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TYPOGRAPHY IN HOLLAND

by

J. VAN KRIMPEN

In principle there is little difference between the revival of typography in Holland and in most other Western European countries. There are of course considerable divergences as regards the material used, the books printed, and many other details; but the motives, the manner of working, and the final results (considered as the contribution of a definite ethnographical unit) have much in common with those to be observed abroad.

In Holland, as elsewhere, a time of barrenness and dullness preceded the effort towards a renaissance. Even the undeniable technical perfection of the work produced by the best printers failed to give a tolerable result. The beginnings of the reaction against this state of affairs were made by men who attempted to do by theory and enthusiasm what can only be achieved by technical knowledge. The first product of the new art of book printing in Holland is generally considered to be a large edition of the *Gijsbrecht van Amstel* by Vondel, issued in 1893 and designed by Professor A. J. Derkinderen. William Morris had influenced the production of books in Holland, but the *Gijsbrecht van Amstel* has no new significance as a product of typography. William Morris's influence at that period did no more than affect theories about the general appearance of the book. And it is precisely his theories and the form of his work which have lost their importance. The history of the output of the following fifteen or twenty years has little relation to a survey of modern Dutch typography: the books which can be mentioned as belonging to that period are usually bad from the point of view of typography although they frequently have ingenious and attractive decorations. The "fine book" had become the prey of the decorative artist—whereas the

book is really a book only when it has shaken itself free from the influence of the decorative artist.

As it is usually told, the history of typography in Holland indicates the years 1910 or 1912 as marking the introduction of something new, thereby committing the grave injustice of neglecting altogether an important factor which was, as early as 1893, existing quite independently of the books produced by arts and crafts enthusiasts, and which continued to exist afterwards. I mean the work of Dr Charles Enschedé.

It is true that Dr Enschedé was above all a type-founder and not a printer; it is certainly true that as a printer of books he had no great significance—but this is no excuse for passing him over with a mere cursory reference when estimating the influences which have made history in Dutch typography.

Dr Enschedé's work is probably better known in England, the United States, and Germany than in Holland. His claim to distinction lies in the fact that, with infinite patience, he classified the old letters, the product of five successive centuries, which were the property of his firm, Joh. Enschedé en Zonen. He found them about 1880, in a state of almost complete confusion. The foundation of this heterogeneous mass, that was under Dr Ch. Enschedé's hands to become a historic collection, had been laid by the second Enschedé who practised the typographic art, Johannes Enschedé the First. This early connoisseur of book printing and type faces, and amateur of their history and later development, secured all the material which came into the market as the result of the sales of various foundries. Several of his descendants followed in his footsteps. In 1808 during a period which was as difficult for founders as for other people, the style of Didot, Bodoni, and others, had for the time being the monopoly of favour, and a great many historic punches and matrices were, in consequence, destroyed. But in the course of the nineteenth century, and even as late as the twentieth, the collection was still further extended.

Dr Charles Enschedé, then, worked for several decades at making an inventory of this old material. He also devoted his efforts to the utilisation of some, at least, of the hundreds of founts of type which composed the

collection. On March 9th, 1893, he published *De Lettergieterij van Joh. Enschedé en Zonen. Gedenkschrift ter gelegenheid van haar honderdvijftig-jarig bestaan op 9 Maart* 1893, which contained a large part of his work and celebrated, as the title indicates, the 150th anniversary of the foundry belonging to his firm. Fifteen years later, in 1908, he published a full summary of his work under the title *Fonderies de Caractères et leur matériel dans les Pays-Bas du XV^e au XIX siècle. Notice historique principalement d'après les données de la collection typographique de Joh. Enschedé en Zonen à Haarlem.*

Probably no one appreciates the extent of Enschedé's pains. The extreme care he took is a daily revelation to one who has the privilege of dealing with the material he left behind him. Since the publication of his book and especially since his death in 1919 the significance of his work has become clearer every day, yet a number of years must elapse before all the possibilities created by his classification can be made clear. To me there appears no doubt that Dr Enschedé was actuated by the same motives as his contemporaries: an abhorrence of the characterless productions of the nineteenth century, and a desire to substitute better things in their place.

It seems remarkable that, although his circumstances would have made it quite easy for him to become the rallying point of the whole new movement, he was content to play such a modest part and to establish so few contacts with those who were pursuing exactly similar aims. I think that the explanation can be found in two of his principal theses.

The first, which made him a pioneer far ahead of his own time, was that while a letter may be as beautiful as one wishes to make it, it must always remain a letter and not an ornament or a sign which can be changed and embellished according to whim. Similarly, he considered that a book was a thing which was meant to be read, not an accumulation of agreeable decorative motives. The faithful adepts of the arts and crafts who lived in the sphere of William Morris's theories considered such conceptions too austere. The production of books based on these doctrines would have presented no scope for their decorative impulse. Inversely, Dr Enschedé felt little inclined to associate with people who missed, in his eyes, the very essence of his craft and who only played with the outer appearance of the product. Nevertheless,

if he had wished it, his knowledge, and the persuasive power which resulted from it, would easily have enabled him to recruit followers from the world of arts and crafts.

It seems to me that his other thesis (which frankly I consider to be mistaken) equally prevented him from establishing such contacts. This thesis is carefully formulated in the introduction to his *Fonderies de Caractères*, where he says:

Typography is a craft, an industry, but also up to a point an art. It is affirmed, and surely not without reason, that a nation develops printing in proportion to its artistic sense. Now it is a remarkable fact that the Netherlands, where, during the past centuries, the artistic sense has been so lively, have never possessed their own typographic style. One only meets a national character in the so-called "nederduytsch" types (Dutch black letter), and in script-founts (Flemish civilité types). But for the Roman and Italic letters it seems that we have always borrowed elsewhere. The greatest type-cutters, with the sole exception of the Voskens[1], were foreigners who settled in the Netherlands but who cut their types after models which had been introduced from the other side of the frontier. There has never existed an essentially Netherlandish character for the printing of books and it is probable that the wish to create such a national character will always remain a pious hope.

It is not my intention either to discuss or to analyse this view: let me only assert that it is erroneous and that as it can be maintained neither about the past nor about the present, and one has no ground for basing upon it a theory about the future. I have mentioned Dr Enschedé's views so fully in order to show how, in all probability, Dr Enschedé was prevented from dividing his appreciation between the old typography and the new.

It is easy to explain why the possibilities which he created are only now beginning to come into their own. When he was alive the only inspiring models for new typographers were the incunabula. In most countries it was

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[1] Mr A. A. M. Stols lately discovered that Dr Enschedé is mistaken in saying that Christoffel van Dijck, the most important Dutch punch-cutter, was a German. Mr Stols states that Van Dijck was born, as a son of a Dutch protestant minister, at Maastricht or thereabouts.

not until recent years that the idea of other potentialities has taken root, and that people have come to realise that the art of book printing really dates only from 1500; and as, for the time being, good new founts which are not exclusively based on the early Venetians and Florentines are extremely rare, it is natural that the seventeenth and eighteenth century material of the Enschedé collection has great importance in relation to the printing of books in accordance with contemporary ideas.

After this passing glance at the somewhat solitary figure of Dr Charles Enschedé, I pass to a number of other notable men in the printing world of Holland, whose work, notwithstanding numerous and sometimes very significant divergences, displays unmistakable coherence. The earliest among them, though decidedly under English influence, established a more or less purely Dutch school or tendency. Their successors started by following them very closely until, either by the maturing of their views or as the result of new influences and contacts, they developed into a more independent movement which vitally affected three departments of modern typography.

This survey is divided into three parts: (*a*) type design, (*b*) printing of books in limited editions, (*c*) some commercial editions.

The first modern Dutch types are those of Mr S. H. de Roos. They are the "Dutch Mediaeval" (cut about 1912); the "Zilver" type, designed about 1915 for "De Zilverdistel," the private press of Dr J. F. van Royen and Dr P. N. van Eyck; the "Erasmus Mediaeval" (*ca.* 1922); the "Grotius" (*ca.* 1925) which is more or less a bold Erasmus; and the "Meidoorn type," designed about 1927 for his newly established private press "De Heuvelpers."

I am obliged to confess that my appreciation for the types of Mr de Roos has not increased with time. I do not mean to say that, having myself experienced all that is implied in the designing of a letter, I do not admire his conscientious, patient, and minute labour. But for the types themselves, I have become less enthusiastic as time has gone on. More and more, it seems to me, they have something too much: they have become drawings, and their details have been so minutely worked out that to my mind they no longer seem to be types which will satisfy the book-printer. They certainly do not

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
Hollandsche Mediaeval, 16 point, for the Amsterdam Type Foundry

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
Hollandsche Med. italic, 16 pt, for the same

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
Erasmus Mediaeval, 16 pt, for the same

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
Erasmus italic, 16 pt, for the same

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
Grotius, 16 pt, for the same

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
Ella italic, 16 pt, for the same

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
Zilver, 15 pt, for the Zilverdistel

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
Meidoorn, 14 pt, for De Heuvelpers

TYPES DESIGNED BY MR S. H. DE ROOS

lack personality, but theirs is a personality which seems to have been superimposed upon their essence. Their curves would have been better less rounded, their endless undulations charm one at first, but after a time become tiresome. Two types which have been cut for commercial use show very clearly that there has been retrogression. In 1912 industrial art decorated everything, and naturally types also; the Dutch Mediaeval was adorned, but in a uniform way which, therefore, is not unrestful. In the Erasmus Mediaeval the basic shape has been considerably improved, but the system of ornamentation has been developed to such a degree that the entire series, with the exception of the two or three smallest bodies, have become rather tiresome.

In these two faces Mr de Roos was obliged to work on the "lining system." In his design for the Zilverdistel, where he was not restricted in this way, he achieved a much more attractive effect. The Zilver type, based on Jenson's letter, is undoubtedly one of its best modern interpretations. If the detail had been simpler, the Zilver type would be in many respects a perfect letter, though it misses the guilelessness and also the tenseness displayed, for instance, by Bruce Rogers's Centaur type.

I do not know if Mr de Roos was entirely free to follow his own inclination in producing his Meidoorn type, but here again there is a lack of simplicity—there is even a tendency to deviate from the pure roman type. This face strikes me as indicating at one and the same time a great admiration for the work of Mr St John Hornby, and of certain German experiments, leaving me with the impression that the fount was perhaps somewhat hastily conceived.

I do not believe that it is possible to sit down and design a type to order, as is attempted in Germany. The type which originates in such a manner may be tolerable in advertisements, but it cannot satisfy the requirements which experience demands for book printing. A satisfactory book type must be present in the mind and at the finger tips of the designer before he sits down to draw. Such a type does not require any added "personality"—either it is essentially personal or it is not. A printing type continues to be an infinitely stylised script letter; but the pen must only serve as an aid to the designer, who must never allow it to dominate his shaping. Paper or

parchment and a nib are very different things from the steel punch and the instruments of the engraver. The movement of the pen should be apparent in the form taken by the metal type, but it must have been stylised to such an extent that it is there only as an underlying force.

These are the considerations which have guided me when I have had occasion to design a fount. I have neither sought for non-existing shapes, nor tried to make my design obviously different from the character proved and tried by the tradition and use of centuries. Thus, in the Lutetia (except in a number of additions to the italic) I have avoided all ornamentation or embellishment, and drawn the details as simply as possible. I may perhaps suitably put down here an expression of my gratitude to the type foundry which cut the Lutetia, placed it upon the market, and that without producing it in accordance with the bad "lining" system used so much in Germany and elsewhere.

Apart from the roman and italic types so far mentioned, a few other letters have been created in Holland. There is a Javanese type, designed by Mr de Roos; I do not feel competent to judge its value. There is also an italic by the same designer intended for use in advertising, which is too much outside the scope of this article to require discussion. Both letters have been placed upon the market by the "Amsterdam" type foundry. There is also a Houtsneeletter (woodcut letter), the punches of which were cut by Mr André van der Vossen. This letter was especially designed for use in inscriptions or in texts accompanying the Dutch woodcuts of our own time, which are generally rather heavy in tone, but this fount has little interest for the book-printing trade. Finally there is the Greek "Antigone," designed by myself. Its value, or lack of it, will be proved by a pocket edition of Homer which is to appear in 1930. This Greek fount is arranged in such a way that it can be used in conjunction and also mixed with the Lutetia face. The "Houtsneeletter" and the Antigone are both products of the Enschedé type foundry.

The number of twentieth century founts of any significance is not large; but this appears to me a matter for rejoicing rather than for regret. It is not

that slowness in production is necessarily a guarantee of reflection, but it is a fact, proved by the record of Germany, that facility in putting on the market type cast from practically every new design executed, is not conducive to restful and well-considered work. Such a situation is more harmful than that which exists in Holland.

Another letter which is exclusively used in Holland, though it did not originate there, must be mentioned, for the sake of completeness. It was cut on the instructions of Dr J. F. van Royen for the Zilverdistel; the design, based upon the writing of Carolingian manuscripts, is by Mr Lucien Pissarro; the punches were cut by Mr E. P. Prince. Dr van Royen wrote some lyrical passages about this letter in a little book published by the Zilverdistel in 1916 (*Over Boekkunst en de Zilverdistel*, by J. F. van Royen and P. N. van Eyck), but even so I cannot reconcile myself to it. The opinion of Mr Ricketts, who considers that a healthy development of writing involves a return to the letter shapes of the days of Charlemagne, and the books, admirable in many respects, which Dr van Royen has printed in this letter equally fail to convince me. This type seems to me nothing but an unhappy experiment only to be understood when it is realised that the design was commissioned about 1914, the date of the high-water mark of the decorative, the "Bibelot" book.

Twenty or so years ago the careful printing of books in limited editions apparently required explanation and justification. This was less the case when the practice was started than it became some years later. In England, certain principles were formulated by Morris and, later, by Cobden Sanderson, who wrote a good defence of the system. "Such reproduction," he wrote, "is not a substitute for the more monumental production of books, and such a production, expressive of man's admiration, is a legitimate ambition of the Printing Press and of some Presses the imperative duty." When the movement reached Holland it made no profession of principles. The Zilverdistel was inaugurated about 1910. It was created to combat the ugliness which the poets Bloem, van Eyck, and Greshoff detected in the books of the time—though the four books, editions of modern poetry, which they published together have, from the point of view of typography, scarcely any value

except as a protest. It was only when, in 1913, Messrs Bloem and Greshoff retired and Dr van Royen took their place that the books of the Zilverdistel acquired a character akin to that of the English and German limited and private editions; a few years later theory and justification duly made their appearance in the shape of the booklet *Over Boekkunst en de Zilverdistel*, which has already been mentioned[1]. This manifesto is remarkable. It is characteristic both of the time of its appearance and of the ideas of the Zilverdistel's typographer and printer, who was then undoubtedly the foremost and the best Dutch "book-artist." A few extracts from it, therefore, will not be superfluous. In the first place there is the opening:

De Zilverdistel intends to offer book art. In this art The Book has a unity which it attains only inside this art, and without this unity it would not be a work of art. It is a unity of spirit and of matter, determined by the laws which can be deduced from the concept "book," and by the character of its written content. The Book, fruit of artistic labour, by this coincidence of spirit and matter becomes a new creation, a new personality, which, by the perfection of its body, reveals the more completely the perfection of its content. As such The Book must in the first place find for the constituent demands of the genus a realisation which aims at technical and aesthetic perfection. In the second place it must, as species of its genus, be personally determined. This personal definition can result only from understanding, gained by carefully applied sympathy and imagination, of the essential significance of the written content, the transmission of which is the purpose of the book. We can rejoice in the goodness and beauty of a particular book only when, on the one hand, the technical and aesthetic requisites of The Book are present and, on the other, the personality of the species, which is determined by the content, is harmoniously embodied.

A further extract:

The right to existence of the beautiful book resides in something other than its utility. It is a work of art, and as such it is an end in itself without reference to outside utility.

[1] Although it is signed J. F. van Royen and P. N. van Eyck, I believe I can safely say that, apart from a brief chapter on the choice of books, it was written almost entirely by the first of these two authors.

Later on the authors say of certain poems by Verlaine and Novalis in the Zilverdistel editions of these poets' works:

Undoubtedly, the sensitive reader will find in our books poems which, had they been music, would have borne the direction "adagio." In our editions, we have indicated by appropriate setting the solemnity of their nature.

A final extract:

To penetrate and elucidate all relations, to give utterance to the love of mankind: that is the veritable wealth of book art. That is why, even in this time of appalling contrasts (i.e. the war), we have the joyful certainty that the beautiful book will, in a more restricted sphere, preserve its exalted significance as a vehicle of enlightenment and happiness.

The motto of the book is taken from Spinoza: "Sub specie aeternitatis."

To formulate one's task thus, to fill it with prideful aestheticism, and to turn into an unworldly mysticism the craft of those who, when all is said and done, are but printers of books—all this means placing oneself entirely outside the sphere in which typographical work can be judged as such. The man who is guided by such principles and such considerations when he makes books seems to me to make books only by accident. Some one of the liberal arts—poetry or painting—would have been his more natural means of expression. But his intentions are so extremely "literary" that, perhaps, he could best express what appears to him as the most essential elements of the poet's work in an essay instead of printing the books. Theories such as this are the hallmark of low productivity, if they do not, in the long run, actually lead to sterility. Finally, books produced under the influence of such doctrines are precisely those which, whenever the text deserves to be read, create the most urgent need for an ordinary edition by the side of the limited edition. There is reason enough for the opinion that too many books are printed in our day, but it is an undeniable fact that methods such as those of Dr van Royen would create a real scarcity. Their general application, however, is inconceivable; and practice, which is often called harsh, is kind enough to give birth to many books which are good as well as beautiful although they do not fit in with the philosophy of the printer of the Zilverdistel. During the last five or six years Dr van Royen, neither by origin nor by profession

a printer, but a high official in the Dutch postal service, has continued this uncommercial enterprise alone under the name of the Kunera Press.

Such is the story of the oldest, and for long the only, Dutch private press which worked exclusively on the English model. Its output, especially in its later years since it has been not only directed but almost exclusively worked by Dr van Royen himself, is interesting from more points of view than one might suspect from a perusal of its manifesto. I am neither retracting nor softening down any of my previous remarks about the paralysing effects of such principles when I say that the work and methods of the printer of the Kunera Press deserve unreserved admiration and respect from all who are sensitive to the beauty and significance of work that aims at the highest achievable object and is performed in a completely disinterested spirit. Such indeed are the characteristics of Dr van Royen's work. Never has he remained satisfied with a result upon which he thought he might still further improve. Never has he rested until he has achieved what came nearest to perfection, in so far as it lay within his power. Nor has he ever paused to consider how much exertion or how much time his efforts required, or whether he was likely to reap material profit from his enterprise.

After the dilettante, though attractive youth of the Zilverdistel, some five or six not very voluminous books were printed by Joh. Enschedé en Zonen under the direction of Dr van Royen in the roman type, which, according to tradition, comes from Peter Schoeffer of Gernsheim. This was fifteen years ago, and in the firm's workshops there is still a vivid recollection of the despair to which one of the best compositors in the world and an excellent hand-press printer were reduced in the course of this work.

One of these books has exceptional charm. It is an edition of the medieval Dutch play in verse, *Lanseloet van Denemerken*. It belongs, I think, to the middle of this period. The beginning has a certain dryness—there is an obvious fear of deviating from the straightest and narrowest way. This is the period when two little books by the Austrian, Leopold Andrian, were produced. The last period, which saw the production of *Romances sans Paroles* by Verlaine and *Gedichte* by Novalis, shows a kind of typographical mysteriousness combined with a great and rather too faithful reverence for

English models (the Doves and Ashendene Presses). The *Lanseloet* has left behind the defects of the first period and is not yet touched by those of the last, and for that reason I consider it the best production of those years.

Those who are familiar with Dr van Royen's views on type-setting and printing will find it difficult to discover, after the longest and most careful consideration, why these works did not satisfy him completely. It is quite understandable that he ceased to take pleasure in Peter Schoeffer's roman letter, and it is natural, therefore, that he decided to have letters cut under his own supervision. But though at this time his administrative functions were growing steadily, perhaps by a species of mysticism, incomprehensible to me, he felt compelled to limit his productive capacities by himself setting the type for his books, and himself printing them on a hand press.

Such was Dr van Royen's decision, and, in the twelve years since he took it, only eight books have appeared. They have been made in the night and during his rare holidays, with endless patience and infinite love. Even if one does not agree with these methods one cannot but be struck by the extreme care which has made his books a wonder of their kind. When the paper and all those other little factors which are sometimes favourable, more often utterly hostile, to the printer, have been auspicious, van Royen's printing has been as good as or even better than any other. In the genre which owes its birth to William Morris Dr van Royen's work undoubtedly occupies a place in the foremost rank. But for me, and for all serious typographers who are younger, though by but ten years, than Dr van Royen, this very praise contains the element which spoils his work from the typographic point of view. I mean that he is a producer of "modern incunabula." Every text which Dr van Royen has printed has, it seems, been forced into that extremely narrow fifteenth century typographical system which received a new lease of life in England about 1900. There is one size of letter, except for a few headings and initials cut in wood—for heaven's sake in wood! Further it has all the other characteristics of the modern incunabula produced in every country. Dr van Royen, and all the printers in England and elsewhere whose views he shares, appear to overlook the fact that for a number of

years now many an "earnest student will work for months in developing a new system of design," and that more than one is successful in finding ideas which suit the best modern printing far better than the best modern incunabula—that, indeed, the printers of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries made books which were more readable, and were typographically better than those of their predecessors in the century when printing was invented.

In recent years, he has given no indication of any approach towards this new development. On the contrary, he appears to be restricting himself still further, for in the last three books he has printed the titles and initials, cut in wood, were also produced by the printer's own hand.

It is not necessary to discuss each of the eight books of his latest period in detail. Among those printed in roman, the Zilver type, the first two, *Over Boekkunst en de Zilverdistel*, which has already been quoted, and *Cheops* by J. H. Leopold, attract me most. They are the simplest and the least sophisticated and therefore probably the best; although the last page of *Over Boekkunst en de Zilverdistel* is not, in my view, a very happy example of the way in which to emphasise a peroration by typographical methods. Among the books which have been printed in the type designed by Mr Pissarro, the Distel type, I can appreciate only one: *Een Boecxken gemaket van Suster Bertken*—poems by a medieval Dutch nun, who shut herself up voluntarily in a convent at Utrecht for more than fifty years. It is not impossible, it is even rather probable, that the undeniable communion of souls between such a poet and such a printer is, partly at least, the reason for the undeniable charm of this little book. The last volume printed with the Distel type contains the *Œuvres de François Villon*. Rubrics in red and blue alternate; sometimes they combine both colours, their design and the complicated mixture of the colours being so elaborate that they would exhaust the patience of any printer using a hand press—except Dr van Royen. I admire this book because of the accomplished craftsmanship of its printer. I am unable to use it for reading, and its artificiality is without decorative attraction for me.

I have written so extensively about Dr van Royen and his work because both deserve more than passing mention. I hope that in spite of my criticism

I have made this quite clear. I am convinced that during the last ten or twelve years the influence of his work upon all careful typography in Holland has been very considerable. This is not due to the nature of Dr van Royen s work, which would have influenced printers with similar inclinations only. Of such I can detect none. Nor is his influence due to the external appearance of his work—other printers have been too much the children of a later generation: unless they were actuated by some interior impulse or by very definite contrary external influences, they could not avoid listening to the ideas of those typographers who have succeeded the printer of modern incunabula. Dr van Royen's real influence rests on the high level he has attained in his work. Any other man who had tried to create the impression in Holland that he was aiming at the production of something better than the work of the average book-printer, but at the same time had not exercised his craft in the most conscientious way, would have failed, for the simple reason that such an attempt would have rung false when compared with the honesty and highmindedness which Dr van Royen has invariably maintained in his work.

The part taken by Mr de Roos in the publication of private editions has not been very extensive. Mr de Roos was first of all attached to the "Amsterdam" type foundry in the capacity of type designer, and was later responsible for the printing department of this firm, aiming to demonstrate a proper use of the foundry's types to those printers who were customers. Mr de Roos became naturally more interested in commercial than in limited and private editions.

In the domain of limited editions, his best known work consists of two publications by the Joan Blaeu Society, a bibliophile society established twelve years ago under the most favourable auspices and which was fairly active for a brief period. About 1920, however, its existence began to be increasingly precarious, and it is to be feared that its output may cease.

The two volumes in question are *Nieuwjaarsdag* by Jac. van Looy, and *Beatrijs* by P. C. Boutens. The first, made in co-operation with Dr van Royen, is a monumental edition of a small tale in prose printed in large

format with a large size of the Hollandsche Mediaeval. It is good and impressive and somewhat in the manner of the Doves Press work. It stands entirely on its own, without predecessors or successors. The other work, *Beatrijs*, a modern version of a medieval poem, is printed in the Gothic of Henric Lettersnider, from the Enschedé collection. A number of inferior woodcuts, not by Mr de Roos, make it impossible to regard the whole as beautiful.

The years have wrought a change in Mr de Roos's views. The Meidoorn type, which has already been mentioned (a specimen appeared in the previous number of the *Fleuron*), was designed and executed for the use of a private press at Hilversum, called the Heuvelpers, which is organised on the lines generally adopted since the days of William Morris.

As I have already said, I do not quite understand why the Meidoorn type became what it is; nor can I appreciate the typographical importance of the first book published by a new press in the year 1928, an edition like his of the *Tractatus Politicus* of Spinoza. But whatever one's objection to his work of the last twenty years, Mr de Roos's sympathies with the printers of modern incunabula, and his repeated professions of admiration for their work, have never prevented him from trying to develop the new typography in a direction full of promise of a healthy and beautiful future. Yet now comes this typography which moves straight towards an old aim, displaying no trace of the discoveries that one would expect as a result of years of labour and research, and which has all the characteristics incidental to modern incunabula. There is the "specially made" paper, the title lines and initials cut in wood, and the limp vellum binding. The hand press is used and, as the announcement says, "if the care exercised is to remain unremitting" the edition must be limited as a rule to no more than 125 copies.

Truly, great care has been bestowed upon this *Tractatus Politicus*; but one cannot help regretting that that care was not applied in an altogether different direction.

A third printer-publisher of limited editions is Mr Charles Nypels of Maastricht. Mr Nypels was a pupil of Mr de Roos, which, apart from his

own inclination, somewhat explains his preference for decorative typography. I am not, I believe, acquainted with the whole of his work, and my attempt to explain it will therefore necessarily be more or less incomplete.

Mr Nypels has not adopted a style and adhered to it throughout his career as a printer, without looking at the developments going on round him. He has worked in all kinds of formats, large and small, with thin and bold letters, with and without woodcuts, having as many as three and four colours in a single book, and sometimes even using gold or silver on title-pages. His daring and his perpetual search for new things form the good and attractive side of his work. He has, however, never considered whether those colours and metals have real significance. A certain untidiness, a lack of care in the execution of his designs, is noticeable in his work. Final and supreme weakness, he seems to be attracted by decorative finish rather than by good legibility in a book.

His editions—for instance, those of the poems of Ronsard and of Joachim du Bellay, published in co-operation with La Connaissance of Paris—might have been very good if they had displayed a little more self-restraint—the text is in three colours, the initials in two, there is a gold vignette or a shield in colours and silver stamped on the title-page—and if the printing had been a little more careful. Instead they make the impression that they were designed with the desire to astonish, to surpass other printers, in what should have been no more than embellishments.

Mr Nypels has also produced a small edition of a few psalms in the French translation by Philippe Desportes. This is an attempt to print music with a better and more satisfactory aspect decoratively than is usual. This attempt is so far successful that one wishes Mr Nypels would make further experiments in this sphere.

Although he has left his first youth behind, Mr Nypels is still young and it may be expected that when his restlessness has somewhat abated, when he has gained steadiness, and when he no longer feels his present excessive exuberance, he will do much good work.

Like Mr Nypels, Mr Alexander A. M. Stols was born at Maastricht. He

started his work, too, in the same town. Both are sons of printers. Mr Stols started publishing in 1922 with an edition of a small book containing a text by Vondel, which had little typographic significance. Publishing for him was then only a hobby—he was studying law at the University of Amsterdam, and continued to do so for some years. But soon after his first publishing venture he moved to The Hague, and transferred from Amsterdam to Leiden University. While he continued to study for his degree at Leiden, he extended his publishing activities at The Hague. In 1926 he moved to Bussum near Amsterdam and worked as a publisher, without, however, giving up his studies at the University. In 1927 he moved again, this time to Brussels, and he now decided to devote himself exclusively to publishing. He thus became, in the course of five or six years, probably without any such intention at the outset, the principal and best-known publisher in the Netherlands of exclusively well-produced books. He is the only such publisher whose productions have reached the whole of Western Europe.

There was little to distinguish the first score or so of his publications from those of various other people. Technically they are usually better and typographically they are more modest than those of Mr Nypels. In these respects he is undoubtedly greatly indebted to the quiet but active assistance of his younger brother, Alphonse A. J. Stols. To their collaboration a number of agreeable little volumes are due—poems by Karel van de Woestijne, Jan van Nijlen, J. Greshoff; prose by Arthur van Schendel, A. Roland Holst, etc.

He first became known beyond the frontiers of the Netherlands through being authorised to publish some of M. Paul Valéry's works—*Album de Vers anciens*, *Narcisse*, *Le Retour de Hollande*, *La Jeune Parque* (the last two were printed by Joh. Enschedé en Zonen) and others—at the precise moment when the works of that author were enjoying their greatest vogue in the bibliophile's market.

With the slackening of public interest in M. Valéry, Mr Stols saw the necessity for modifying his programme, and his present endeavours appear somewhat akin to those of the Nonesuch Press: limited but not too small editions, editions of which the best are clearly meant for the *literati* and not for the snobs: variety of format, paper, and type. At the press which belongs

to his father and brothers, his work is done with the Hollandsche Mediaeval and the Erasmus of Mr de Roos, with Lutetia, and with Caslon and Monotype Garamond. At Joh. Enschedé en Zonen books are printed for him with Lutetia and with the founts of Peter Schoeffer, Christoffel van Dijck, Fleischman, Rosart, and others.

Most of his editions are still small in size and therefore less characteristic of his new intentions than a series, with the mention of which I shall conclude my review of this publisher's work. I mean the *Collection des Poètes Lyonnais*[1], two parts of which have already appeared: *Microcosme* of Maurice Scève, and the *Œuvres* of Louïze Labé. There is certainly room for some improvement in these books. I should welcome the disappearance of the last traces of typography mixed with specially drawn lettering, and would plead for unity in the use of founts, instead of the use of Monotype Garamond for the text and Lutetia for the titles. I should like the portraits of the authors to be less solemn and less tormented. A single use of the same printer's or publisher's mark in one book would satisfy me. Apart from such objections, editions like these are really made for people who wish to read or study the work of these Lyons poets, not for collectors who are satisfied if they have a number of books in limited editions on their shelves, and that to my mind seems to be the greatest praise which can be given to editions that yet retain an aroma of bibliophily.

In this section I cannot avoid referring once more to my own work. It is necessary for the sake of completeness, but I find my task here infinitely more difficult than when, a few pages *supra*, I wrote about type.

Some fifteen years ago, when I was concerned for the first time with the external production of books, and when for the first time I published a *plaquette*, the work seemed to me much easier than it does now, and I saw my way more clearly than I do at present. The reader will understand this when I say that then the road I saw before me appeared to lead to the modern incunabula. Nevertheless, in the group about which I am writing

[1] Unlike the books of the Nonesuch Press, this collection seems not to have been very successful, and no further volumes will be published, I think.

I was one of the first to choose a letter which was not decorative but was meant to be read—Caslon. That was in 1920, when my little editions, the "Palladium" series, which had hitherto been a pastime, were to be continued in the form of a better equipped commercial enterprise. With this type nearly twenty smallish books have been printed in two formats, 8vo and 16mo. They contained much that is old but also something new. The letter invites one to read. The composition does not deter the reader: but the solution of the problems raised by different texts and titles was still in the first place sought in the decorative manner. The series is not finished; but has for various reasons been temporarily suspended. As far as I am concerned, not the least of these reasons is my conviction that the time is past for any more or less uniform series, and for books which clearly proclaim that they are above all decorative. During my connection with Joh. Enschedé en Zonen, I have had a hand in the making of books for various publishers in Holland and elsewhere. I have been given complete freedom in designing the limited editions of the firm itself, which have not been numerous up to the present. I think that my most successful pieces of work so far have been *De Pen op Papier* by M. Nijhoff and an anthology of lyrical poetry by Karel van de Woestijne. Both books are printed in Lutetia, the first mainly in roman[1], the other exclusively in italic.

I shall soon have an opportunity of attempting larger and more important tasks. I hope then to be successful in producing what I consider to be most needed in present-day typography: carefully produced editions for reading and utility which, even if they show that their printer has preferences for some period or other of the past, yet bear the characteristics of their twentieth-century origin.

A few considerations as to the economic aspect of the publication of limited editions in Holland may be appropriate here. I do not mean books printed at hand presses—the Kunera Press and the Heuvel Press. In Holland, as elsewhere, all the care and trouble expended on such productions will

[1] With a lower case e which has a horizontal middle-bar. (Note for Mr Stanley Morison and several others.)

be adequately rewarded only if much higher prices can be obtained than the not exactly low ones already asked.

I am thinking more particularly of the productions of Charles Nypels, A. A. M. Stols (Trajectum-ad-Mosam and Halcyon Press), Hijman, Stenfert Kroese & Van der Zande ("Palladium"), and of Messrs Joh. Enschedé en Zonen. Their books are usually issued in editions of from 150 to 200 copies. Compared with the prices ruling in England, the United States, or Germany, they are not expensive, when one considers the size of the editions. The Dutch language is not spoken by more than twelve, or at the very most fifteen, million people in the whole world. Most of the territories outside the kingdom of Holland where Dutch is spoken—our Asiatic and American colonies, and large parts of Belgium and South Africa—are not interested in nine-tenths of these editions. At the most, there is a market of some seven million people. One may therefore say that an edition limited to 200 copies is about equal proportionately to one of 2500 copies in England.

None of the publishers just mentioned would object to producing editions of five hundred or even a thousand copies at prices which would make it possible to achieve the same financial result, but that is out of the question. People continue to call expensive what abroad would be deemed cheap. Or else another thing occurs.

Mr Stols once made a remarkable experiment which had a—to us—still more remarkable result. He printed 485 copies of the tragedy *Gijsbrecht van Amstel* by the seventeenth-century poet Vondel, which is very popular and is still regularly played. In English literature only the names of Shakespeare and Milton can be placed side by side with that of Vondel, and this not so much because of similarity of work, as because of the place they occupy in life and letters. Of these 485, fifty copies were on Dutch and 435 on good but ordinary English text paper. The booksellers, who always say that they cannot sell our books, and the public, who say they cannot buy them, because they are too expensive, bought up in a few days all the copies on Dutch paper, which were naturally more expensive than the others, and Mr Stols was unable to dispose of the main part of the cheaper edition.

The gifts, the seriousness of purpose, and the capacities of the Dutch

printers discussed in this article are in no way inferior to those of their foreign colleagues. Their number is not considerable although it cannot be called small in view of the size of their country. But the average of their work is equal or even superior to that of foreign printers. When, however, they want to try their strength with work worthy of their ability, there is no way open to them save that of applying to foreign countries, as has already been done in some degree by Mr Nypels, and to a more considerable extent by Mr Stols.

In conclusion, what is the situation of ordinary book printing in Holland? Briefly, I should say that, compared with twenty or even with ten years ago, there has been considerable progress. I believe that, on the average, Holland does not compare unfavourably with other countries. In the first place, here as elsewhere the output of the private presses has worked as a leaven and has gradually caused an improvement in the quality of ordinary books. In the second place, there is the no doubt somewhat youthful and raw, but witty and vivid criticism of *De Witte Mier* (*The White Ant*), "a small monthly magazine for the friends of the book directed by J. Greshoff,"[1] which appeared in 1912 and during the beginning of 1913. The irritated reaction of publishers and commercial printers proved that the criticisms made had hit their mark. More than one publisher and printer began to test their books by some of the criteria formulated in *De Witte Mier*. More than once I have heard apologies in cases where these rules had not been observed. In the third place the examples which I mentioned in discussing the work of Mr de Roos have had their effect. Some of the men whose work has been examined in the previous part of this article have also been commissioned to work directly for commercial publishers, and some printers have applied as much as they could of that which they learnt by such work to their execution of other work; and, finally, the organisation of technical training, which at present is carried out in three printing schools, as well as the study

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[1] This monthly magazine clearly shows that its founder knew and appreciated the *Zwiebelfisch* of Hans von Weber.

clubs of directors and workmen, must have helped to improve the level of everyday book printing, notwithstanding their general attitude of knowing everything and having known it all along.

In the present relationship between publishers and printers, in which the latter are scarcely more than the executants of the former, either because they lack knowledge or because they have not the power to impose the knowledge they possess, one cannot very well talk of the work of printers. The same workshops sometimes produce good work for one publisher and inferior work for others. I must therefore mention a few publishers whose books prove that in their circles, too, the notion has gained currency that things cannot continue as they were some five-and-twenty years ago.

There is, first of all, Martinus Nijhoff at The Hague, whose books retained even during the most decadent period a certain tone and solidity. Unhappily he has made less use than he might have done of the work and discoveries of those whose daily care is the appearance of books. Most of his editions are of books which are in daily use, and would therefore afford a splendid opportunity for testing discoveries which so far have not had the advantage of extensive application.

Something similar can be seen in the publications of H. D. Tjeenk Willink en Zoon at Haarlem. This firm, however, has repeatedly given the complete direction of a publication to some outside expert. Mr de Roos is responsible for several attractive and altogether unpretentious editions issued by this firm.

The first to admit numerous outside influences was the late S. L. van Looy. Among his publications one finds the greatest medley. Sometimes one meets good work, at other times one fails to comprehend what was intended, and in still other cases there are mistakes and failures which are sufficiently convincing. The directors of W. L. en J. Brusse's publishing company at Rotterdam were originally, in a certain sense, pupils of Mr van Looy. For a number of years they have tried to put to the best use the work of the private presses, and all good enterprise being made in the world of typography. Mr de Roos has been of great assistance to them, and although many of their editions do not observe in every respect the demands which

may justly be made of reading editions, one must admit that their publications give the impression of having been produced with great care for their outward appearance, and that they are characterised by a definite style which has made it possible to maintain a certain unity in the output of this company.

Em. Querido's publishing company in Amsterdam and Hijman, Stenfert Kroese & van der Zande (who also published the "Palladium" series) at Arnhem, have been working in the same direction, though not so long as Brusse. Querido's work is still a little too experimental, in the manner of Mr van Looy. The others do not publish much, but their work displays a more definite trend, and the novels in particular which they have published belong, in my opinion, to the best made reading books in Holland. Finally there are the publishers who are their own printers—Nijgh van Ditmar's publishing company at Rotterdam and Boosten Stols at Maastricht—whose books, on the average, are on the same level as those of the previously mentioned firms.

In Holland, as in Germany, far more books are hand set than in England. Only during very recent years has mechanical setting, mainly, of course, Monotype, made progress. In the course of the last twelve or fifteen years, new founts have begun to be used, without arousing displeasure, sometimes even for preference. The new founts available in the market and in general use were not always the best from the point of view of legibility. This has naturally had an unfavourable effect upon the production of good books for reading. The first Monotype users showed a preference for letters like Venetian, in order to retain the style of hand-set books. In more recent years, however, Caslon, Garamond and Baskerville Monotype have gradually come into more general use. Further development in this direction, as well as in the making of new Monotype founts, and a greater discretion on the part of Dutch printers in their choice of type for their machines, will prove great and favourable influences on this most important aspect of Dutch typography.