



THE
Printer's Grammar.

CHAP. I.
*Of ROMAN, ITALIC, and BLACK
 Printing Letter.*

Conformable to the General method which is observed in Grammars, we begin *this* also with the Principles thereof, viz. LETTERS; with this difference, that instead of applying their signification, as in others, to the art of speaking and writing some particular language, we shall consider them as the chief Printing-Materials; and in the course of this Chapter treat of their Contexture, Superficial shape, and such Properties as come under the cognizance of Printers,

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Bookfellers, and others who have a judgment of Printing. Accordingly we shall not confine ourselves to the bare letters of different Alphabets, but shew what other Sorts are comprehended in a Fount of letter, cast either for Sacred, Antient, or Modern languages: of which those of the last class being the most prevailing, we shall, in consequence, give the preference to the characters which are appropriated not only for our own, but other European speeches.

The Types, or Letters, then, which are made use of for printing of Books, Effays, &c. here in England, are called either ROMAN, ITALIC, or BLACK.

S E C T. I.

Of ROMAN Printing Letter.

ROMAN, is at present the general, and almost only Letter which is used for printing; and has long since been the national character not only of Great Britain and Ireland, but also of Portugal, Spain, France, and Italy; whereas in Germany, and in the kingdoms which lie round the Baltic, they print with letters which owe their formation to the Gothic characters: nevertheless none of these nations would scruple to change Types, and, with the Dutch, Polanders, and Hungarians, to print whole works in their own language, with Roman letter: and that the Germans themselves, as well as those who patronize their characters, have not yet intirely quitted them, and made Roman letter more universal, is chiefly owing to their apprehen-

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prehensions of sharing the fate of the primitive Printers, who, in attempting to introduce Roman characters, suffered greatly, from the dislike which the Learned then shewed to the works which had been done in that letter ; whereby the former were obliged to return to printing in Gothic character, to which men of literature were then accustom'd, and which resembled the writing of Monks ; for whom it was not difficult to persuade people to disapprove of any thing which had the least shew of bearing against monastic interest.

The same reason may be given, why the Dutch have not turned the Black letter out of their Printing-houses, but still make use of it, especially in books of devotion, and religious treatises designed for general use ; whereas curious and learned subjects are frequently printed in Roman. The Germans, indeed, have more than once made essays to print prayer-books in Roman letter, to try how they would be received by the public : but it has been observed, that this method of bringing people into the Printers scheme would not take ; and that the small impressions of these books came into the hands of such only as were either curious, or as would be thought to be learned, when they should be seen reading in a book printed in characters which the vulgar people in Germany persuade themselves to be appropriated to no other than the Latin language. However, what has frustrated the design of the German Printers, has not intimidated those in Sweden, where, by the authority of the proper supporters of so noble a plan, they have of late made considerable steps towards

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abolishing German types, by printing the New Testament, the Pfalter, and other school-books, in Roman letter; by which, 'tis hoped, printing, in *that* quarter, will put on a better face; and their hitherto established printing letters become obsolete, and antiquated.

The appellation itself which the subject-character bears is sufficient for us to conclude, that it owes its being to the ancient Romans, tho' the face of the present, and the shape of the original Roman letters are greatly changed, by the improvements which they have received from time to time, according to the laws and rules laid down by eminent penmen. The Germans, and their confederates, differ with us here, in calling all those sizes of letter *ANTIQUE*, which we, as well as the French, and other printing nations, comprehend under the name of *ROMAN*; which, were it matter of any importance, would deserve our inquiry, to see whether it is done to deprive the ancient Romans from an acknowledgement due to their memory, for the invention of their letters; or whether it is to serve for an open confession that they have not yet been at the pains to bring their Antiqua to the same perfection as their neighbours have done the Roman.

That *good* Roman makes the best figure in a Specimen of letters, may be said without reservation, especially as I would be understood not to pronounce all Letter good which is new; but only such as has the necessary accomplishments as well in its appearance, as substance. The first of the good qualities, therefore, of Letter, consists in
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its being of a *true*, or rather *good* shape; since it is impossible to maintain the first, without involving ourselves in controversies which cannot be decided till such rules are established as may be a standard for the exact uniformity of each letter in particular. We shall therefore not presume to make our observations upon this head; but conclude, with the ingenious Mr. MOXON, "That the Roman letters were originally invented and contrived to be made and consist of Circles, Arches of circles, and straight Lines; and that therefore those letters that have these figures, either entire, or else properly mixt, so as the course and progress of the pen may best admit, may deserve the name of true shape." The before-mentioned mathematical figures, therefore, being observed, and properly applied, by the Letter-cutter, will produce Roman characters, of such harmony, grace, and symmetry, as will delight and ease the eye, in reading; by having their Fats and Leans drove into one another with such sweetness as amazes a close examiner into the proportion which the smallest letters bear to those of larger sizes: but to say, with certainty, what foundry-house can boast of *true-shaped* letters, would be speaking with too much forwardness; since it is agreed, even by able pen-men, that none can strike two letters of the same signification so as, upon the strictest examination, to have the same likeness. If therefore it is impracticable to write a *true* duplicate upon *paper*, it may be excused in those who attempt it in *steel*: for, were it possible to copy so as to make it impossible to discover the

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the least deviation from the original, letter-cutters too, would then be able to give accented letters, and such as are contained in ligatures, the same exact shape and symmetry with those of the mean alphabet, tho' even *these* should have nothing but the fancy of the artist in support of their being *true*-shaped. We will therefore not engage in the controversy about *true* shape in letters, but rather chuse to be silent upon that head; and yet not to say, that the Dutch have exerted themselves more than their neighbours, in casting good Letter, would be stifling a truth which does not want for vouchers: for tho' the authorities about the invention of Metal Types run in favour of the Germans; the meliorating and improving them cannot be more justly claimed by any than by the Dutch, who have long since distinguished themselves by neat Press-work—And as this has been ascribed to the goodness of their Letter, a tradition is still foster'd by some who have no conceptions of Printing, 'That the Dutch print with 'silver types.' But a good and neat Pressman can best inform them, that it is not Dutch letter on which good Press-work depends; nor that all Dutch letter is of equal goodness and beauty. It may also be observed, that it is owing to the genius of more than one Master that the preference has been given to Dutch letter, and that the same has been exemplary; as may be said of *Van Dijke's* letters; from which Mr. Moxon made his draught of true-shaped letters. After *Van Dijke*, *Voskin*, and *Dommer*, have been considered as two Worthies, for their abilities in their profession. Not-

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withstanding this, it cannot be said that the merit of Dutch letter shews itself in being true-shaped, else the large capital letters, in particular, would not bear such a disproportion to each other, and discover so little of that beauty which the proper Placing of Fats and Leans otherwise afford. In this I refer to the large capitals of Dutch English, and Small Pica Roman, which still are found in Printing-houses in London. We will therefore suppose that the Dutch take more than common care in finishing their Punches, and removing all such irregularities as may obstruct their making a smooth and even impression when they are sunk into Matrices, first well prepared for the purpose: and as their Letter is generally cast of good metal, and to stand true, and exact in line, besides well dressed; no wonder that it has recommended itself into the most considerable Printing-houses in this city, and, probably, would have been received in several others, had it not been obliged to make a halt in its further progress, when the ingenious Mr. W. CASLON at once destroyed the interest which the Dutch letter-founders have had in England; and which, 'tis hoped, they will not recover, unless it appears that the Founders here should design to promote their own interest by detrimmenting that of Printers.

What has been said about *true* shape in letters, relates chiefly to Roman; but, in our further observations upon the Properties of good Letter, we shall comprehend all other full types as are cast *here*. Accordingly, the goodness of Printing-letter being not confined to true shape alone, consists

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sifts also in having a *deep* face; which depends, first, upon the Punches being cut to a reasonable depth, and their Hollows deepened in proportion to the width of the respective letters; and, secondly, upon the Punches being sunk *deep* into Matrices: for if either of these two requisites is neglected, the Letter, in course, will have a shallow face, and prove unprofitable to the purchaser; as it is in France, where Printers have very great reason to complain of the shallowness of Letter cast by their founders. Mr. FERTEL, Printer at St. Omer, in particular, exclaims against this imposition in the following manner: “ We need not “ wonder (says he) that our Press-work does not “ look better; for if the paper is apt to sink, or “ otherwise deceives the person that wets it; and “ the ink happens not to be very clean, the eye of “ the Letter is presently filled up—The Pressman “ then, with his Bodkin, turns Graver; but with “ such an unsteady hand, and with so little precaution, that he more hurts than clears the Letter. “ Had our characters the same depth as those “ abroad, French Press-work would undoubtedly “ make a better figure also: but we have had new “ Founts wherethe relief part of some Sorts (consider’d from the centre of their hollows) did not “ answer to above the thickness of ordinary paper “ for printing—which is a shame!” And though this, at present, is not the case in England, it may nevertheless be observed, that some of our Roman lower-case sorts are not equally fortified to endure the weight of the Press, especially in Founts of the lesser sizes, where the a, e, s, w, are worn out before

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before the other sorts are injured; which few sorts, were they cast again, and the worn ones thrown out, would render a fount serviceable for a great deal of good work more.

The next of the principal qualities of good Letter, is, that it be cast of good metal, fit to wear well at least so long as till it has paid for itself, besides good interest for its long credit; thereby to ease the charges of such sorts of Letter as never make a return neither of the principal nor interest. This is another great hardship upon the Printers in Paris, who are served with very bad metal by their founders; which, and the short wear they have of their Letter on account of its shallowness, makes the more substantial Printers lay out their money in Francfort, from whence they are served with a better commodity. Notwithstanding which, the founders in Paris keep to their wonted metal, and alledge, that it is of the same composition with that which is used at the King's founding-house; which serves not any other but his Majesty's Printing-house at the Louvre, with fustil materials. It would therefore be inconsistent with the interest of the founder to cast Letter for lasting; since Letter, at the said Printing-house in Paris, is deemed old, and worn, when it has lost its brightness; which, tho' it delights the eyes of some, does not please the Printer, who rather chuses to see new Letter have a gloomy cast, judging from thence that its metal will prove to be good.

The Composition of metal for Letter being various, and depending upon the discretion of the founder, must needs have different effects upon

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Letter, and render it either more or less serviceable. Mr. Moxon has been so generous as to particularize the species and the quantities which *he* used to make Metal of; and accordingly 28 *lb.* of Metal required 25 *lb.* melted lead, mixt with 3 *lb.* of iron and antimony melted together. But in Germany they use more than three ingredients to their Metal; which is there made of steel, iron, copper, brass, tin, and lead: all which they incorporate with each other by means of antimony. This Metal, if duly prepared, does not bend, but breaks like glass: it is harder than tin and lead; something softer than copper, and melts sooner than lead. This account I have of Mr. STRUKE, a Printer at Lubec, who did cast, for his own use, not only large-siz'd letters for titles, but also a sufficient quantity of two-lined English, after a peculiar manner, by cutting his Punches on wood, and sinking them afterwards into leaden Matrices; yet were the letters cast in them deeper than the French generally are. How they prepare Letter-metal in Holland, I have not learn'd; but from a certain instance (the narration whereof would require a long digression) I am perswaded that they differ both from the English and the Germans.

Besides the three principal Properties which we have mentioned, the following (like Satellites to *good* Letter) are not undeserving the purchaser's examination; who ought to take notice,

1. Whether the Letter stands even, and in Line: which is the chief good quality in Letter, and makes the face thereof sometimes to pass, tho' otherwise ill-shaped.

2. Whe-