



WITH THE PALS OF OTHER DAYS

Hot Springs, Ark., August 12.—Once more the writer is hobnobbing with the "pals" of other days—the printer men. The older the architect of this department grows the better he likes to foregather with the union printers in international convention assembled and indulge in reminiscences. Where a bunch of old-time printers is assembled, there you will be sure to find that fraternity which maketh for jollity, and the good will that maketh for lasting friendships. The great feature of this convention of printers is the "Old Pirate's Reunion." And thereby hangs a tale that to be enjoyed needs some elucidation.

The "Missouri River Pirates" composed that pioneer band of union printers that worked along the Missouri river in the early days from 1877 to 1883, preaching unionism wherever they stopped, and reviving the spirit of local union men who had grown discouraged. Unions had been established at Atchison and St. Joseph even before the war, but the war, and the panic of 1873 caused them to lose their charters, and unionism was at a low ebb when good times began in the late 70's. Then it was that the "Pirates" began working along the river—Kansas City, Leavenworth, Atchison, St. Joseph, Council Bluffs, Omaha, Sloux City, and cities lying not far inland. The result was a renewal of unionism that blazed into success, and now every city of 15,000 in the Missouri valley is organized, the printers drawing top wages and are working the eight hour day.

The architect of this department started to learn the printer's trade about the time the "Pirates" were in their glory, and among the most pleasant recollections of his life are those concerning the "tourists" who never lost an opportunity to drill unionism into his youthful mind. The result was that as soon as he had served the requisite apprenticeship he hiked to the nearest union town and became a full fledged union printer. But he started on the road about the time the glory of the "Pirates" was fading, and it never was his lot to be counted one of them.

But the "Pirates" are gathering here from the four quarters of the earth, and they are going to have a reunion that will go down in union printer history. It will be held Wednesday, long before this shall reach The Commoner readers, but next week we'll tell you all about it—that is, most all about it. Just as soon as this letter is finished the writer is going out to hunt up Ben Hill, foreman of the St. Joe Gazette, for it was under Hill's supervision that the writer set up his first line of type on a morning newspaper, way back in '83. He expects to meet "Red" Hill, the old proof reader on the Omaha World-Herald, who once marked Webster's Dictionary when a compositor called him down for a correction and offered old Noah as ocular demonstration. He expects to see "Gig" Martin, who always comes into town "by hand." He'll look for Dixie Dunbar who, disgusted with his gas jet put on his coat and started out of the office to "ketch some lightning" bugs to dissipate this gloom. If he doesn't meet Bill Boyer, Native Missourian an'

proud of it, he'll feel badly, for it was Bill that gave him the first word of encouragement as a "tourist" at Rockport, Mo., in the fall of '83. My, my, but that was a long time ago!

Uncle Sam is quite a prominent citizen in Hot Springs. He maintains a bath house here for those who can not afford private baths, and he also maintains a reservation which is cared for just like Uncle Sam cares for all his parks. The springs are good for any old ailment. They will relieve a man of about everything, and the hotels attend to relieving us of the rest. Met a gentleman yesterday evening who said that he had shot himself full of chloride of gold in an effort to get rid of the drink habit, but without success. But he came down here, boiled himself in the baths for a couple of weeks and is now all right. "They got the gold out of my system, and out of my pockets, too," he said.

There is only one bad feature about a visit to Hot Springs, and that is the sight of so many sufferers who are here for help. But even that has its bright side, for the man who has health and strength can not look on them without returning thanks for his manifold blessings. A man who has health and strength and a good digestion never knows how well off he is until he sees some poor, unfortunate who lacks all those things.

A reception was held at the Arlington hotel yesterday. People who have an idea that printers are a dissipated, forlorn, happy-go-lucky, careless class of craftsmen, should have been present at the reception. He would have seen a bunch of as fine looking men as he could locate in a year's search. Fact is, they looked like a bunch of bankers, or lawyers, or Wall Street financiers. Some of them are getting along in years, but the majority of them are comparatively young men. They are jollifying, for this is the first convention held since the winning of the bitter fight for the eight hour day. That fight was begun on January 1, 1906, and since that time the 45,000 union printers of the country put up over \$3,000,000 in cold cash to secure victory. During the struggle not one union printer so far as known was arrested on any charge of violence, although three or four were arrested and fined for contempt of court, the contempt consisting in ignoring a judicial order not to assert their rights as free born American citizens. The general public heard very little about the eight hour strike, for the reason that it was so quiet the daily newspapers could not make any news features out of it. Now, after less than two years of battling for the short work day, the International Typographical Union has more money in its treasury than it ever had at one time before. It has more men working the eight hour day than it ever had working the nine hour day, and while financing this battle the printers maintained their splendid Home at Colorado Springs, where 150 aged and invalid printers are cared for as they deserve to be. When a man thinks of all these things he has a right to be proud of the fact that he has carried a union printer's card for nearly a quarter of a century, even

though it has been fifteen years since he worked at the case.

Speaking about the Union Printers' Home at Colorado Springs brings to mind the fact that this Home contains one of the finest libraries in the United States. Two years ago James Monroe Kretter, a member of Columbia Typographical Union, Washington, D. C., conceived the idea of having every visitor to the Colorado Springs convention in 1906 bring a book for the Home. This was done, with the result that the library was enriched by something like 2,000 volumes. Then B. Frank Swigart of St. Louis Typographical Union, got into the game and began writing authors, publishers, statesmen and everybody else, telling them about the Home and its library, and asking for donations. The result is that the library now contains upwards of 8,000 volumes, many of them priceless. President Roosevelt contributed a complete set of his books, autographed. Emperor William of Germany is on the list, and his imperial signature looms up on the fly leaves of the books he sent. King Edward VII of Great Britain and Ireland, contributed autographed books of great value. Every cabinet office is represented, every justice of the United States supreme court is represented, and Mark Twain sent in a set of his books with a characteristic dedication, for Mark is an old-time printer. The library today, apart from its sentimental value, is worth not less than \$30,000, and now the printers are going to assess themselves and raise enough money to build a library annex to the Home. The writer of this department carries quite a bunch of what people call "life insurance," and the fruits of which he can never enjoy. It costs him a lot of money every year, too. But in the Typographical Union he has insurance that simply can not be beaten. He doesn't have to die to get it, either. If ever he becomes crippled, ill or incapacitated from work, he can go to the Union Printers' Home at Colorado Springs and live on the fat of the land in a home that is a home in all that the name implies, surrounded by a veritable garden, and in sight of the eternal peaks of the Rocky Mountains. And for this insurance he pays the enormous tax of ten cents a month, or \$1.20 a year. After you have let this fact soak into your mind perhaps you can begin to realize what a soft snap the managers of the big "life" insurance companies have had for the past fifty or a hundred years.

A growing feature of these annual conventions is the increasing number of women who attend. The printers are getting into the habit of bringing their wives along, and the result is beneficial in more ways than one. The social times are more thoroughly enjoyed, and some of the features that used to mark the conventions in the writer's early printing days have been eliminated—for all of which the rank and file is duly thankful. There are several women delegates on the floor of the convention. They are a splendid credit to the craft, too. Here is a good thing to remember about the Typographical Union: Whenever you see a woman working at the case or on a machine in a union composing room you know she is getting the same rate of wage as the men. "Equal pay for equal work," is one of the Typographical Union's slogans.

It is pretty nearly time for the day's "business" to begin. First comes the "German lunch," which is now about ready to serve. Then comes a balloon ascension, followed by a visit to the alligator and ostrich farms. This will be followed by a vaudeville entertainment. So the

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