The Daily

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THE OLD PRINTER

A Sketch of Life Behind the Scenes in a Newspaper Composing-Room,

patch of garden. And by-and-by he on the weather. If he can't stay that dream of home was inspiring to "wood up" with their sticks and him. It is an old story, this struggle of a printer to get a home; any one of these restless mariners of the land, down his stick, take off his spectacles case while he was saving money for a pity to call him back, and the boy a house and lot, and the "subs" look- would say: ily and can't tramp, he breaks his heart, puts dust on his head, and goes "out of the union," and wearily works at the bosses' rates. So the old man worked bravely on, as many

old clothes grew shabbier. year used to be seen in the office printer; he didn't often rush, and he after school, standing at his tall fa-never "soldiered for fat on the hook," ther's elbow, learning, in a very irregular, boyish, unapprenticed fashion, with a cataract of questions, to whether it was a "pick up" or a great "stick type." The old man never in take of "blind copy," scribbled in tended the boy should be a printer.
And he was proud of him and of his of the paper and marked "solid," with standing at school. And once the never a break or paragraph from A to boy wrote a ten-line account of a boy Z. But he would stand at that old falling down-stairs, and a good-natured reporter sent it in just as it came.

But one day an unbidden guest all his bills would be paid there, and sad looking old and worn, was the printer who came next day and took his old place at the case. The types own, every last "slug" of them. didn't click very fast in that "alley for days after that. And sometimes the printer's face would be lying on the boxes in his folded arms, and how pathetic looked the half-filled "stick" in the clasped hands, the composingrule fallen out of its place, and the pied type and leads all tumbling tolowed; and more than one looking across at the heart-broken picture of

After that, streaks of gray showed plainly over the old man's head, and truck, and omnibus; blared with the broad shoulders stooped a little, brass bands, howled with hand orbegan to call him "the old man." even the shricking newsboy, with a The office was his home now. When ghastly sarcasm, murdered the sleep I first came on the paper, I remember how he used to come into the sanctum every Saturday afternoon and run over the exchanges for his Sunday reading; and there were certain papers that were always saved for him. I soon learned his quiet ways, and many times I have hid his favorite exchanges for him, so that the senior ments on his work, on the margin of when the manager revised the ex-change list, and cut off, among a hun-haired poets, who could never learn dred others, all theold man's favorite to spell, wrathfully cast all their imthe official letter-head, smuggled and found more sunshine than shad-them right back again. And the old ow in the world; he had more friends man always came into the editorial than enemies. Printers, and forependent, I think, for I know the bus-iness manager used sometimes to pay iness manager used sometimes to pay and emptied again, and filled again the old man in drafts when he wanted with row and strange faces. to send her money.

him. He was quiet, save when he posing-room drew wearily on, he was ance to the boys, or expressed his riews on the political issues of the as himself—but a printer is never too day. When he preached or debated, he had a way of sitting at his case, or standing in the alley, his stick poised in the air, marking off the emphatic portions of his remarks. The great, big, solemn spectacles came upon the face now, and the boys occasionally suggested that he "open his windows and let in the air." He sat down by the low windowship worked four nights a week after sill by his case, with his stick in his his windows and let in the air." He only worked four nights a week after a while, and fell into a habit of setting up a good deal of reprint in the afternoon. Nights when he put on a strength of the set in the composing room and pottered around till midnight, for a man can't break the habits of a life-time. In the winter he "stoked," be-

cause nobody else knew how to make the stove draw, and the old man would make things roar until the stove-pipe was red clear to the ceil-

ing. He had a fashion now, too, of sing-There was a wife, and there was a ing snatches of old hymns as he stood boy. Long before any one now in at his case. I don't know where he the office had a "sit" in news-room, learned them, unless when he was a press-room, business office, or sanc-tum, and before the old man had be-who goes to bed about 4 or 5 o'clock gun to look out at the world through Sunday morning, doesn't feel much spectacles and his figure was as like getting up and going to church at half-past ten. Sunday night he reporters used to hear him talk about buying a lot and building a house out on the hill, where he could have a heart to take him, it depends largely was going to quit "sticking type," doors, he goes to church; but if the and get into something that would weather is pleasant, he rather thinks let him stay home nights, and get acquainted with his family. And the enough. Slug Nine used to call the suit of clothes he bought in the fall old man's case "The Meetin' House," lasted a long way into the next sum-mer, and then they came out again in the winter, and the old man "rushed" too vociferous in its character to than he ever did again while please the typos, who made it a rule

drifting from port to port and back in a thoughtful way, and stand lookagain, lured by the ignis fatuus of so many cents more a thousand and a price and a half after two o'clock, and big bills with four or five nights' work. Never a wandering "jour" got a chance to stand at the old man's

work for the printer to buy a home.

His pay is easily reduced and seldom raised; a long strike many tables.

He never seemed to be very ambitions; never joined in the clamor to "have the markets go "sanga". "have the markets go 'round;" didn't seem to aspire to the "ad" case, and I raised; a long strike means taking to seem to aspire to the "ad" case, and I the road for him, and if he has a familithink he was a little bit afraid of table work. He seemed to feel, sometimes, his lack of early advantages, but he had a good print-shop educa-tion. Slug Nine said the old man learned his letters right from the a printer has worked before and since boxes, and grew up and learned to set his time, and the little plant in the type in one of those mustang offices, bank began to grow brighter as the where they keep the type in a coffee old clothes grew shabbier. sack, and chalk out the cases on the And the boy growing into his tenth floor. He wasn't even a very fast but took whatever came along with equal patience and good nature,

although it was a dull day, and the scribe wanted awfully to make it a column and put on a hanging head. And the old man sent marked copies of that paper to every soul he knew in this world.

But came day are applied as a contract of the But one day an unbidden guest how hard it is for a printer not to came home from school with the boy, drop a good many type, and fumble and sat down by the hearthstone in for the boxes, and let his thumb get rented home. And the most awfully sore, and have to bunt long days of fever and doctors' bills for the bellows and blow out his case, drew out nearly all that little bank and study the copy very closely and account, and one black day the old find it dreadfully hard to read, and man's case was empty, and the busi-ness office told the undertaker that ing a little he can get a "pick-up" as long as your arm, and a "leaded" take he mustn't take any money from the with a paragraph to every sentence. old man. And pale, and quiet, and But they did that for the old man, sad looking old and worn, was the and he knew it by and by, and loved

And so, year after year, he wrought among the boys on a morning paper. He went to bed about the time the rest of the world got up, and he arose about the time the rest of the world sat down to dinner. He worked by every kind of light except sunlight There were candles in the office when gether. More than one printer, go-ing by on his way to empty his stick lamps, that smoked and sputtered they came in; then they had lard-oil in the galley, was a long time bending and smelled; then he saw two or three down to find the "take" his own folprinters blinded by explosions of camphene and spirit-gas; then kerosene came in and heated up the news sorrow, leaned close down to his copy room on summer nights like a fur to read fair writing that was never nace; then the office put in gas; and blurred when it came off the hook, and grimmed his eyes with an unceiling and dazzled his old eyes, and steady hand, saying something about the dust or the glare of the light. he sang on his way home, a policeman hand then, about five years after bade him "cheese that," and reminded that the boy's mother, weary of the him that he was disturbing the peace long pilgrimage, lay down to rest in a and people wanted to sleep. But cool arbor, roofed with waving grass when he wanted to sleep, the rest of and blue violets, and awoke to kiss the world, for whom he had sat up all night to make a morning paper, roar-ed and crashed down by the noisy

and it was about that time the boys gans, and talked and shouted; and exchanges for him, so that the senior ments on his work, on the margin of might not cut them. And his proof-slips; long-winded correscountry exchanges, I was the guilty perfections upon his head. But man who, by a mandatory note on through it all he wrought patiently, the official letter-head, smuggled and found more sunshine than shadrooms to write letters to a half-sister, men, and pressmen, and reporters, I believe, who was the only relative and editors, came and went, but he he had in the world. She was destayed, and he saw news-room and

He was working one night, and He began to grow old now. His when the hours that are so short in orrows didn't make a morose man of the ball-room and so long in the com-When he preached or debated, tired to be good natured-offered to

ASTORIA, OREGON, SUNDAY, JUNE 15, 1884.

he was on the point of exploding with wrath and impatience.

Slug Nine, passing by the alley, stopped to speak to the old man, sit-

ting there so quietly.

The telegraph boy came running in with the last manifold sheet, shout-

They carried the old man to the foreman's long long table, and laid him down reverently, and covered his face. They took the stick out of his nerveless hand, and read his last take: Bosron, November 23.—The American barque Pilgrim went to pieces off Mar-blehead in a light gale, about midnight. She was old and unseaworthy, and this was to have been her last trip.



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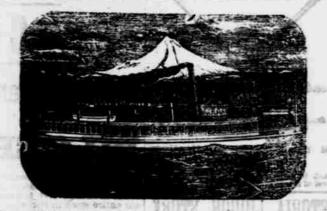
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