CHAPTER XI.

COMPOSING—Composition of a Common Paragraph—Indentation—Spacing—Rules for Spacing.

The young compositor is now acquainted with the principle of the art of type-setting, but is able to apply it only to the most rudimentary description of work. In the present chapter we will endeavour to render clear to him the system upon which work of a somewhat more complicated character is to be done. We will suppose that the following is the first portion of the copy:—

> All communications connected with the Literary portion of the *Register* including New Books and Novelties sent for notice, should be addressed to the editor, at his office.

Before picking up any of the types for this line, remove the setting rule from the back of the first or title line already in the stick (see last chapter), and place it at the front (or against the nick side of the types), so that it may be at the back of the second line. It is only necessary to set a few types without a rule to perceive the convenience of one.

Notice that the first line of the paragraph (compositors abbreviate the word to "par.") is shorter than the two following, there being a white space at the beginning of it. This is called an indentation. The space is equal to that of an em quad, and must be obtained by using one; hence the line is said to be indented an em.

It may here be conveniently stated, although doing so is somewhat discursive, that a paragraph set up like that before the reader is called an ordinary or common par. If the relative length of the lines were altered, by the first being begun at the commencement of the line (it would then be said to be "full out" or "run out"), and the second and the following lines were indented, the whole would be a "hanging indention," because part of the first line would hang over the succeeding ones. To set a paragraph in this style, the compositor would be told to "run out and indent." This is an example of the valuable use of

technical terms; the two words indicate with perfect distinctness what, without them, would take several lines to describe. An exact acquaintance with the technical terms of the trade conduces very much to the progress of the beginner. But he should always *think* over their simplification; there is a meaning, not always at once apparent, but certainly attached to, every phrase and word of the kind that is current.

The compositor will place the em quadrat fairly in his stick, with as much care as he placed the letters in the line already set up. He will then set the capital A, and the two ll's which follow. Of course he will only put the latter in one by one, and not try to place the two at once. He will then put in a thick space to divide the word "All" from the word "communications" that follows. He will proceed in the same manner in setting the remainder of the line.

Now, when the last word in the line, which is "the," has been set, the line will be short. The line already set was short, but it was not required to be long. It had only to be placed in the middle, and the remaining space was easily filled up with quadrats, &c. This line must be "full out;" how is it to be made so?

There are three ways of making the line, of the full length. One is to put more letters in, that is, to include a portion of the following line. Part of the word *Register* would fill it up. But there are certain laws which cannot be altered, that bear upon this part of the business. In the first place, whenever a word is broken or divided, a hyphen must be inserted to indicate the fact. Place the hyphen at the end, for the sake of an experiment, and it will be found, perhaps, that there is room for the R.[27] It would not do to let this letter stand alone at the end, and to begin the next line with egister. That would be unsightly, inconvenient for reading, and contrary to the laws of syllabication. These latter laws we will

27 The experienced printer will perceive that we are only assuming some of these details for the purpose of making clear to the young compositor the mode of acting in certain contingencies.

refer to presently. The least we could do is to "get in"—a technical term again, which is amply explained by its present connection—the syllable *Re-*. We will suppose that this is impracticable, that there is no room for the *e*. The line must be a full one; how is it to be made so?

The least consideration will show that the line can only be made full by putting a wider space between the words. This brings us to the important subject of spacing.

Spacing is the art of putting the proper spaces between words, with a view to securing the most symmetrical appearance, while making the line of a proper length. In poetry every line differs in length, and all that is necessary is to get the words as far apart as will give to them a neat and orderly appearance. But in prose matter, which is "run on"—another technical term—like that in the paragraph now to be set, the lines must all be of one length. This uniformity of length is obtained by the use of spaces of various thicknesses.

The compositor has ready to his hand the following spaces—the hair space, the thin space, the middle space, the thick space, and the en quad, which in this respect may be regarded as one of the spaces. It has been previously stated that a one em quad is equal to two en quads, or three thick spaces, or four middle spaces, or five thin spaces. This should be impressed upon the mind, and the relative thicknesses of the spaces to each other will be understood. The art of spacing is simply this: ascertain how much space there is at the end of the lime, and divide that between the number of words to be separated. If there were an opening equal to two ems to space, and eleven words in the line, ten thin spaces would be used, in addition to those already inserted. If with the same vacant space there were only seven words, thick spaces would be used, for six of them would just extend the line to its proper length.[28]

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28 We do not, however, recommend the use of a thin space with a thick in ordinary work, the remarks above being intended to show only the principle involved. Instead of a thick and thin in five places we would put a

It is by this means that modem printers render all their lines uniform in length. The early printers did not trouble themselves about this particular, and the beauty and symmetry of their pages suffered in consequence.

Spacing requires some ingenuity and some thought, and the most careful attention should be paid to it by the young compositor. When he has mastered the principle involved, all the rest is a matter of calculation and judgment. He will put in more or less space according to the exigencies of the occasion. He may have to take out his thick spaces and substitute thin ones to "get in" a few extra letters; or he may have to put in thicker ones, or to add thin ones to those already in use. We will not give a table of the relative proportions of the spaces to each other, as it would be better for a beginner to calculate for himself, and on his readiness of calculation much of his speed in composition will depend. It is just like dividing a sum of money equally among a number of persons, each of whom is to have the same coins; if there were a pound to distribute between ten persons, each would get a florin and receive his full allowance: if the pound had to be divided among only eight persons, each would get a florin and a sixpence, or half-a-crown. So in spacing.[29]

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thick and middle in two, and an en quad in three, which would measure the same. Of course we would choose the best places for each sort, according to a rule to be stated presently.

29 As we have already stated, the hair space is not always of uniform proportion to different bodies. It varies in thickness in different bodies from seven to ten to the em. It is, however, desirable to use as few as possible of these spaces. They are so thin that they are easily bent (or broken, and careless compositors soon use up all the apportioned quantity of them to a case. They are really very seldom required; a little calculation will show how to avoid them altogether, in most cases, by using at some part of the line, without detriment to the general appearance, one or two spaces rather thicker than the rest, the extra thickness being equal to the hair space. Besides the spaces enumerated, in America they have a so-called "patent space" which is in thickness midway between a thick space and an en quad. We have never seen a space of the kind used in this country, but are inclined to think that it would be convenient. Practical printers, however, are very reluctant to increase the number of pieces in their cases,

The appearance of all composition depends greatly upon the character of the spacing, and there are certain rules-laid down for the purpose which must never be infringed.

Rules for Spacing.—First: There must be, as far as possible, an equal space between all the words in a line. This need not *actually* be the case, but only *apparently*. For instance, there may actually be less space between o and d than between 1 and h, yet the apparent space will be the same. Example:—

Motto denotes will have

A thin space divides the first two words, a middle space the second two, yet the spacing appears nearly the same.

Long parallel upright-bodied letters always require more space between them than those which are curved and short. Where there is an overhanging kern, as f, at the end of a word, if the word next to it begins with a short letter, less space is required than when a long full-bodied letter follows, and *vice versâ*. If a comma is placed after a word, the space following may be less than between words with no such point. This leads up to another rule.

Secondly: The spacing after the grammatical and rhetorical points varies, in order to conduce to the apparent uniformity of the whole. In this country we do not put a space before the comma, whereas on the Continent they always do so. We put in a space, for instance, between the word and the semi-colon, the colon, the note of interrogation, and the note of exclamation, as the case may be. The following is a general rule in regard to these, subject, however, to the exceptions that will hereafter be specified:—

Before the , . - ’ and) no space.

Before the;: ? and ! a thin or hair space.

After the , . - and ’ a *thin* space if the general spacing is with middle spaces, a *middle* if with thick spaces.

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and with very good reason.

After the;:) ? and ! a *thicker* space, generally, than the rest of the line.

The latter direction is acted upon, not for the purpose of securing uniformity in appearance, but because a short, break should, it is thought, be left after an ordinary phrase.

These rules require for their observance not only discretion and calculation, but taste, on the part of the compositor, and show, if it were needed, that setting up types is not the mere mechanical operation that persons unacquainted with its intricacies might imagine.

It should be distinctly understood, however, that these rules are not inflexible. They are often impracticable; sometimes objectionable. Especially when the lines are short, or the letters very wide, must the observance or non-observance of the rules depend upon the judgment of the workman; the spacing must then be governed by necessity.

The spacing, in short, must be uniform in appearance throughout the line, except that at the close of some phrases a little wider space may be permitted. If the line cannot by any exercise of ingenuity be uniformly spaced, it may be a little wider in the *middle*.[30]

In poetry a thick space is generally used throughout; but if the lines are wide apart or leaded, more space will be required, according to our next or *third* rule.

In setting the example of copy chosen for this lesson, we directed the young compositor to begin with a *thick* space. This space is, in fact, generally used for the purpose; it may be said to be the *normal* one. But if the matter of which this line was the commencement were *leaded*, a thicker space should be placed between the words. Hence

Rule Third.—The spacing between the words must be regulated proportionately to the space between the lines.

30 Large types, such as those used in placards, are spaced by putting furniture, quotations, reglet, leads, or even pieces of card, between the words, according to the space required.

Solid matter—that is, matter which has no space or leads between the lines—is to be less widely spaced than matter that is "open" or leaded. If in one case thick spaces were used, in the other en quads would be used. Here, again, the judgment and taste of the compositor find an opportunity for their exercise. As much as an em space may be used when the page is very large, the type large, and the lines very open. No exact rule can be given in regard to this requirement; much must be left to the judgment of the compositor. To cultivate the taste, let him carefully study good examples of printing; these are accessible enough at the present day, when so much fine work is done by the large houses in London and the country.

In ordinary book work no pains whatever should be spared to ensure good spacing. We would impress this upon the young beginner, and advise him from the outset to determine to do his work in this respect as well as he possibly can. In hurried work, such as on newspapers, good spacing is almost impossible, and the appearance of it suffers accordingly. Sometimes great "holes," or "pigeon holes" as they are called, are seen between the words of a newspaper paragraph, but how unsightly they are! In a book house they would be avoided at any cost of time or trouble.

The compositor should not space up his lines so tightly as to make it a matter of difficulty to take them out of the composing stick. Nor, on the other hand, should they be very loose. If too loose, two evils will be experienced; the lines will not appear uniform in length, nor can they be easily "lifted" out of the stick. If all have been spaced to an uniform length, the stick may be emptied, a dozen or more lines together (in the way that we shall describe hereafter) almost as safely as if the whole consisted of one piece of metal. Careless compositors often thrust in spaces by main force, with a bodkin or a piece of rule. The result is that the space is broken in half, one part of it only remaining between the words. Besides this, it is a matter of great difficulty to get the lines out of the stick afterwards, and if all are not equally tightly spaced, the probability is that some will drop out in the process.

The rest of the paragraph needs but little remark. After each line take out the setting rule and place it in position for beginning another.

The word *Register* is set in italics; these letters must, of course, be got from the italic case; if there are words in small capitals, these are to be got from the upper case of the Roman in which the whole is being composed.

At the end of the paragraph there is a very large blank. This is to be filled up with the aid of quadrats, beginning with four ems, and then using lesser ones and spaces until the line is the same length as the rest. The compositor must in this case remember the direction given in regard to the display line selected as the subject of the last chapter, and place *the smallest spaces nearest to the type*.

The present chapter will, we hope, have shown the reader how to set up in a proper maimer any ordinary kind of "straightforward" composition. It will also have shown him, we trust, how to do this in the most tasteful manner. It will have disabused his mind of the error that a compositor is a mere "picker up" of types, or a "type lifter" as some persons regard him. All the rest he must learn for himself, by thought and study, and by the imitation of good examples.

When a learner can set an ordinary paragraph from reprint copy, he should be given a paragraph of manuscript copy. This will exercise his faculties in a way that he perhaps did not expect. There are a multitude of details connected with composition that never render themselves apparent to the ordinary reader, and the compositor does not find them out till he comes to put together all the different types. If inexperienced, he should have a carefully and tastefully printed book (and books of this kind are now very cheap and common) beside him, and refer to it from time to time. It is surprising how profitable is a little study of this kind.