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978-1-108-01297-3 - A History of the Old English Letter Foundries  
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# A History of the Old English Letter Foundries

*With Notes, Historical and Bibliographical, on  
the Rise and Progress of English Typography*

TALBOT BAINES REED



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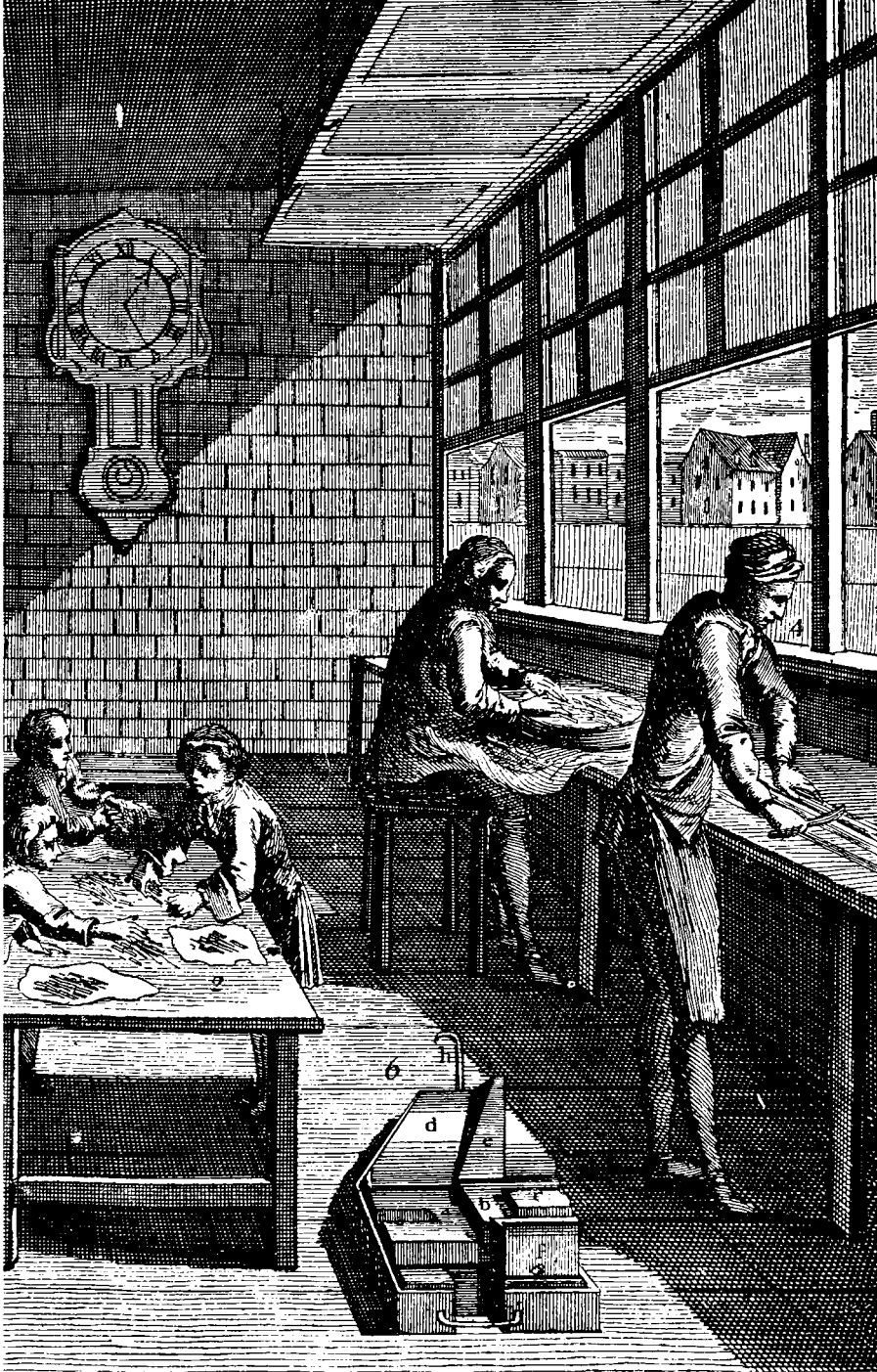
*A true & exact Representation of the Art of*



*Engraved for the Universal Magazine 1750. for J. Hinton at*

58. Interior of Caslon's Foundry in 1750. From the *Uni*

*1 of Casting & Preparing Letters for Printing.*



*at the Kings Arms in St. Pauls Church Yard LONDON.*

*the Universal Magazine* (The mould is described, p. 108).



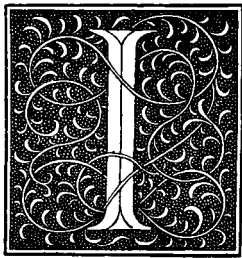
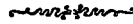
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BY  
TALBOT BAINES REED.

LONDON ·  
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.  
—  
1887.



## P R E F A C E .



IN this age of progress, when the fine arts are rapidly becoming trades, and the machine is on every side superseding that labour of head and hand which our fathers called Handicraft, we are in danger of losing sight of, or, at least, of undervaluing the genius of those who, with none of our mechanical advantages, established and made famous in our land those arts and handicrafts of which we are now the heritors.

The Art of Letter Founding hesitated long before yielding to the revolutionary impulses of modern progress. While kindred arts—and notably that art which preserves all others—were advancing by leaps and bounds, the founder, as late as half a century ago, was pursuing the even tenor of his ways by paths which had been trodden by De Worde and Day and Moxon. But the inevitable revolution came, and Letter Founding to-day bids fair to break all her old ties and take new departures undreamed of by those heroes of the punch and matrix and mould who made her what we found her.

At such a time, it seems not undutiful to attempt to gather together into a connected form the numerous records of the Old English Letter Founders scattered throughout our literary and

typographical history, with a view to preserve the memory of those to whose labours English Printing is indebted for so much of its glory.

The present work represents the labour of several years in what may be considered some of the untrodden by-paths of English typographical history.

The curious *Dissertation on English Typographical Founders and Foundries* by the learned Edward Rowe Mores, published in 1778, is, in fact, the only work in the language purporting to treat of Letter Founding as distinct from the art which it fosters. This quaint and crabbed sketch, full of valuable but half-digested information, was intended to accompany a specimen of the types of John James, whose foundry had gradually absorbed all the minor English foundries, and, after the death of its owner, had become the property of Mores himself. The enthusiasm of the Oxford antiquary infused new life into the dry bones of this decayed collection. Working backwards, he restored in imagination the old foundries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as they had been before they became absorbed in his own. He tracked back a few famous historical types to their fountain-head, and even bridged over the mysterious gulf which divided the early sixteenth from the early seventeenth centuries of English letter-founding.

Mores' *Dissertation* has necessarily formed the basis of my investigations, and is, indeed, almost wholly incorporated in the present volume. Of the additional and more anecdotal notes on the later founders, preserved by Nichols and Hansard, I have also freely made use; although in every case it has been my endeavour to take nothing on report which it has been possible to verify by reference to original sources. This effort has been rewarded by several interesting discoveries which it is hoped may be found to throw considerable fresh light on the history of our national typography.

The first century of English letter-founding is a period of great obscurity, to master which it is absolutely essential to have

*Preface.*

vii

unlimited access to all the works of all the printers whose books were the only type specimens of their day. Such access it has been beyond my power fully to secure, and in this portion of my work I am bound to admit that I can lay claim to little originality of research. I have, however, endeavoured to examine as many of the specimens of these early presses as possible, and to satisfy myself that the observations of others, of which I have availed myself, are such as I can assent to.

In detailing the rise and progress of the various English Letter Foundries, it has been my endeavour to treat the subject, as far as possible, bibliographically—that is, to regard as type-specimens not merely the stated advertisements of the founder, but also the works for which his types were created and in which they were used. The *Catena on Job*, Walton's *Polyglot*, Boyle's *Irish Testament*, Bowyer's *Selden*, thus rank as type specimens quite as interesting as, and far more valuable than, the ordinary letter founders' catalogues. Proceeding on this principle, moreover, this History will be found to embody a pretty complete bibliography of works not only relating to, but illustrative of, English Letter Founding. At the same time, the particular bibliography of the subject has been kept distinct, by appending to each chapter a chronological list of the Specimen Books issued by the foundry to which it relates.

The introductory chapter on the Types and Type Founding of the First Printers may be considered somewhat foreign to the scope of this History. The importance, however, of a practical acquaintance with the processes and appliances of the Art of Letter Founding as a foundation to any complete study of typographical history—as well as the numerous misconceptions existing on the part even of accepted authorities on the subject—suggested the attempt to examine the various accounts of the Invention of Printing from a letter founder's point of view, in the hope, if not of arriving at any very definite conclusions, at least of clearing the question of a few prevalent fallacies.

The two chapters on Type Bodies and Type Faces, although also

to some extent foreign, are considered important by way of introduction to the history of English Letter Founding in which the “foreign and learned” characters have so conspicuously figured.

If this book—the imperfections of which are apparent to no one as painfully as they are to the writer—should in any way encourage the study of our national Typography, with a view to profit by the history of the past in an endeavour to promote its excellence in the future, the labour here concluded will be amply repaid.

The agreeable task remains of thanking the numerous friends to whose aid and encouragement this book is indebted for much of whatever value it may possess.

My foremost thanks are due to my honoured and valued friend, Mr. William Blades, to whom I am indebted for far more than unlimited access to his valuable typographical library, and the ungrudging use of his special knowledge on all subjects connected with English typography. These I have enjoyed, and what was of equal value his kindly advice and sympathy during the whole progress of a work which, but for his encouragement from the outset, might never have been completed.

Another friend who, brief as was our acquaintance, had taken a genuine interest in the progress of this History, and had enriched it by more than one valuable communication, has been snatched away by the hand of Death before the thanks he never coveted but constantly incurred can reach him. In Henry Bradshaw the world of books has lost a distinguished ornament, and this little book has lost a hearty friend.

To Mr. F. Madan, of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, I owe much valuable information as to early printing at that University; while to the kindness of Mr. Horace Hart, Controller of the University Press, I am indebted for full access to the highly interesting collection of typographical antiquities preserved at that Press, as well as for the specimens I am here enabled to show of some of the most interesting relics of the oldest Foundry in the country.

*Preface.*

ix

Mr. T. W. Smith has kindly given me similar facilities as regards the archives and historical specimens of the venerable Caslon Foundry.

Mr. Sam. Timmins most generously placed at my disposal much of the information embodied in my chapter on Baskerville, including the extracts from the letters forming part of his unique collection relating to that celebrated typographer.

To Mr. James Figgins I am obliged for many particulars relating to the early association of founders at the commencement of the present century ; also for a specimen of one of the most noted founts of his distinguished ancestor.

Mr. Charles R. Rivington I have to thank for one or two valuable extracts from the *Minutes* of the Court of the Stationers' Company, relating to Letter Founders.

To Messrs. Enschedé and Sons, of Haarlem, my thanks are also specially due for giving me specimens of some of their most curious and ancient types.

It is also my pleasure, as well as my duty, to thank the Secretary of the American Antiquarian Society for information regarding specimens in his possession ; my friend, Dr. Wright, of the British and Foreign Bible Society, for free access to the highly interesting Library under his care ; Messrs. Tuer, Bremner, Gill, and others for the kind loan of Specimens ; the Librarian of the London Institution for permission to facsimile portions of the rare specimen of James' Foundry in that Library ; and the numerous other friends, who, by reading proofs and in other ways, have generously assisted me in my labours.

I also take this opportunity of thanking Mr. Prætorius and Mr. Manning for the care they have bestowed on the preparation of facsimiles for this work ; and of expressing my obligations to the officials of the British Museum and Record Office for their invariable courtesy on all occasions on which their assistance has been invoked.

LONDON, *January 1st*, 1887.

*b*

## CONTENTS.



Introductory Chapter. THE TYPES AND TYPE FOUNDING OF THE FIRST PRINTERS	1
Chap. 1. THE ENGLISH TYPE BODIES AND FACES - - - -	31
„ 2. THE LEARNED, FOREIGN AND PECULIAR CHARACTERS - -	57
„ 3. THE PRINTER LETTER-FOUNDERS, FROM CAXTON TO DAY - -	13
„ 4. LETTER FOUNDING AS AN ENGLISH MECHANICAL TRADE - -	102
„ 5. THE STATE CONTROL OF ENGLISH LETTER FOUNDING - -	123
„ 6. THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY FOUNDRY - - - -	137
„ 7. THE STAR CHAMBER FOUNDERS, AND THE LONDON POLYGLOT -	164
„ 8. JOSEPH MOXON - - - - -	180
„ 9. THE LATER FOUNDERS OF THE 17TH CENTURY - - - -	193
„ 10. THOMAS AND JOHN JAMES - - - - -	212
„ 11. WILLIAM CASLON - - - - -	232
„ 12. ALEXANDER WILSON - - - - -	257
„ 13. JOHN BASKERVILLE - - - - -	268
„ 14. THOMAS COTTRELL - - - - -	288
„ 15. JOSEPH AND EDMUND FRY - - - - -	298
„ 16. JOSEPH JACKSON - - - - -	315
„ 17. WILLIAM MARTIN - - - - -	330
„ 18. VINCENT FIGGINS - - - - -	335
„ 19. THE MINOR FOUNDERS OF THE 18TH CENTURY - - - -	345
„ 20. WILLIAM MILLER - - - - -	355
„ 21. THE MINOR FOUNDERS FROM 1800 TO 1830 - - - -	357

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
1.—Types cast from leaden matrices, <i>circ.</i> 1500 ... ..	16
2.—Specimen illustrating the variations in the face of type, produced by bad casting ...	18
3.—Type mould of Claude Garamond. Paris, 1540. From Duverger ...	23
4.—Profile tracings from M. Claudin's 15th century types ... ..	21
5.—A 15th century type. From M. Madden's <i>Lettres d'un Bibliographe</i> ...	24
6.—A 15th century type. From <i>Liber de Laudibus... Mariae, circ.</i> 1468 ... ..	24
7.—Roman letter. From the <i>Sophologium</i> , Wiedenbach? 1465-70? ... ..	42
8.—Roman and Black letter intermixed. From Traheron's <i>Exposition of St. John</i> , 1552 ..	45
9.—Robijn Italic, cut by Chr. van Dijk. From the original matrices ... ..	52
10.—Gothic Type or Lettre de Forme, <i>circ.</i> 1480. From the original matrices ... ..	53
11.—Philosophie Flamand engraved by Fleischman, 1743. From the original matrices ...	54
12.—Lettre de Civilité, cut by Ameet Tavernier for Plantin, <i>circ.</i> 1570. From the original matrices	56
13.—Blooming Initials. Oxford, <i>circ.</i> 1700 ... ..	80
14.—Pierced Initial. Oxford, <i>ante</i> 1700 ... ..	81
15.—Caxton's Advertisement, in his Type 3 ... ..	face
16.—Caxton's Type 4.* From the <i>Golden Legend</i> ... ..	face
17.—Black letter, supposed to be De Worde's. From Palmer's <i>History of Printing</i> ... ..	90
18.—Pynson's Roman letter. From the <i>Oratio in Pace Nuperrimâ</i> , 1518 ... ..	92
18a.—Berthelet's Black letter and Secretary type. From the <i>Boke named the Governour</i> , 1531 ...	95
19.—Portrait of John Day, 1562. From Peter Martir's <i>Commentaries</i> , 1568 ... ..	99
20, 21, 22.—Day's Saxon, Roman, and Italic. From the <i>Ælfredi Res Gesta</i> , 1574 ... ..	face 96
23.—Letter Founding in Frankfort in 1568. From Jost Amman's <i>Stände und Handwerker</i> ...	104
24.—Letter Founding and Printing <i>circ.</i> 1548. From the Harleian MSS. ... ..	105
25.—Letter Founding in 1683. From Moxon's <i>Mechanick Exercises</i> ... ..	109
26.—Letter Founding in France in 1718. From Thiboust's <i>Typographia Excellentia</i> ... ..	115
27.—Colophon of the <i>Lyndewode</i> , Oxford, <i>n.d.</i> Showing types [c], [d], [e], [f] ... ..	face 138
28.—Greek fount of the Eton <i>Chrysostom</i> , 1613 ... ..	face
29.—Greeks, Roman and Italic. From the <i>Catena on Job</i> , 1637 ... ..	face } 140
30.—The Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford. From an old wood-block ... ..	153
31.—The Clarendon Press, Oxford. From an old wood-block ... ..	156
32.—Pica Roman and Italic, presented to Oxford by Dr. Fell, 1667 ... ..	}
33.—Pica Roman and Italic, bought by Oxford University in 1692 ... ..	} 152
34, 35, 36, 37, 38.—Hebrew, large and small, Coptic, Arabic, and Syriac, presented to Oxford by Dr. Fell, 1667. From the original matrices ... ..	147
39.—Ethiopic, bought by Oxford University in 1692. From the original matrices ... ..	154
40.—Ethiopic of Walton's <i>Polyglot</i> , 1657. From the original matrices ... ..	}
41.—Syriac of Walton's <i>Polyglot</i> , 1657. From the original matrices ... ..	} 174
42.—Samaritan of Walton's <i>Polyglot</i> , 1657. From the original matrices ... ..	}
43.—Specimen of Nicholas Nicholls, 1665. From the original ... ..	face 178



44.—Portrait of Joseph Moxon. From the <i>Tutor to Astronomy and Geography</i> , 4th ed., 1686, <i>face</i>	180
45.—Moxon's Irish type, 1680. From the original matrices ... ..	189
46.—Dutch Initial Letters. From the original matrices ... ..	80
47.—Nonpareil Rabbinical Hebrew in Andrews' Foundry. From the original matrices ...	194
48.—Saxon, cut by R. Andrews for Miss Elstob's <i>Grammar</i> , 1715. From the original matrices ...	196
49.—Old Dutch Blacks in R. Andrews' Foundry. From the original matrices ... ..	194
50.—Alexandrian Greek in Grover's Foundry, From the Catalogue of James' Sale, 1782 ...	200
51.—Scriptorial in Grover's Foundry. From the original matrices ... ..	} 204
52.—Court Hand in Grover's Foundry. From the original matrices ... ..	
53.—Union Pearl in Grover's Foundry. From the original matrices ... ..	
54.—Walpergen's Music type. Oxford, <i>circ.</i> 1675. From the original matrices ... ..	208
55.—Pictorial pierced Initial. From an 18th century newspaper ... ..	81
56.—Title-page of the Catalogue and Specimen of James' Foundry, 1782. From the original ...	226
57.—Portrait of William Caslon. From Hansard ... ..	<i>face</i> 232
58.—View of the Interior of Caslon's Foundry in 1750. From the <i>Universal Magazine</i>	<i>Frontispiece</i>
59.—Pica Roman and Italic, cut by Caslon, 1720. From the original matrices ... ..	236
60.—Black letter, cut by Caslon. From the original matrices ... ..	239
61.—Arabic, cut by Caslon, 1720. From the original matrices ... ..	235
62.—Coptic, cut by Caslon, <i>ante</i> 1731. From the original matrices ... ..	236
63.—Armenian, cut by Caslon, <i>ante</i> 1736. From the original matrices ... ..	239
64.—Etruscan, cut by Caslon, 1738. From the original matrices ... ..	240
65.—Gothic, cut by Caslon, <i>ante</i> 1734. From the original matrices ... ..	239
66.—Ethiopic, cut by Caslon. From the original matrices ... ..	240
67.—Syriac, cut by Caslon II, <i>circ.</i> 1768. From the original matrices ... ..	246
68.—Portrait of Alexander Wilson. From Hansard. ... ..	<i>face</i> 258
69.—Greek, cut by Alex. Wilson, <i>ante</i> 1768. From the <i>Glasgow Homer</i> , 1768 ... ..	262
70.—Portrait of John Baskerville. From Hansard ... ..	<i>face</i> 268
71.—Greek, cut by Baskerville for Oxford. From the <i>Oxford Specimen</i> , 1768-70 ... ..	<i>face</i> 274
72.—Roman and Italic, cut by Baskerville, 1758. From the <i>Milton</i> , Birmingham, 1758	<i>face</i> 276
73.—Engrossing, cut by Cottrell, <i>circ.</i> 1768. From the original matrices ... ..	289
73a.—Silhouette Portraits of Joseph and Edmund Fry. From the originals ... ..	<i>face</i> 298
74.—Alexandrian Greek (formerly Grover's), rejustified by Dr. Fry. From the original matrices...	304
74a.—Hebrew, cut by Dr. Fry, <i>circ.</i> 1785. From the original matrices ... ..	304
75.—Portrait of Joseph Jackson. From Nichols' <i>Literary Anecdotes</i> ... ..	<i>face</i> 316
76.—Portrait of William Caslon III. From Hansard ... ..	<i>face</i> 326
77.—Two-line English Roman, cut by Vincent Figgins, 1792. From the original matrices ...	337
78.—Samaritan, cut by Dummers for Caslon, <i>circ.</i> 1734. From the original matrices...	345

