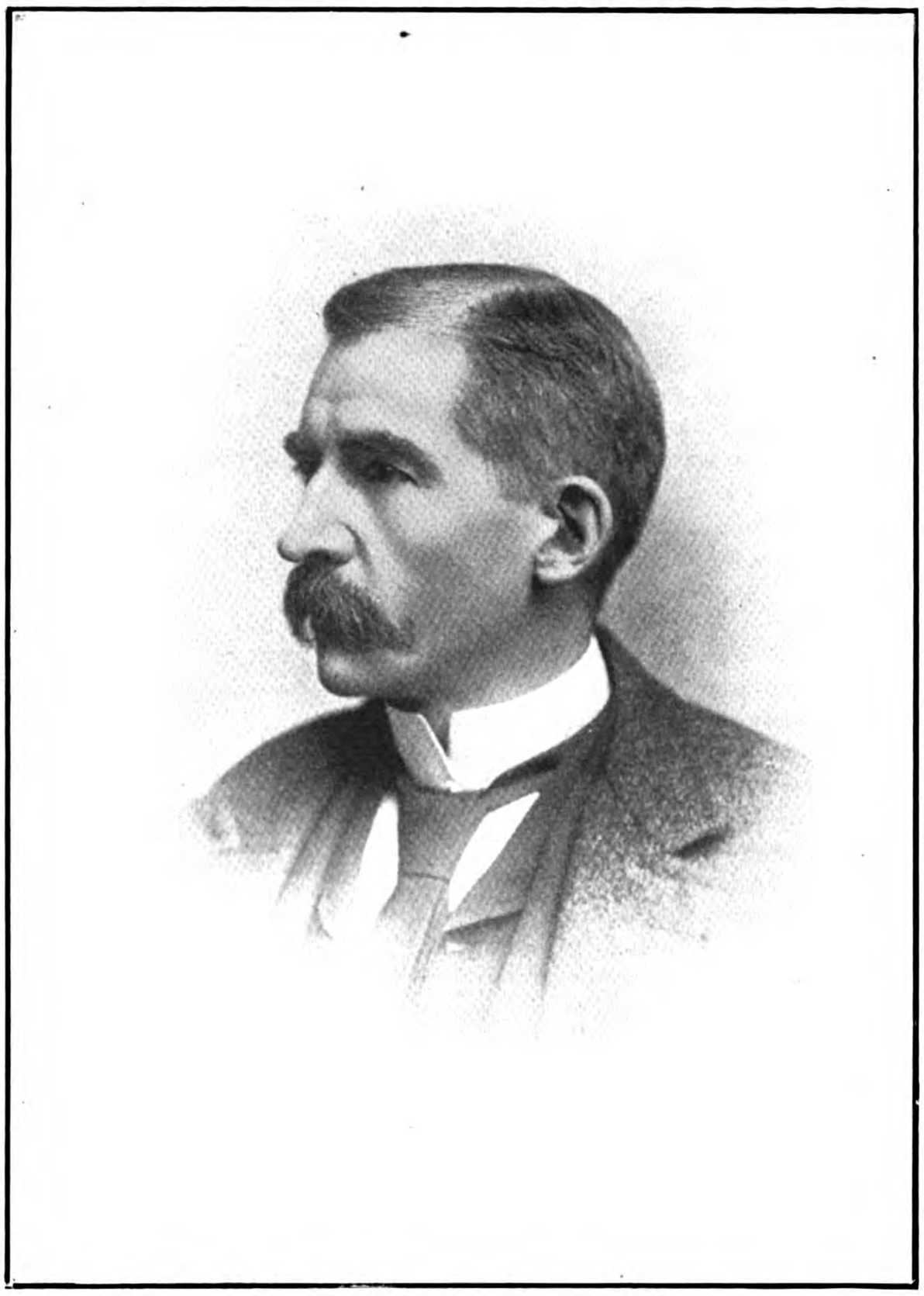
SAMUEL REED JOHNSTON.

The announcement of the untimely death of Mr. Samuel Reed Johnston, which occurred at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Monday, March 23, fell with universal sorrow upon the large circle of friends and acquaintances who had learned to admire and respect him, not alone for his acknowledged ability in the "art preservative," but for his conscious worth and unflinching integrity as a man and brother. In a private letter from Mr. John F. Marthens, who succeeds the deceased as superintendent of the printing department of the great firm of Joseph Eichbaum & Co., we learn that Mr. Johnston's last day at the office was Saturday, March 14. During the first days of the following week, as no news was received from him, it was supposed that he was suffering from a slight indisposition, and that he would again be at his place. Then word came that he had la grippe, which soon developed into pneumonia, to which he succumbed on the night of the 23d.



Mr. Marthens also kindly forwarded a copy of the last photograph taken of Mr. Johnston during life, which we have had reproduced and herewith present, together with a brief biographical sketch, by the courtesy of the *American Art Printer*—which appeared in the columns of our esteemed contemporary in December, 1887.

Samuel Reed Johnston was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where his father, also a printer, was born and raised, and where his grandfather, who was a silversmith, lived for many years; so he was thus of genuine Pennsylvania stock. As early as 1816, his father, while a very young man, was one of the firm of Eichbaum & Johnston—the first-named being an uncle of the subject of the present sketch and father of one of the present partners, Joseph Eichbaum.

The senior Eichbaum was, in early life, a bookbinder and ruler, doing the latter branch of the work by hand, with a pen and a large round ruler—ruling machines being as yet in the womb of time.

Mr. Johnston spent much of his time in this office and bindery, the family residence being but a short distance away, and he thus picked up much information about the business. Upon leaving school, he entered mercantile life, where he continued five or six years, never dreaming of becoming a printer, but acquiring a knowledge of commercial affairs which stood him well in after years. His father at length prevailed on him to enter the printing office, though against his judgment and inclination, and he ever maintained that he made a great mistake and that he was never cut out for a printer, though the number who differed with him tallied exactly with the number who had the pleasure of examining his work.

Mr. Johnston became a printer, and ere long a good one. Before many years had flown he acquired charge of the printing department, and then began a warfare against all forms of fogyism in the business, no matter how covered with the respected dust of years. One old-fashioned notion he stuck to, however: he insisted that printing is a trade and not an art. Among the things Mr. Johnston held in aversion are bad brass rule jobs and "patent rigidly-rigid cut-out-of-sheet-tin flourishes," as he called them, which many typefounders furnish. Serpentine type lines never had his favor, nor had adherence to the time honored red-and-blue and green-and-red in color work. He was first in Pittsburgh to deviate from them and mix and use shades of purple, as he was also the first in that city to demonstrate that a large power press could do fine black work, not only as good as the hand press but also many times faster.

He believed in the gospel of cleanliness; floors free from all waste paper, presses shining, walls free from handbills or showcards; and in the gospel of good order; in fine, in a systematic way of doing business; in knowing what to do first, how to do it right, and last and far from least, what the cost would be; not to disappoint a customer, but to get out work at the time and of the quality bargained for; never knowingly substituting a poorer article than promised, and often giving more than required; if an error was made, never letting the customer suffer, but bearing the loss. He was one of the few men who acknowledge that they learn from mistakes.

The adoption of the "Owl" as the trade mark of the firm in 1873 was Mr. Johnston's idea, and though an odd choice, there was a future in it, for two years later he first printed *Owltype*, the name being suggested by the popularity of the trade mark.

Original as he was both as a designer and colorist, Mr. Johnston took more pride in a fine pure style of typework in black than he did in fancy jobwork. His ideas were bright and original, and ever on the alert in his superintendence of the printing department. He was the inventor and patentee of calendars with white instead of black lines between the figures, and of a large number of more and less useful devices.

His life was an exemplar to all men, and his death an occasion of bitter regret.