

(A sketch of an ordinary working-man's life.)

My first introduction to the printing industry was in Stalybridge (Lancs.) in 1898 when I was about 12½ years old. We lived in Dukinfield. I had left school about twelve months before and had been working in a rope and twine factory. The reason for leaving school at so early an age was that I had reached the fourth standard and thus qualified to enter an examination entitling me to leave school and take up full-time employment. I passed this examination. (My brother (God?) had previously passed a similar examination entitling him to half-time employment--mornings at school one week, and afterwards the next week.) I might mention that I am slightly lame, one leg being considerably smaller and a little shorter than the other, due to infantile paralysis, though in other respects I was then quite healthy and robust. The work in the rope and twine factory was proving somewhat too strenuous for me, for I had to run along the length of the rope-walk holding the ends of the newly made twine (or bant, as it was locally called), while my gaffer turned the frame on which the skeins were wound at a speed to suit himself rather than out of consideration for my lack of running power. He had to produce so many lengths of twine a day or he was "for it". Winding the machine that twisted the yarn into twine I did not mind, though I got lax at times and forgot to press the lever that reversed the twist after the three plys had been placed together on one hook of the machine for twisting into the finished article. At this a bell would ring violently above my head, the bell-cord having been angrily pulled by the gaffer at the dim end of the walk that seemed at least half a mile away to my young eyes. I started work at 6 a.m. and finished at 6 p.m., except on Saturday when 1 o'clock was the time to knock off. *My own sketch of my life.*

An evening advertisement for a boy to learn the printing, my mother took me for an interview with the owner of the printing establishment in Stalybridge. We entered a narrow doorway of an ordinary house in a row of ordinary houses, such as might still be seen, say, in Endell Street, Southwark, but much more shabby. Passing along a narrow passage up a narrow and dark stairway, we entered a dim room with a hanging dirty cretonne curtain dividing it two-thirds from the door. From that third part, behind the curtain, there came a slight hissing sound and the curtains over and anon bulged as someone peered behind, touching them. And there was a peculiar odour pervading the room that reminded me vaguely of meat being cooked, but which on added effluvia I positively could not place. I have, ever since very early days, been very sensitive to smells, and often conjure up in an alchemical imagination--sometimes pleasantly, sometimes unaccountably--the smells I have inhaled in bygone days, but this peculiar odour--not always of severity, I fear--I have learnt to know for what it is, for what it means, and for what it does: it's printers' ink. Printers' ink mixed with the cooking of a meal pervaded that stuffy room, where sat a grubby middle-aged man in a dirty-white apron at a small table near the wall on the right, on which were oddments of paper, some printed, some smeared and some in neat piles. The room was lit, lighted by a single open-flame gas jet and a sooty window half divided by the curtain. Placed against the wall of this little room loomed strange pieces of mechanism which seemed to me like engines of torture such as might have been found in the vaults of the Spanish Inquisition. These, I learnt later, were a Clarendon hand-press with its roller on the ink bed, a treadle platen, and a small stone on which were mallet, shooting-stick, planer, etc. There was also a case-rack, and jumbled about were standing formes and brio-a-brac--all, all unknown to my wondering and wandering eyes.

During the conversation between my mother and the printer--man a stout, red-faced woman came from behind the curtain with three cups of tea on a black rusty tray. We drank the tea and

mother and I went home--never to see that place again. I still worked at the bant factory, till we moved to Colchester.

Ever since the visit to the Stalybridge printer I had occupied my spare time in cutting type from cork and rubber, and bought myself a little rubber type-set and played about with these with very poor results, even by my own uninformed standards. I would put oil on newspaper pictures and obtain dim transfers therefrom. These occupations induced my parents to apprentice me to a printer.

We had now moved to Colchester and I was bound apprentice to Messrs. Wiles & Son, Trinity Printing Works, for six years, to learn the art and mystery of the trade, and to keep out of taverns and houses of ill-repute, etc. The pay for the first six months was 2/- a week; for the second six months 3/- a week; ~~the week increase for each of the~~ ~~subsequent~~ ~~fourth~~ ~~and~~ ~~fifth~~ ~~and~~ ~~sixth~~ ~~year,~~ ~~making~~ ~~9/-~~ ~~a~~ ~~week.~~ ~~26/-~~ ~~for~~ ~~50~~ ~~hours,~~ ~~26/-~~ ~~for~~ ~~52~~ ~~hours.~~ We worked 50 hours, and sometimes, when I grew a little older, ~~did~~ ~~an~~ ~~unreputitious~~ bit of overtime.

At first, of course, I was the devil, in the machine room, and after learning the mysteries of washing up and the art of becoming daubed with a variety of oily inks and stinking of paraffin and lye, I learnt to use a lumbering treadle platen without guards, now and again catching my fingers, without serious injury, for the platen seemed to be almost impossible. I did hurt my knee occasionally, if I kept my legs straight, as ~~then~~ ~~it~~ ~~got~~ ~~caught~~ a bang on some underpart of the machine as the treadle reached its highest point. Later I was put on a power platen, with a guard, run by a pulley belt. I also ran errands, faster than the errand boy; assisted one of the minders in melting gelatine and moulding rollers; and helped a comp. in making stereotypes. These two operations were done in a ~~separate~~ large and stinking cellar, which was also a hide-out when we boys were tired of work or wanted a spree.

I was, at first, fascinated with the working of the flat-bed machines: to see the paper fed and go round the cylinders and to be taken off by the fliers, almost unerringly, and I certainly got a thrill when I was allowed to feed one, which I did ever so nervously at first. One of the machines had no fliers, the printed sheets being taken off the cylinder by hand.

After about a year of this I was posted upstairs to the composing room. As was the case in the machine room so here there were as many apprentices as journeymen, sometimes more, as journeymen were occasionally stood off when work was slack. They were the times for all to join in sorting the huge pile of pie that had accumulated, not always accidentally, I fear.

After some ^{Libertian} experiences and a few times on the Carpet, as was the lot of apprentices in those days, I settled down and learnt how to use a stick, and became as good a display comp. as the others--nothing special.

During the summer months itinerant comps. would call in on us, some for a whip-round to help them on their way from London to Bursley or Beccles; some selling books, setting-rules, sticks, type-gauges, etc. It was said that some of these comps. would augment their pay wherever they worked by selling tea, matches, collar-studs or bootlaces, or other knick-knacks.

During my apprenticeship I had learnt but vaguely about a society for compositors, but had never been told its objects, and from the attitude of our journeymen, it seemed to be something to be wary of. And so I bestowed little thought on the matter. I had never met a Society man. And so I went forth with all the effrontery of ignorance.

When the time came I reminded my boss--a kindly man to others, and more so, in a way, to himself--that my term of servitude had expired. He, with mock ingenuousness, expressed surprise that the time had flown so fast and that I had grown to man's stature so quickly, and said that he would keep me on

1st year 4/-
2nd year 5/-
3rd year 6/-
4th year 7/-
5th year 9/-

and pay me £1 per week. On my objecting and pointing out that journeymen were paid 25s., he told me I was not a journeyman, but an improver--"Was there not room for improvement?" he said. I agreed with that as sincerely then as I do now, but I also thought I had been deceived. I have often considered his words, sometimes with benefit, as I did when the first proof of the matter I had set for The Clacton Times was the subject of an inquiry by the boss and the clicker.

Disgruntled with my pay, and anxious to leave home--I had a good home--but wanted to be independent--I took the first job offered, which was at Abraham Quick's, Clacton-on-Sea (alleged to be an offshoot of Page & Prette), where The Clacton Times was printed. I was nervous, in a strange place, so different from the roomy, clean office I had left, and among silent strangers. Here I had set, from manuscript copy, three or four stickfuls in brevier in the style of the parish magazines I had been used to. The result was the dirtiest proof I have ever turned out and one which even now causes a blush of shame to mantle neck and cheeks. However, Mr. Quick spoke kindly to me and told me to study the style of the paper and to take more care, in which the clicker acquiesced.

My engagement was for the summer months season. My nervousness faded. I improved indeed, and I was put into the piece 'ship on the paper, where I can truly say I held my own, though I was no whip. I certainly became friendly with old Sammy Bindaey, the dis-hand, and no doubt gained a bob or two extra by his kindly help when sorts were running short, and gratuitous information when a fat take was next on the spike. But as I often bought him beer I doubt if I benefited very much. The rate of pay was 6d. per thou., and my earnings were between 32s. and 38s. per week.

Though we had no whips in our 'ship, on one occasion when we were extra busy a comp. from London (on holiday, I suspected) was temporarily engaged. He was paid daily. I have forgotten his name, even if it were a false one. He proved to be the quickest comp. I had come across so far, and his celerity filled me with envy. He was a whip! He was also very artful. Too artful for us, simple provincials. During his first week with us he did his quota of dissing as we did, but a good deal quicker. However, one morning he failed to show up. On drawing out the cases in his rack it was found that they were all practically empty. He had whipped up as many thousand as possible during the last day or two, taken his pay and left without doing his quota of dis, thus filching the firm of a nice little sum.

The summer season soon came to an end and so did my engagement. I had spent a very happy time in Clacton, both at work and in the social amenities--the theatre, the Opera House in the then new Palace by the Sea, moonlight bathing, cycle rides round the countryside and to my home at week-ends, often cycling from Colchester to Clacton on Monday mornings in time for work at 8 o'clock.

Now I had made up my mind that, as I was always likely to remain poor as a compositor, I would in very deed be a journeyman and stay in one job no longer than about two years, and so see as much of England as I could in this way. Motors were just being introduced, motor 'buses were few and were always breaking down and temporarily abandoned by the road side, to be jereed at by us who cycled. Motor coaches had not been thought of. I was very fond of cycling and I loved the country, then so quiet and peaceful, with the pubs open all day and a quart, or pob, of two-beers costing 5d., bread and cheese (real bread and real cheese) always available at 2d. for as much as I could eat; and real ham sandwiches, or real ~~meat~~ cold roast beef, and pickles in plenty. What more did a comp want on the road? Only a job in a country town.

I left Clacton and took a job at Ware with George Price and Son. The printing office was a small one at the back of a wailing, in an overgrown garden, several yards from the river. A pleasant little place in a pleasant little town, where work

had been
never a very
wild east.

was also pleasant and the three or four compa.-cum- machine-minders a pleasant lot of chaps. But I had not met a Society man and still knew next to nothing of Society matters, and thought of them not at all. This was a seasonal job, chiefly on a local and a county directory, interspersed with bill-heads, pamphlets, posters, parish magazine, and a series of interesting extracts from an original copy of Isaac Welton's Compleat Angler, set in long primer old style with the use of the long "s", for which many pounds of l.c. f's had been purchased so that the inside of the cross stroke had to be chipped off with a pen-knife. Mr. Timson was the overseer.

Here I met an interesting young comp. He was a German-speaking Swiss, named Julius Keller, doing a European tour. He had cycled and hitch-hiked through Italy, Germany and France and come to England. His father, who was in business as a mason in Zurich, made him a monthly allowance. He had recently been working in London on a German paper or pamphlet and was now making his way to a German colony near Baldoek. He never got there. He did not like being called a German, as he found the British somewhat antipathetic to that race. He casually walked into the little printing works and met our young boss, who, more from gratifying a whim than for practical reasons, gave him a job. His English was difficult to understand, though he could read it quite well and write it indifferently. He was, of course, strange to the place and I had not yet made many friends, so I palled up with him and learned that he had set English in Zurich and had done English proof-reading. He always carried a bulging German-English dictionary in his pocket. We soon became very friendly and before he left us he could speak English pretty well. He was a better educated than I was, and I learnt a lot from him, and was interested in the tales of his experiences on the Continent. His proofs were as clean as any English comp's. His only difficulty was in our MS. capital letters individually or if he was unfamiliar with the words of which they were the initials. He told me I ought to go to London and learn the linotype, and was ever pressing me to better myself. He left us and went to France, and the next I heard of him was an offer of a job as comp. in Biarritz by a firm of printers to whom he had recommended me. For various reasons I did not accept the offer. I had disappointed him and had but one letter more from him intimating as much.

Soon after the following Master this job terminated and I straightway went to Portsmouth, to work in the office of the Hampshire Post. Up to now I had never seen a linotype, though, of course, I had heard and read of them. I used to take the British Printer regularly. Here I had to help in making-up lino slugs into pages, lay them down in sixteens, thirty-tvos, etc., and generally do stone-head's work, set leading articles and ads. for the paper, programmes for concerts, bills and posters-- and winkle bags. This was the largest works I had so far worked in. I did not like it, but I stayed on to become acquainted with the town and countryside, both of which I thoroughly enjoyed.

One day I was asked to help a lino-op. with a magazine. I was puzzled. The only magazines I was acquainted with were the parish variety, or some such. When it came to helping to lift the mag. from gino. and lift another one on to it, I learnt something.

This was the year the Workmen's Compensation Act came into force. It was rumoured that the firm would not take out an insurance policy under the Act, or that no insurance office would accept the risk. Not to overstate the case there were several man-traps about the place, such as holes in the floor-boards, some covered by nailed-on pieces of timber half an inch or so above the uneven floor level, broken steps on the wooden stairway to the machine room, whose floor was also uneven with several holes in the dirty concrete. These things I noticed because it has been almost an unconscious

habit with me since childhood to look where I am to place my feet. I do so more consciously now, for, as I have already said, I am slightly lame and not always sure where my foot will go unheeded. In fact, I am, as is the case with most people similarly placed, more careful in this respect than the normal. However, I could, and did, clamber up out-drawn cases to reach poster type on randoms above; I could, and did, carry double-deny poster frames down the stairs, to save time, for the "lift" was an old-fashioned, slow pulley arrangement that moved up or down only an inch or so as each yard or so of chain was hauled--an exhausting process. These two activities of mine were suddenly forbidden by the O. (Mr. Holloway). No longer was I asked to 'Help with the magazine'. But I soon forgot to use the 'lift' or to search for the rickety step-ladder to reach the poster type. As a matter of fact, I was now seldom given posters to set. In short, I was soon secked --as I thought and still think owing to the coming into force of the Workmen's Compensation Act. Not that I cared a rap. I did not. I did not like the place. I had heard little more of Society matters, but not enough to make me favourably interested, and what I heard was of rather a negative character.

The following Monday morning I started work in the same town in a little office behind a stationer's shop. The proprietor's name I have forgotten. Here I was engaged, on stubs, on the July Voters' lists, starting work at 6 a.m. and finishing at 10 p.m. Gosh! Didn't I get tired! Tired of standing. My poor feet! After a few days of this I had to wear canvas slippers before breakfast, unlaced shoes between breakfast and dinner, older shoes in the afternoon and slippers again after tea, and then shamble to my lodgings ~~for~~ supper and welcome bed. On the first day I asked the O. where I might find a "perch". He directed me to the w.c. down the yard. He had never heard of a "perch". Nor could I make one, for no old type box or other material was available, not even an empty case to turn on end. Anyway, I stuck it out and finished the job. By the way, dirty post-cards were printed in this little office. The boss was a member of the Local Council or Board of Guardians, or some official body.

I was fairly well breeched after gobbling up all this overtime, so I had a week's holiday in Pompy and roundabout, before taking a job I had secured in Warwick town. This job, I feel, was my first introduction into the clan of reel printers. I called on the boss as soon as I arrived in the town in the late afternoon. His name was Robert Spennell, a thick-set, round-faced angry-looking man. He had but one leg, the other had been amputated at the thigh, high up. He told me where to go for lodgings, and said he would not pay extra for overtime. ^{But he} ~~did.~~ The wages, if I remember rightly, were 52/-per week.

The comps. were friendly, and the snuff-boxes were freely passed round. I was soon asked if I belonged to the T.A. As I did not, I was asked if I would join. I expressed my willingness, not knowing exactly what I was letting myself in for. This was an "open House", but only a very few were not in the T.A. However, I filled in the forms and duly attended the Branch Meeting (vet) and was admitted as a member on the 25th October, 1907. I regularly attended Chapel's and Branch Meetings (both of which were always wet), and learnt a lot, of which I had been totally ignorant before. ~~Arthur~~ Langford was Branch Secretary. No shortly afterwards emigrated, I think to Canada. I was soon made to feel at home with my fellow comps.; an experience more strange than familiar (except at Ware). I was happy at my work and in getting about that lush and delightful countryside.

Several other fresh comps. started work soon after I arrived. They were of the travelling fraternity, who had learnt by experience where seasonal work was to be found, and here they knew that the Autumn County Voters' Lists were to be printed; also the Warwickshire County Directory. T.A. Traveling Cards were then expiring.

And here, I would like to mention, was something the like of which I have never seen elsewhere. The whole of this establishment was housed in one wide and very long room with stone floor. At one end near the entrance door, were the machines, the one mono-caster and the keyboard; then trestle tables at which folders and binders worked and on which paper was stacked. The rest of the floor space to the other end was the composing department. The boss's house was at the front of the works and a little to one side. ~~It was~~ it. At the extreme end of the composing department was a sort of wooden gallery, elevated on baulks of timber and reached by a fixed step-ladder. On racks all round this gallery were hundreds and hundreds of double-column all-metal galleys, quite new in appearance. On these galleys were the pages of the whole County Voters' Lists, two pages, close up, to each galley, with brand new reglets between each column dividing the address column from the name column, and so on. Most of the type was new, once-printed foundry's type--Caslon long primer, I believe--a few were mono.-set. All the galleys were numbered and the numbers corresponded to a MS. list indicating their contents. There was no difficulty in locating a specific galley.

So our chief job was to correct the pages according to the Registration Officer's up-to-date copy. Besides all these galleys was another series of hundreds of further galleys, single-column, bearing all the pages of type for the County Directory. I believe so many galleys of standing type in so limited a space is unique, to say the least.

Now, the boss, it was said, had been a schoolmaster, and had lost his leg through being kicked by a schoolboy whom he was chastising. He was certainly a temperamental old chap. He also suffered from an obvious rupture, which at times would confine him to his bed, where, it was also said, he threw on a bottle or two of whisky till he was well enough to get up again. He would spend hours on end sitting on a high stool peering into the mono-caster, with his hands and chin resting on his crutch. And he hated to be disturbed while thus engaged, and would wield his crutch at anyone would-be intruder, which once unluckily caught his wife and felled her. She at one time had been his servant or housekeeper.

During one of the bouts mentioned above, after I and the other imported comps had been there only a few weeks, we received a week's notice to leave. No reason was given. I was perturbed; but I need not have been, for at the week-end the notices were withdrawn. The old man was well again; and on the Monday following he issued a notice that on a certain date the whole firm would have the day off to attend the County Show at Kineton, travelling there in four-horse brakes, all expenses to be paid by him, including reasonable refreshment and meals. It was a glorious autumn day, a lovey-ride, and a cheery crowd, and plenty of food and beer. The cavalcade of brakes was headed by the old man driving a high gig drawn by a first-class fast-trotting pony, his wife sitting beside him. This mode of travel round the countryside was a favourite pastime of his. And a smart turn-out it was. He was known to be a connoisseur of horseflesh, as well as of whisky. But print is really my theme.

In the works another pastime of his was to hop up the stairway to the gallery of racks, unbeknown to anyone (but not always) and to spy on us as we worked, and then, unexpectedly, to thunder at anyone he thought was miking. At one time one of the labourers in the machine room got into trouble and was spending a month in Warwick Gaol. The old man sent food to his wife and family and saw that they were cared for, and took the man back into his employ on release.

The Voters' Lists, of course, grew monotonous, though the Directory was interesting enough, teaching me some interesting facts about the county, some of which I verified on my cycle-rides through that delightful county. Stratford-on-Avon and Leamington were of course favourite haunts. I had to go ~~and~~ to Leamington for my weekly bath--chalybeate water 6d.; ordinary water 3d. I have tried drinking this spa water, but the ordinary sort is better, and the local beer was better still. I did not worry. I knew the job would not last long and I had, up to then, had no difficulty in getting a new one. In the following spring I got the sack and went home to Colchester, where my father was very ill. I got a job in the town, in a small print shop behind a stationer's shop--Poysers.

Spottiswoodes were setting up their printing works there at the time and I applied there for a job, and was told I ~~was told~~ I would be notified when the type arrived and would be given the job of laying the cases. But when the manager, Mr. White, a Scotsman, found that I was a member of the T.A. he turned me down and gave the job to a tram conductor who had been a comp. Anyway, Poysers suited me for a time, and then I went to Chelmsford, to Dutton's (an open house), where a variety of work was done, and a lot of council minutes and the like, and the inevitable Voters' Lists set on piece. It was a free-and-easy place, with a genial O., Mr. Casey. He was so genial that rather than let me, or anyone for that matter, pop out to get a packet of Woodbines, he would get them himself. He was himself an inveterate ~~smoker~~ cigarette smoker.

At 10 a.m. the boy collected our cans and went for our beer. If he happened to be late any morning, one of the comps would hit three times with shooting-stick on a suspended chase, at which we would cry at the top of our voices: "Be-err!" and up would pop the O., saying, "All right, boys, he won't be long". So long as we kept sober and did our work it was not against the rules to bring in what beer or other refreshment we wished to. This place was another converted dwelling-house, with cellar for the machines, the two floors above being occupied by the composing department. All was very cramped and the place rather dilapidated. But I stayed on, chiefly because my father was still very ill. I would cycle home nearly every week-end to see how things were there and to pay my T.A. subs as there was no branch at Chelmsford.

When my father died and my mother settled, I applied for and got a job in Newport, Mon., at George Bell's. This was another printing works behind a stationer's shop, where quite a good-class of jobbing work was done, and it was a full-soc. house. Newport printers were very well organized, under the very able leadership of Bill Humphreys, Branch Secretary. The bosses were, as a rule, somewhat antagonistic to society activities.

The largest printing works in the town--Mullocks--went so far as to employ a lady mono operator, and paid her, as they said, "within an ace" of the T.A. rate. She was offered T.A. membership, but refused it. This encroachment the Chapel and the Branch, and the local Federation, would not stand, and after fruitless conferences, all the employees (except apprentices) tendered strike notices and ceased work. All Federation members were organized into pickets, and we persuaded many would-be employees to return from whence they came, often buying their railway tickets for their journey. We marched in noisy processions behind the blackleg O. (Mr. Brain) from his work to his lodgings, and argued with those who had accepted employment with the firm, but mainly kept out of trouble with the police, who looked on without interfering. Tonypandy was not far away, where Mr. Winston J. Churchill, then Home Secretary, had recently called out the military. So we were careful. Most of us were English, though there was a sprinkling of hot-headed Welshmen in our ranks, who, when we received an offer ~~of~~ of help from the Dockers' Union, clamoured for accepting it. Thankfully, they did not

He was paid,

prevail, or worse, or worse, might have resulted. The "Fair Wage Clause" was invoked in the Council Chamber, in local authorities governing public-utility undertakings, and others for whom the firm did the printing, and the firm felt the pinch.

Up till then I had met only two London comps, neither of whom had impressed me favourably. I was soon to see and talk to some more. These had been recruited in London, locked in an "engaged" compartment on the train and released at the station before Newport, to be brought by cars from there to their lodgings, which Mallocks had provided in a common lodging-house not far from their work place. How we learnt this information I don't now know, but it very likely was from the apprentices, who were ~~also~~ very helpful in passing inside information to us. But it was sound. Some of us picketed the lodgings, in ones and twos, at a little distance, and when the conveyances arrived converged on them. A few of us (I was one) mixed with blacklegs and entered the house and into the room where their guide had led them. It was dusk and we had not been noticed. The guide left the room and we quickly and earnestly explained the position to these poor chaps, most of whom looked so down and out that it was hard to believe they were skilled craftsmen or other than poor street-gutter beggars.

We persuaded three or four of them to come to the Branch Secretary, much to the chagrin of the guide when he returned to the room. Out of Branch funds we bought their tickets and packed them back to London, with an extra bob or two in their pockets.

It took a long time, but eventually the firm came back into the fold, after their former employees had dispersed themselves far and wide. ~~Of~~ What trouble ~~the~~ women bore the cause!

In Newport I met some very agreeable companions, who would walk with me into the country villages, and I enjoyed my cycle-rides, especially one into Chepstow and up the Wye Valley into Uck, passing the old Cistercian Abbey of Tintern with almost Wardenworthian emotion; trips on the Bristol Channel, with Welshmen, chiefly miners, singing quietly and harmoniously in the moonlight as the ship churned its homeward way quietly, through the calm water. Has anyone ever heard harmonious singing on pleasure steamers from London to Southend, and beyond? I joined a Welsh choir, too.

However, two years were up and I wanted a change. I inserted an ad. in The Printers' Register, which I knew the boss read, for it was through that periodical that he had engaged me. The week my ad. appeared I received notice, but had received no replies. After hanging about Newport for a week or two I jumped on my bike and rode as far as Reading (barring the journey from Portskewit to Milning through the Bristol Channel Tunnel). Next day I rode to Gravesend, the only time I have ridden through London, and the only part of the ride I did not enjoy. I had always fought shy of London, whether for work or pleasure. It could then offer me neither. I am not a real countryman, but a provincial who loves the country and country towns rather than cities with their "fretful stir unprofitable and fever of the world".

'Twas now 1912. I applied personally for a job at Harndsworths (now The Amalgamated Press) at Rosherville, just outside Gravesend. I was laughed at. No comps had been employed there since the 1911 London comps' strike (except a stone-hand or two). The Branch Secretary, the jovial, rotund, snuff-taking Freddy Newton, sent me off to Chatham, to MacKays, where the Chatham Observer was (and still is) printed. Here my chief work was the setting of an Esperanto Dictionary, six different fonts of type being used. I very soon learnt Esperanto, and was made a sort of clicker of the small 'ship of two or three comps. Other work was the Esperanto Journal, the usual small display jobs, and the Sapper and other R. E. work dealing with the part the R.E.'s had taken in the Peninsular War and in which I found a deal of interest. This job lasted longer than expected owing to a type-founders' strike

holding up deliveries of necessary sorts for the Dictionary. This was a full-union shop and Bill Keels the able I.A. Branch Secretary. He was a good chap and did all he could for the branch members. The District sections of the I.A. were coming into full swing with beneficial effects on members seeking work, as was exemplified in my own case when this job finished. Bill Keels got in touch with the District Secretary, who fixed a job for me right away at the Salvation Army Printing Works (The Campfield Press) at St. Albans. My railway fare was paid, but I cycled from Gravesend on the Sunday and started work on Monday, in what I consider the best printing works I have ever been in. It was a six-weeks job on a catalogue for Garstins of London, bag and trunk makers. At 8 a.m. all employees were gathered in the entrance hall to a religious service conducted by the Works Chaplain, whose place was occasionally taken by other S.A. officers. A Salvation Army comp ~~w~~elded a concertino to lead the hymns, and the flourishes and arpeggios he introduced into the tunes delighted us by their variety and the skillful abandon with which he executed them. He was a master of the instrument. ~~During~~ the services, which usually occupied about ten minutes, frequent exhortations were made to those at the rear of the hall to desist from reading their newspapers and attend to the Word as expounded by the elect--but with little avail, I am afraid. On special occasions the service lasted a good deal longer, but no one minded that. We had both morning and afternoon tea-breaks, providing our own milk and tea and sugar, and the mid-day break was one hour and a quarter. The place was painted white or cream throughout, was light, airy and clean.

The catalogue finished, I was given notice, but at the same time was informed by the clicker of the room, honest Albert Bolton, that should I wish to come back again I was to keep in touch with his brother Bill. Brother Bill was the hard-working, conscientious T.A. District and Branch Secretary. He was also the Reader on our floor, and a very likeable man. If Brother Bill knew where to find me he would let me know when a vacancy occurred. He did more: he sent me straight to Redhill, giving me my Removal Card to Mr. Fitch, the Branch Secretary there, who worked with his father-in-law in the office in which the vacancy had occurred.

On the Monday morning I presented myself at this--What shall I call it? It was situated at the bottom of a back garden about 60 feet from Mr. Smith's back door. It was a patch-work shed, built unskillfully of odd pieces of timber covered here and there with odd pieces of felt and corrugated iron, all looking very, very old and dingy, and an unshapely manner attached to a low brick building that may at one time have been a small stable or wash-house. I entered the doorway of this tumble-down structure, where everything appeared dim, dull and dirty. What a contrast to the cleanliness, airiness, and brightness of the place--or palace, by comparison--I had just left. I hesitated to take off my coat. I almost said aloud that I would not work in such a place. But I thought of Brother Bill and of how I might offend him if I failed to take the job he had sent me to. What a dumb job it was. Besides Mr. Smith and Mr. Fitch, there was another man (a comp-cum-machine minder) and a boy. When Mr. Smith was there no one spoke, except in the briefest terms on the work in hand and in subdued voice. Only on the rare occasions when he was away did the tension relax and we indulge in a chat and perhaps a smoke. Even the taking of a pinch of snuff was done furtively when he was there. He was a grim character, as though always combating an adversity that was not apparent to others, but very real to himself. But I believe he was a good, honest, if stern, man. He seldom smiled, and then sarcastically, cadaverously.

I don't remember much about the work here, except that most of it was solid matter--for me at least. I had comfortable lodgings with the widow of a comp and with whom two other comps lodged. They worked at the Athenaeum. With one of them I started to walk to Croydon tram terminus one Saturday afternoon, to get to London and attend a theatre. We got as far as Merstram, when a motor-car overtook us and pulled up. The uniformed chauffeur offered us a lift and took us to Charing Cross Station. He was to meet his boss there. He would accept nothing for the service he had given us. Neither my pal nor I knew much about London. All the theatres about the Strand were fully booked for that evening, so we went into the Rivoli Music Hall, soon after demolished. Here we saw, among other turns, Fred Kitchen's Humming Birds. I had seen this show some time before at Colchester when I certainly did think it funny, but now it appeared without any humour at all. We went back to Redhill by train.

I did a fair amount of cycling and many week-ends would cycle to Gravesend on Saturday afternoon and back on Sunday evening and occasionally on Monday morning. There were still very few motors on the roads, compared with to-day's congestion.

About Easter time 1913 I got tired of this job and wrote to Brother Bill on spec. His reply was to start at the S.A. as soon as possible. I did, and spent one of the most comfortable periods of my life in print in St. Albans and its neighbourhood. I renewed acquaintance with my old pals at Ware, and made a friendship with a man of many parts which lasted till broken by his death just over a year ago.

In the Salvation Army Printing Works chapels were held round the stones; T.A. Branch Meetings in a room over a restaurant. At one of these I was elected as delegate to the local Trades Council. I cannot say that this was then a very effective body, but I got an insight into some of the inner workings of local administration.

Work went pleasantly and became very friendly with my front page (George Briscoe) and a lino. op. (Len Parker), both L.S.C. members. (G.B. was killed in the 1914-18 war.) Though the Campfield Press, to give it its secular title, was a T.U. house, one anomaly then existed. T.A. employees received 36/- per week; L.S.C. employees 39/-. There was no friction about this so far as I know.

George, Len and I would now and again spend a week-end at the Lord Rodney, not far from the Limpsfield Home, where we would call, and where Len would play the piano, sometimes accompanying the gramophone, as a diversion for the boarders. He was a great musician, and, I hope, still is. They were pleasant days.

In August, 1914, just after war was declared, George and I spent our holiday in walking in easy stages to Worthing, and back through Brighton, (train to Haywards Heath), Limpsfield to Caterham, where his brother lived. There I left him and returned to St. Albans by train. We had intended doing a similar trip by horse and caravan, but all horses were requisitioned by the Army. Not even a pony or donkey could be obtained. So we walked. But I digress.

Mr. Fairbairn was manager of the Works, a stately, benignant gentleman, held in great respect by all. Mr. Bryson was the placid and very competent overseer of the combs, and work always seemed to flow smoothly under his guidance, though occasionally anxious furrows would appear on his usually calm features. Most of the heads of departments were not Salvationists. Salvationists worked cheek-by-jowl with episcopals, chapelites, atheists, agnostics, non-sectarians and other outcasts. Ervy, hatred and malice and all uncharitableness as well as all the virtues--each and all were as prevalent here as in any other workshop where more than two or three are gathered together, but, I must say, that

Good will was highly prominent and I got on very well with the members of the various denominations. In human relationships there was nothing to choose between the religionists and the non-religionists. Some were easy to get on with, some were not and their company was not sought. There were scandals among both, which, of course, reflected more discredit on the unco guid. There was, so far as I could see, but little bias shown in favour of Salvationists, and that little was fostered by the inevitable and shy aloofness of the non-religionists, of whom I was one. Then came the war. Those outside the fold were the first to get the sack.

I got in touch with the Y.M.C.A. and was sent to Sheerness to help run a canteen--a hugh bell-tent in a soldiers' encampment. With this experience, after a few months I applied for and got a job with Dickinsons, the Army caterers, and was posted as manager of a small canteen for wounded soldiers pending discharge, at Strood, near Rochester. The Navy and Army Canteen Board soon took over all canteens. I was transferred to Fort Pitt, Chatham; from there to Cliffe Fort, on the Thames-side, about five miles from Gravesend; from there to Joyce Green, abutting the river, two miles from Dartford. Here I married, in 1918. The war over and my job too, I applied ~~for~~ to Burroughs and Wellcome for a job as compositor in their printing-works at Dartford. There was no vacancy. Would I take a job in their chemical department? I would, and did. I worked on a chloroform-purifying plant, but not for long. I then got a job as invoice clerk at J. & E. Hall's engineering works. This worried me. I could not do it properly and I felt the restrictions after the greater freedom I had recently enjoyed. I caught the 'flu and pneumonia. I nearly died. On recovery I got a job as compositor at Vickers Printing Works, in Gunpowder Lane, Wilmington, near Dartford. When offered the job I was asked if I was a society man. I was. I had paid my subscriptions into the Gravesend Branch of the T.A. throughout the war. On starting work the F.O.C. (Mr. Bill Deakin) asked me for my Card. I presented it. It was the wrong one. This was an L.S.C. shop. Would I join the L.S.C.? I would, and was accepted in September, 1919.

I worked quite happily here, on catalogue work: chiefly, advertising the various Vicker's peace-time products. An old comp I had ~~met~~ worked with in Chelmsford came along and stayed a while with us-- Mr. Herring (inevitably "Bloater"), and he remembered me more by a red waistcoat that I had also worn when he had last seen me, years ago.

In March of the following year a vacancy occurred in the Reading Box. I applied for the job and got it. Would I join the A.C.P.? I would, and was admitted. I disliked relinquishing either of my comps' cards as the set of a renegade; but as I was paying full subs. to both, I could not see my way clear to pay full subs. also to the A.C.P., so I joined as a 6d.-a-week member. I have never worked as a comp in London, which strikes me as anomalous.

I took a correspondence course in English Grammar and Composition with a tutor at Ruskin College, Oxford, and thoroughly enjoyed it. It opened up new ground in literature and widened my horizon as well as helping me in the work I had put my hand to. Soon afterwards I moved to Gravesend to live, and cycled backwards and forwards daily, and the fresh air and exercise soon made me very fit after my late illness.

My antipathy towards London had by now waned somewhat, as also had my wanderlust. I was a married man. Ah! ... Then things began to get uncomfortable in the firm. Most of us were narked at the attitude of the management. The O. (Mr. Self) left us in a huff. So did others. Through the kindly information passed to me by an elderly reader (who did not want to leave his job) that I could get work on the Army and Navy Lists at Kelihers, Marshalsea Road, I applied for and was given the job.

After a short spell here and then a few weeks out of work, I was recalled and continued to read the monotonous Lists and also, I remember, an interesting book for Batsfords, about country churches and country places in Kent., till the turn of the New Year--1921, the year of the slump and Black Friday. Now I was to have my taste of the dreadful experience of being really out of work and the aimlessness and tediousness of Signing The Book, both at Poppins Court and Farringdon Street. AS I was living at Gravesend I signed the book there also. The A.C.P. sent me to Haycock, Cadell and Viney's, somewhere off the Old Kent Road, I believe, where I had a short spell. Then more book-signing, of terrible memory. Then in June of that shocking year I got a job as reader-comp at Dorlings, Epsom, through the good offices of a friend in Gravesend. When I told Mr. Tom Naylor of my bit of luck, he congratulated me and gave me his blessing and good wishes. I had thought it was outside the London area and in T.A. territory, but it was not, he said.

I arrived at Dorlings on the Monday morning in the week before Race Week. No lodgings were to be had, so the O. told me. But he, kind soul, had spoken on my behalf to the Vicar of the parish (the Rev. Mr. Fraser, a Scots Canadian, who had been an Army padre), who had said that if I proved respectable enough he would be happy to put me up till lodgings were available. At the Vicarage I had bed and breakfast; shaving water and a cup of tea were put outside my bedroom door at 7 a.m. by the maid, who, punctually at 7.30, also gave me a substantial breakfast of egg and bacon, bread, butter and marmalade. I had the use of the bathroom, the Vicar's study in which to write my letters, the drawing-room if I wanted to spend an evening in, till I feared the cost would deplete my wages considerably, for I had rail fare ~~at the~~ week-end to my home in Gravesend to pay as well, and to keep my home going free of debt. However, on my broaching the subject of payment to the Vicar, he would not hear of my paying him anything at all. I was to accept of his hospitality willingly offered. I thought a lot of that man, and still do--and of his wife and little Ian, his son, and of the kindness of that excellent and amiable maid.

After Race Week was over Mr. Fraser found me digs. with one of his needy parishioners.

Dorlings printed the race-cards. The boss was Clerk of the Course. I never met him. Other general jobbing work and, of course, the Parish Magazine were done there. I did more comping than reading while I was there. The summer was generally gloriously sunny, and I walked miles over the downs and round the environs of the town. I missed my bike. On the Friday of Race Week (Ladies' Day--The Oaks Day) when we turned up to work at 8 a.m. the O. said that there was not much work, and if there were he did not expect we would do much, so we had better b---off to the Races. He gave us each a race-card.

After all the sunny days we had had, this one was dull and drizzling off and on. Nevertheless I went on to the downs and mixed with the crowd, more interested in the variety of people than in the races. I did not even have a bet.

This job lasted into the autumn, and on my return to Gravesend I broke my journey to have an interview with Mr. Sam Newstead at The Field Press in Breams Buildings. He engaged me. I started work on the Monday, reading The Queen, The Field and other work. Thus I continued for several weeks. The reader of The Law Times had recently retired from print after long service. Mr. Gell, I believe was his name, though I never met him. Someone was wanted to fill the vacancy. I was given a trial. I suited. But rumours were thick and fast that the firm was selling out. I feared there would be more book-signing for me, one of the last to be taken on. Then more definite rumours that The Law Times was the first

publication to be transferred, to Hudson & Kearns, Stamford Street. I expected the sack any week-end. I worked in a small room with my copyholder. Intruders were infrequent. Mr. Nightingale, a deputy-deputy head reader, would timorously enter at times to know if I could spare the time to read a take or two of The Queen for him. That excitable man (on press days), Mr. Townsend, the printer of The Law Times, was another visitor, dashing in and out for or with proofs urgently wanted. On other days he was urbane, calm and smiling and chatty. The sub-editor (Mr. *~~COBOLD~~) an L.S.C. member) was a more frequent visitor, fussily asking for proofs of this or that, which had to be posted, chiefly proofs of articles by that then well-known character, Mr. Swift-McNeil (a descendant of the famous Dean Swift), who ~~also~~ had been one of the noisy Irish M.P.s in the H.O.C., and who wrote authoritatively on Constitutional subjects in the most execrable handwriting I have ever seen. He lived in Dublin. Then there was that dear old boy, Mr. Bishop, a barrister of Lincoln's Inn, with whom I used to exchange marginal notes on the proofs in friendly fashion. He was very helpful and informative. Mr. Herbert (a barrister) was the editor. He later became Recorder of Newcastle-under-Lyme. A very likeable man.

However, I thought my days were numbered. One day Mr. Newstead called for me. I thought, again, "This is it". Instead, he asked me if I were willing to be transferred with The Law Times to Hudson & Kearns. I was, thankfully. I asked that my copyholder might be transferred with me. This was acceded.

At Hudson & Kearns, Mr. Happerfield (Happy) was head reader; Mr. Parker deputy h.r. and F.O.C. Charlie Blackwell was F.O.C. comps, and that dear old chap, *~~the clerk~~, the clerk. The O. of the comps was that tall and open-eyed Mr. Westerman, a Yorkshireman, who at one of the ~~happy~~ dinners sang A Pair of Sparkling Eyes, which all averred he had sung in the Russian language. Mr. Cockle was manager of the firm. Now I knew Mr. Cockle, though he did not know me. He had been a costing clerk at the Campfield Press when I was there in 1913-14. The other readers were Mr. Purnell and Mr. Wilkie (also L.S.C.).

With the inflow of work the reading chapel, as well as the comps, was increased. Linos from the Field Press were to be ~~increased~~, but owing to the inability of the L.S.C. and the employers to agree on rates of pay they were not then installed. But there were many mono-keyboards and casters. And here I ~~ought to mention~~ would like to mention the cleanest mono-operator I have ever come across-- Mr. Coles--who would set galley after galley without error. He was a great help. Tom Burch, of placid, imperturbable good nature, became printer of The Law Times when Mr. Townsend retired. I became F.O.C. Readers when Mr. Parker left, and continued so till alterations were introduced, on the firm's changing hands some seven years later.

At one time the firm wanted to put all on short-time. I was sent by the readers' chapel to Mr. Crampin, who advised strongly against accepting it. From my interview with him I barged in on the comps' delegation interviewing Mr. Davies, L.S.C. Assistant Secretary, who also advised against accepting short-time, upholding Mr. Crampin's decision, which I had made known to the delegation. But the comps' chapel were for accepting it, and Mr. Davies was forced to say in effect: "Well, if that's the Chapel's decision, so be it". On reporting this to Mr. Crampin he said: "Oh, well, you'll have to follow the comps". And so it was. But the firm soon wanted some of the comps to work overtime on the days on which they were working. That was not agreed to, and short-time soon ceased.

Then came the General Strike of 1926, when the firm sent out to the employees forms of application for re-engagement in terms dictatorially set out, which were to be signed

* This is the name that I can't recall clearly names Kearns and referring to the person in my mind

* Name forgotten

and presented before re-engagement. The firm received one reply--from a little girl who had just left school and had been working but a week or two.

I did not like the ^{alterations} changes that were taking place inside the works as a result of change of ownership. I had read The Law Times without serious complaint for seven years, as well as most of the Law Reports and all the Public Acts of Parliament and the Short Titles and Preambles of the Private Acts passed between the years 1921 and 1927, with the able assistance of my capable copyholder, and she and I got the proofs out and handed to the messenger for posting or delivery to authors and/or editor almost invariably on time--and now the system that had worked satisfactorily for so long was to be changed. Sir Sylvester Harmsworth was the big noise of the new directors. Mr. Herbert, the editor, had unfortunately died and "now there arose up a new [encl. who knew not Joseph".

After getting my copyholder another job, I left to go to St. Clements Press. After a few months under Mr. as head header (reputed to have been a bricklayer before the war--so was Mr. Churchill), I transferred, for a holiday grass, to The Financial Times on the next floor, with Mr. Joe Stay as head reader. The holiday grass over, I was again signing the books, but only off and on, for I had long grasses on The Financial News under Mr. Coveney; now and again on The Observer, under Mr. Harris; and once or twice on The Daily Express. I was eventually recalled to The Financial Times, where I continued for about 12 years till September, 1940. When Joe Stay retired Mr. Charles Butler took his place. Mr. B. had been a house-apprentice.

On the outbreak of war half the 'ship worked one week, the other half the next week, and so on, till it became two weeks off and one on. So partly owing to the difficulty of getting to London and back to Gravesend, partly to the waking into activity of a duodenal ulcer I had contracted during those 12 years of night work, and partly owing to shortage of cash, I decided to do A.R.P. work locally and became a shelter warden. This work becoming too arduous for me, I took a clerk's job in the local D.C.R.E.'s office, and became a member of the Civil Servants Clerical Association. Shelter Warden's pay was £3 5s. per week. The clerk's job about £3 10, increasing later to £4 10s. (with bonuses and a little overtime). I continued with the R.E.s till November, 1945, learnt the typewriter (not very well--I already knew shorthand) and became a little more adept at figures (always a bugbear) as an assistant to the Finance Clerk.

On the C.R.E.'s organization gradually collapsing on the cessation of hostilities, and with no prospect of being kept on as a civil servant, I obtained a job as Drawing Office Clerk with the local firm of Essex Aero Ltd., light-metal engineers.

During most of the war period I was on the local T.A. Branch Committee and the Branch delegate to the local Trades Council, to which I also became Minute Clerk, and was local correspondent and part-distributor of "The Voice". (Ever heard of it?) These activities were chiefly because of lack of time with the few working printers left, who had more overtime and A.R.P. duties to contend with than I had.

I had thought over the possibility of returning to print in London, but my health was not robust enough for me to face the journey to and fro with any degree of equanimity.

I still cycle, and do the journey up the hill to airport where the office is situated, a distance of about miles from my home. From the windows of the office I can see the broad sweeping bend of the river, beyond Gravesend, leading to the sea, and on the westward, over the town, Tilbury Docks, and the industrial reaches of the river leading to London, while on the three other sides are open country and low hills partly cultivated and partly wooded, and between them and the aerodrome are acres of waving corn, and the tiny picturesquely gabled hamlet of Thong nestling at the base of a low hill--very pleasant in the summer, and how different from the restricted outlook of any Reader's Box, where to let one's eyes wander from the roof would lead to trouble and anxiety, to say the least. But in winter--both of nature and humanity--a bleaker outlook presents itself; yet, as with all winters, "Can spring be far behind?"

And now I hope to potter in my garden when I feel like it, help the missis (she needs it), read my books when inclination dictates, and listen to the Radio when something is to be broadcast that might appeal to me, and to wear out my old clothes. And this I have longed to do for some years. I'm getting tired of industrial life. And, so, good-bye. I ~~think I will leave my body to the Royal College of Surgeons, if they will have it.~~ ^{have left} ~~It may be of more use in death than I have been in life.~~

T.A.	(361)	44	years' membership.
L.S.C.	(340)	32	" "
A.C.P.	(31)	31	" "
Total	<u>107</u>	4	" "

Not to mention about 4 " " in the C.S.C.A.

P.S. Names, places and incidents mentioned above are all authentic.

Paul Evett.

16th August, 1951.