

Compositors vs. Type-Founders, and Cases vs. Proportions of Fonts.

Whether all type-founders put up their type according to the same rule or not, we are not prepared to say; but this we do say, they nearly all fail to give general satisfaction to the printer as regards the proportions of fonts. Of course, it must be admitted that it is a difficult matter to make the letter always "come out" the same, for the reason that some copy will "run on" one sort, while other copy will require the reverse sorts; but we have, on many occasions, seen very large quantities of type left over after the cases had been "set out" as far as possible: this type is perfectly useless unless sorts are ordered to fill up. Our experience is, that we have never seen a font of type (of course we are speaking now of news and book fonts) which "set out" as even as we think it should if care was taken as to proportions; we never knew of a considerable font of body-letter being bought except at a special price, and we know that all sorts ordered afterwards to fill up have been charged at list prices. Whether there is any connexion between the above facts or not we are not prepared to say, but think type-founders should give the matter their best consideration if they wish to avoid raising in the mind of the printer suspicions of crookedness. This suggestion is made in the interest of both manufacturer and consumer, and we trust it will be accepted in the same spirit in which it is made.

Another matter which demands attention from the manufacturer is a remedy for the defective proportions of the boxes in the present upper and lower case. This is a thing that rests entirely with the makers, yet none seem to have recognized the importance of applying a remedy. It is a well-known fact that the boxes are of three uniform sizes and shapes, whereas, in the 145 different characters which should be in the compositor's case, there are not more than a dozen of them of the same proportions, either in number, size, or weight. Many suggestions have been made by practical printers in reference to changes desirable in the proportions and laying out of cases, particularly of the lower case, but very little notice seems to have been attracted to the subject. It would seem as if the makers of cases consulted their own convenience and profit, rather than those of the printer. This is all wrong; a new case is demanded by the exigencies of the trade. The human compositor is

being brought into competition with the machine type-setter, and it is necessary that the former should be placed in as advantageous a position as possible, and then if he is beaten by the machine composer let him bow gracefully to the defeat with the conviction that he has done all in his power to win the victory.

In reference to the present style of case, we would add one suggestion to the many for its improvement. Let the lay of the case stand as it is, but fit pieces of wood in the bottoms of those boxes which contain letters not much used. Of course, the thickness of the block must be governed entirely by the quantity of type necessary to set a case out. For instance, put a block say $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick in the bottom of the b box, about the same in the boxes containing c, d, f, g, i, k, l, m, p, r, s, t, w and y, while a thicker block could be put into the boxes containing j, q, u, v, x and z. The latter named boxes are clearly too large for the quantity of letters used, but plenty small enough to allow the compositor to put his finger and thumb into them in order to pick up a letter. By fitting a block of wood into the bottom of the boxes the type is brought nearer the top and two points are gained: the letters are easier—therefore quicker—picked up, and there would be less dead letter in the case. It is a well-known fact to practical men that a printer likes his cases even; but few stop to think and reason out the why and wherefore of this desire. We know from practical experience that when the boxes in a case are low, it is much more difficult to compose, besides being slower; hence, the desire to have all the boxes evenly filled. A full case generally has all the boxes even, or nearly so, and the inconvenience of empty boxes is not felt until the case is set out, and even then it is only the larger boxes that are low, while the smaller boxes, containing the letters not much used, are not half empty. On the other hand, take a case that is laid according to the proportions of type sent out by the founder, and when the compositor has his case full and commences composition two-thirds or one-half of the boxes—especially the smallest and most difficult ones to get the thumb and finger into—are too low for expeditious work. He labors in this latter case, under the disadvantage of setting all the time out of a case, many of the boxes in which are nearly empty. Let the type-founder and case-maker try their hands at making