

UNTO THE
MASTER PRINTERS OF EDINBURGH,
THE MEMORIAL

OF THE
JOURNEYMEN COMPOSITORS OF THAT CITY.

GENTLEMEN,

IN submitting the accompanying Scale of Prices for your consideration, we, the Compositors of Edinburgh, take leave respectfully to offer the following statement of our present position as a trade, as compared with that of our brethren in other towns, and with the majority of skilled artisans throughout the country.

By the Interlocutor of 1805, the rates for Compositors' work were advanced from $3\frac{1}{2}$ d. to $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. per 1000 letters for ordinary Book-work, and from $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. to $5\frac{1}{2}$ d. for Session-work and Jobs. Previous to this increase, the average wages earned in three different classes of houses were, respectively, 13s. 9d., 15s. 6d., and 18s. a-week. Putting these rates together, the average wage of the Compositor in Edinburgh, previous to 1805, was 15s. 9d. a-week, representing the composition of 54,000 types. Assuming that the amount of work kept pace with the increase of Compositors, the average wage, on the passing of the Interlocutor, ought to have risen to 20s. 3d.; and there is reason to believe, from the then existing circumstances of the trade, that that was the immediate effect of the enactment. It was considered, most justly, that an average wage of 15s. 9d. was inadequate remuneration for the members of a profession, the proper exercise of which calls for a degree of intelligence, and an amount of information, greater than is required in the ordinary avocations of working men.

No advance has been made on these rates since 1805—a period of fifty-six years—notwithstanding the many radical changes that have been effected in Printing; nor has the wage of the Compositor continued at the average to which it was then raised. On the contrary, we believe it has decreased to very nearly its former level. Leaving out of view the Newspaper Department of the trade, which, in consequence of the general introduction of dailies, has few points of resemblance with Book and Jobbing offices, the average earnings of Compositors do not exceed 17s. 3d. a-week—being 3s. under the amount earned by our body more than half a century ago. The change in the character of general literature, and the rapidity with which all kinds of work is now hurried through the press—the continued disproportion in the number of apprentices—the introduction of bastard and thin founts—and the partial adoption of the system of paying settled wages—have, it may be said, superinduced this result; a condition of things quite the reverse of what might not unnaturally have been anticipated from a business which, during the past thirty years, has made the most marvellous progress, and contributed so largely to the public weal.

But this average wage, which is estimated from the combined earnings of all the Book and Jobbing Compositors, gives only a faint idea of the actual condition of our trade. In 1805, when the average wage increased to upwards of 20s., Printing was entirely executed on piece prices; each Compositor, according to his ability, having the opportunity of making as much as the amount and nature of the work would yield. The partial introduction of the system of settled wages, while undoubtedly beneficial to those permanently employed on it, has nevertheless operated injuriously to the great majority of the trade in this city. To those employed on piece, the average wage, low as it is, becomes still lower. Exclusive of those engaged on newspapers, there were in Edinburgh, last year, 330 Compositors, the weekly wage of whom, at an average of 17s. 3d. each, amounted to

£284, 12s. 6d. Of that number, however, 70 were employed on established wages, whose weekly receipts, estimated at the minimum wage of 25s., were £87, 10s., which, when deducted from the former sum, left to be divided among the remaining 260, £197, 2s. 6d.; being an average wage of about FIFTEEN SHILLINGS and TWOPENCE each.

While the wages of what are called "line" men have thus retrograded, the remuneration of establishment men has, on the contrary, been progressively increasing. In 1833, the established wage was 21s.; it is now generally 26s.: in other words, the remuneration of the establishment man has increased in the same ratio that the remuneration of the piece hand has diminished. The wage of the one has fallen from 20s. 3d. to 15s. 2d.; that of the other has risen from 21s. to 26s.;—the wage of a small proportion has gone on increasing, while the price per 1000, by which the value of their labour is mainly determined, and by which nearly four-fifths of the trade are paid, has remained stationary, and their actual earnings fallen away; in both cases there being a difference—one progressive, the other retrogressive—of 25 per cent. This, we respectfully submit, is an unnatural and unhealthy state of trade—one which we are morally bound to improve by every right means, and in which we hope to carry with us your sympathy and co-operation.

If the preceding sketch gives, as we believe it does, a faithful outline of our position as a trade, then we are amply justified in making the present meliorative effort. For many years has our trade suffered from the anomalies we have endeavoured to point out. The Scale recently issued was an attempt to modify these without raising the price per 1000; but we are now convinced that the remedy in a great measure lies, not in having high rates for extras and incidental work, but by increasing the present low rate for Book-work, whereby, without injury to the legitimate interests of any, the great mass of our trade will be benefited, and its position raised to a level more in accordance with its character.

Some time ago, several suggestions were very kindly submitted for our consideration by Messrs MURRAY and GIBB and Mr THOMAS CONSTABLE. They proposed that the charges for Scheme, Greek, and other extras, should be reduced; and in lieu thereof, suggested an increase of a halfpenny per 1000 on Manuscript Book-work, and of a shilling per sheet, of all sizes, for Reprints. The Scale herewith sent is based on this principle of equalization, and is the result of additions and amendments to the propositions referred to. The various reductions that have been made we here pass over; preferring to direct your attention to the proposed increase in the price per 1000. After what has already been said as to the condition of our trade, the advance from 4½d. to 5d. for Reprints, and to 5½d. for MS., will not appear unreasonable. It is but an increase of three farthings per 1000 on ordinary Book-work only, the rates for Session and Jobs remaining unaltered. Instead of 4½d., the rate, putting Reprint and MS. together, will be 5¼d. Even with this increase (greatly modified by the reductions made in the price of Greek, Scheme, etc.), it will take a man sixty hours—composing and distributing at the rate of 1000 types an hour—to make the present established wage. If employers consider 25s. or 26s. fair remuneration for a week's work,—and the fact that the established wage has gradually and spontaneously risen to that amount may be regarded as showing this,—they can have little objection to an increase in the price per 1000 that will place piece hands more on a level with those thus employed, and with the members of other trades which certainly do not make greater demands on the strength, skill, and intelligence of the workman. We have alluded to this view of the subject, not as showing that the establishment hand has too much, but that the piece hand has too little; and that, as advances have been made to one section of the trade, there exists at least equal reasons for augmenting the remuneration of the other more numerous, but not less important, section.

On this fact alone, after what has been stated, we might rest our claim for the advance sought; but the reasonableness of our request is further strengthened by a comparison with the rates paid in other cities. The means of

speedy transit between one part of the country and another have so assimilated the modes of living, that, so far as expense is concerned, it matters little whether a man lives in Edinburgh or in London. Even house-rent with us is fast rising to metropolitan prices, and exceeds what is charged in the other English cities. Yet, although such is the fact, Compositors in London, Liverpool, and Manchester are paid 1d. per 1000 above their brethren in Edinburgh. In these cities, the average rate for Book-work, on founts not less than Brevier, is $5\frac{1}{2}$ d. ;* so that, even with the advance to $5\frac{1}{4}$ d., we will still be fully a farthing per 1000 behind the English workman.

Another argument in support of the increase asked might be found in the gradual rise in the rates of wages that has taken place in other trades. To present, however, anything like a just view of this part of the subject would require more research on our part than we have been able to devote to it, and unduly extend our Memorial, already too long. We therefore avail ourselves of the testimony of, perhaps, the best living authority on a question relating to the Wages of Labour—himself one of the leading Printers and Publishers of this city—Mr William Chambers. In a recently published tract on “Misexpenditure,” Mr Chambers says:—“Within the past thirty years, wages have, with inconsiderable exceptions, been undergoing a gradual rise. . . . Instances are common of wages having risen 15 to 20 per cent., sometimes 25 to 30 per cent.; the advance being most marked in the building and several other trades in which individual skill is exercised.”

We have now, at perhaps too tedious a length, for which the importance of the subject must be our apology, stated the grounds on which we rest our claim to the advance proposed in the new Scale. We believe the facts we have adduced to be correct; we feel the position we have taken to be a sound one; and we leave the Scale in your hands, trusting that the reasonableness of the increase sought will commend itself to your judgment, and that we will no longer have to labour at so marked a disadvantage, not only with each other, but with our brethren in towns, such as Liverpool and Manchester, which, so far as Printing is concerned, are unquestionably not in advance of the metropolis of Scotland.

Your opinion on the foregoing Memorial, which it is requested may be communicated to your respective Chapels on or before the 8th January next, will be esteemed a favour by your Memorialists, whose names are hereto appended.

* The rates for Book-work in London, Liverpool, and Manchester are,—REPRINT, leaded, 5d., solid, $5\frac{1}{4}$ d.; MS., leaded, $5\frac{3}{4}$ d., solid, 6d.; which gives the average of $5\frac{1}{2}$ d. per 1000. These rates are for founts ranging from English to Brevier,—an advance of one farthing taking place on Minion, which still further increases the average.

[For the sake of reference, the Memorialists' names are arranged alphabetically under those of their Employers.]

<p>A. Aikman and Co.</p> <p>Peter Liddell. James Smith. John Storie.</p> <p>Ballantyne and Co.</p> <p>David Baird. Donald Bremner. Peter Brown. James Clark. Patrick Connolly. Philip Connolly. Robert Craig. Alexander Crowe. James Cunningham. A. Elder. William Gellan. William Gilbert. Alexander Gunn. Buchanan Henderson. William Henderson. Charles Irvine. James Jeffrey. John Johnstone. Alexander Kerr. Thomas Kerr. John Logan.</p>	<p>Alexander M'Corkindale. Eason M'Donald. William Mackay. James Marr. James Mason. John Mercer. John Murray. Hugh Paterson. James Pearson. James Petrie. William Pullen. James Ramsay. John Reid. Thomas Scott. John Smith. Donald Sutherland.</p> <p>Blackwood and Sons.</p> <p>John Anderson. Thomas Annan. Alexander Ayer. Robert Banks. J. Bishop. John A. Black. William Black. George Bell. George O. Berry. James Burns.</p>	<p>Charles Christie. Charles Cooper. John Cruickshanks. Thomas Fairley. William Gentle. Charles Grant. Peter Grant. William Gray. Joseph Harley. John Henderson. James Hodge. George Hogg. James Keppie. James Kidd. Samuel Kinnear. David Lockhart. James Logan. Thomas P. M'George. John Macqueen. Charles Murray. David Ninian. James Paton. William Paton. William Peffers. William Richardson. Thomas Robertson. William Ross. John Shedden. J. R. Smith. George Sutherland.</p>	<p>George Thomson. James Walker. Alexander Wilson.</p> <p>Mr William Burness.</p> <p>Colin Belford. James Dodds. James M'Donald. John Reynolds. James Skinner. William Smith. James Taylor. Peter Thomson.</p> <p>W. and R. Chambers.</p> <p>George Aikman. William Brandon. William Brown. James Dewar. Alexander Hardie. David Kinnear. James Lamb. G. S. M'Gill. John Munro. Andrew Phillips. Peter Thomson.</p>
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R. and B. Clark.

Walter Baillie.
John Barclay.
William Barton.
David Cottam.
Archibald Johnston.
Thomas Little.
James Macdonald.
Thomas MacFarlane.
Alexander Martin.
James Muir.
Teesdale S. Reed.
William Reid.
Adam Richardson.
William Ritchie.
Robert Ross.
Andrew Sinclair.
William Skinner.
Richard Stevenson.
Robert Taylor.
James Tod.
Archibald Walker.

Mr Thomas Constable.

Andrew Aimers.
John Allan.
John Archibald.
Matthew Archibald.
Andrew Armstrong.
William Auld.
James Blaik.
Frederick Blake.
Benjamin Bremner.
David Campbell.
James Collins.
John S. Common.
John Couper.
Robert Fergie.
Alexander Geddes.
Robert Geddes.
James Graham.
William Graham.
William B. Grieve.
James Haig.
David Hunter.
Alphonzo Jolly.
Thomas Keddie.
James Kennedy.
Thomas Kerry.
Harry Laird.
James Luke.
James M'Clymont.
Hugh M'Crindle.
John M'Cubbin.
James R. M'Donald.
Andrew M'Dougall.
Daniel Macgregor.
James M'Kechnie.
Daniel Monro.
Daniel Munro.
Daniel Nicol.
James Ramsay.
Robert Richardson.
Alexander Robertson.
James Rose.
James Scott.
Robert Scurr.
William Small.
John Stephen.
John Stoddart.
William Todd.
William Watson.
Peter Wight.
Robert Wight.

Courant.

George Anderson.
Peter Banks.
Wemyss Bisset.
William K. Cooper.
John Dickson.
James Donaldson.
John Duncan.
Alexander S. Hay.
Andrew Hay.
James M. B. Jeffrey.
John Kerr.
John Lawson.
Robert Low.
James M'Donald.
George H. Macleod.
John Matthew.
John H. Purdie.
David Ramsay.
Lewis Rennie.
Donald Ross.
William Ross.
John Stewart.
John Wall.
Andrew Weir.

Daily Review.

James Aimer.
William Anderson.
T. Baird.
Conway Beckett.
James F. Borrowman.
Grant Campbell.
Alexander Carmichael.
Richard B. Carruthers.
Robert H. Cooper.
John Edmonston.
John Grant.
J. M. MacBean.
John M'Culloch.
James Mackenzie.
John Molle.
D. H. Mosses.
James Napier.
William Scott.
Walter Swan.
Alexander Watson.
John Whyte.

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Andrew Carr.
David Dunlop.
Thomas Hope.
J. A. Milner.
Walter Morison.
William Russell.
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Gazette.

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David Sandilands.
William Sked.
James Thomson.
Robert White.

Mr Charles Gibson.

John E. Christie.
William Turnbull.

Greig and Son.

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A. M. Grant.
James Hardie.
John Nixon.
James Park.
John Patton.
George D. Simpson.
John Slymond.

Mr Hughes.

James Gall.
John Gall.
John Lowe.
Alexander Macdonald.
James Wilson.

Mr Andrew Jack.

James Edmond.
John Lang (1).
John Lang (2).
Hugh Mackay.
Malcolm M'Millan.
George Masson.

Mercury.

Charles Alexander.
William Allan.
B. Bayse.
J. Bogie.
Daniel Brock.
John H. Brown.
Joseph Brown.
Robert Calder.
William Crosbie.
Bernard Cumming.
Joseph Goepel.
Peter Johnston.
R. Kellahin.
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James Lipen.
William M'Kay.
W. M'Neill.

Robert Mitchell.
Charles O'Hara.
William Orr.
John Pollock.
James Ramsay.
Andrew Thomson.

Murray and Gibb.

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Thomas Adams.
Andrew Aitken.
David Aitken.
James Anderson.
Robert Brough.
Hugh Cameron.
John Chisholm.
David Christie.
John Craig.
James Craigie.
Duncan Devon.
William Dickson.
James Doran.
Thomas Godfrey.
John Greenshields.
Lachlan Hay.
Peter Hay.
William Herries.
David Hillhouse.
Robert Hutton.
Thomas F. Johnston.
James Kemp.
John Kyles.
Francis Lamb.
Robert Lamb.
James Macmillan.
John M'Rea.
Robert Pringle.
George Reid.
Alexander S. Risk.
James Robertson.
John Rodgers.
Thomas Russell.
Robert Sanderson.
Benjamin Smith.
William G. Souter.
Hugh Stewart.
John A. Torrance.
James Wilkie.
William Williamson.
Douglas Wilson.

Neill and Co.

William Andrew.
George M. Bain.
Peter Banks.
Andrew Bruce.
A. R. Clark.
George Davidson.
John Dick.
James D. Donaldson.
David Fergusson.
John Flett.
A. Forrest.
Alexander Johnston.
William Johnston.
Robert Lyon.
Thomas M'Alpin.
John M'Glashan.
William Matthew.
R. Robertson.
John Simpson.
W. Smith.
George Stewart.
George Thomson.
David Wilkinson.

Thomas Nelson and Sons.

John Bain.
Daniel S. Clark.
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David Hogg.
James Macfarlane.
William Muir.
George Nairne.
John Plummer.
John F. Robertson.
William Tait.
Andrew F. Taylor.
James Whyte.

North British Advertiser.

Thomas F. Barrowman.
James Currie.
David Deans.
David Fisher.
Pringle Galloway.

D. S. Harper.
John Laurie.
James B. Leask.
Stuart Livingstone.
Lachlan Mackenzie.
Alexander Mason.
David Mein.
John Sime.
George Smart.
Edward Smith.
George Smith.

N. B. Agriculturist.

William Donald.
J. Friend.
Robert Hardie.
John Johnstone.
Matthew Paterson.
Thomas W. Reid.
John C. Todd.

North Briton.

James Alexander.
Robert Belford.
Colin W. Gardner.
David Hay.
John Inglis.
William Macleod.
John Owler.
William Owler.
James Stewart.

Oliver and Boyd.

William Ayton.
John Colquhoun.
Simon Cossar.
James Hutton.
Robert Hutton.
Francis Mein.
Andrew Myles.
Robert Reidpath.

Scotsman.

John Acqueroff.
James Adamson.
D. M. Anderson.
J. Anderson.
John Baird.
G. Booty.
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A. Cameron.
Foster Cass.
John Chrystal.
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John Cooper.
Charles Cox.
William Cruickshank.
Charles Hinmars.
John Kerr.
W. Lambert.
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William Longmore, jun.
John P. Low.
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A. G. Merrilees.
A. C. Muir.
John W. Nesbitt.
R. Oliver.
Alexander Paisley.
Alfred Payne.
George Porteous.
D. Robb.
James Robb.
James Shaw.
James Smart.
Thomas Tait.
William Todd.
Henry Urquhart.
Robert Walker.
W. Watt.
George Wood.
William Wylie.
Thomas Young.

Witness.

James Alcorn.
William Anderson.
John Cooper.
James Drummond.
James Dun.
Thomas Litster.
George M'Neil.
John S. Porteous.
George Torrance.
Robert Wilson.