fact by riding around town in a single seated buggy. He was dressed up in a plug hat, undershirt, pair of pants and slippers—nothing more. As he was a big fat man, weighing 260 pounds and wore his hair long—below his shoulders—he presented a very ludicrous appearance, indeed.

Before going into the newspaper business Old Jack was a hotel keeper, (which industry he continued along with his newspaper, otherwise he would have starved) and before that he was a saloon keeper; so it can be imagined the kind of an editor he was.

When I first went to work for him, which was in April, 1901, he had changed the politics of the Times from gold democrat to republican, and continued it so ever since. Also, about that time he sold out his hotel interests—or, rather least it out—and depended entirely on the printing office for a living.

The man who was operating the mechanical end of the plant for him was his son-in-law, O——, who was one of the best all-round country printers I ever worked under. It is rather amusing story the way O—— became Old Jack's son-in-law, and it happened in this manner:

Gets a Son-in-Law

Old Jack had two daughters, both of marriagable age, and when O—— first came to work for him, he (O.) was instantly smitten by the charms of the youngest of the girls, and in due time asked Jack if he could not have her hand in marriage. "No!" thundered Old Jack. "I'll see my daughter dead in her grave before I would consent to see her the wife of a booze-fighting, tramp printer!" O—— never said a word to that, but kept right on with his work; not even minding the insult which Old Jack threw up at him; but he made up his mind he would have the girl anyway and laid his plans accordingly. He fixed it up with his fiance, and as he had a good offer of a job in the village of L——, they decided to skip to the county seat, at J——, and get married—which they did early the following morning.

I tell you, the air was blue around the Times office when Old Jack discovered that the answer he gave to O—— didn't cut the column short, but had only made O—— forget to put a "dash" after the story and double-lead the continuation.

Well, as they only had two hours' start when Jack made the discovery, and as the county seat was twenty-six (26) miles away, he rushed over to the livery stable, got a team and started in pursuit. He didn't even stop to get his hat and coat, but hopped into the buggy, and flew. He "cussed" and swore all along the whole road, and people he passed thought he had gone out of his head; but it didn't do him any good, for he arrived several hours too late. They were married immediately upon arriving there, and all Old Jack could do was to make the best he could of a bad situation (from his point of view).

O—— didn't go to work for Old Jack again, but took the job offered him by the L—— Standard, and I believe he worked there about six months, when Jack persuaded him to come back to P——.

He finally took O—— in as a partner and gave him a half interest in the Times.

An Old Time Press

In the fall of 1901, I went to work for the News, the contemporary of the Times in the same town. George F—— was owner and editor of the News at that time, and was noted for never getting his paper out on time. The nearest he ever came to getting out on publication day was the time I smashed up the old stop-cylinder press.

That press was considered one of the first cylinder presses brought to Minnesota, and it had seen a lot of hard usage in its travels around the state. In fact, at one time it was being hauled across a bridge over the Mississippi river down near Winona, when in some manner the wagon broke down and the press slid off and went, plunk, into the river. Well, they left the old threshing machine there, and there it staid for very nearly a year. Finally, a fellow who was starting up a paper in some small town in southern Minnesota made a dicker with the party who owned the press and went over to the river and fished it out and had it fixed up.

How the News got hold of it, I don't remember, but anyway it was there when I went to work on that sheet.

Thursday was publication day on the News, and by noon of that day I had the two two-page forms of the paper locked up and O. K'd, ready for the press. After dinner we put the forms on and started to run the paper off. Well, we got one side off all right and had just started on he other side when the tank of the danged old, hit-and-miss-fire gasoline engine blew up. There was some excitement around there for a minute or two, but we finally got the blazing tank out doors and turned it upside down in the gutter and dumped the rest of the imitation gasoline into the street. The tank wasn't damaged very much—just a leather arrangement blew out of the top which we had fixed up again in an hour.

Worse and More of it

But now, here is the best part of it: When the tank blew up, I stopped the press and unset the rollers, so that they wouldn't be resting on the ink plate. After we got the engine going again I went back to the press, never thinking about resetting my rollers, and started her a going. Well, the first thing I saw was one roller pointing up to the ceiling—there was a crash and the press stopped, and so did I, for the boss had just came in the back door where he had stepped out after the engine got to going again.

Well sir, when he saw what had happened, you ought to have heard the noise. I don't believe he has stopped swearing yet. He stood there and swore until supper time, and then swore some more on the road home to supper. As for me, I walked over to get my hat and coat and to figure out whether I had cash enough to get out of town or whether I had to beat it. But he didn't fire me.

It took us all the next morning to get the press fixed up so we could run the paper off, but we was only a day late this time, and that was some gain. Anyway, it was better than we had been doing—getting out two and three days late.

KANSAS BEAT LEAVENWORTH

Forty Inmates Visit Federal Prison and Play Ball on Decoration Day.

On Decoration Day, forty inmates of the Kansas penitentiary, were taken from that prison which is located at Lansing, on a pleasure trip to the Federal prison at Leavenworth; for the purpose of enjoying a match game of baseball. Besides the players were the members of the prison band which furnished the music for the trip on the cars and for the street parade through the streets of Leavenworth. The delegation was accompanied by the Warden of the Kansas prison and one guard, and the only arms they carried were good cigars which were passed out to the inmates with liberal hand,

In the delegation which made this excursion were twelve life termers; one twenty-five year man; six twenty year men; seven fifteen year men; and fourteen serving from five to ten years.

The report printed in the Kansas Penitentiary Bulletin tells us that the men were not even put on their honor before starting. The warden merely saying, "boys we're going over to beat the Federal prison in a game of ball"—and they did.

After spending a delightful day the Kansas boys returned as orderly as they had come, and thus was recorded another evidence that the men behind the bars can be trusted—also, that prison betterment goes marching steadily on.