

# The Printer's Miscellany.

VOL. I.

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[Selected from our Scrap Book.]

## The Art of Displaying Type.

NUMBER II.

Every book title, poster, card, and almost every variety of displayed work, should have one leading line, superior to all others in size, clearness and effect. The leading line should consist only of the word or words which embrace the pith and marrow of the subject, and consequently most likely to arrest the eye and give an insight into the object of the work. In a poster for a transportation company, the destination is the most effective line; in the show-bill of a theatre, the name of the chief piece or principal actor; in the title of a book, the words by which the book is called. This rule is so simple that it needs no enforcement by illustration. The word that gives a key to all the other matter should have the greatest prominence, and all else should be subordinate.

This leading line should never be divided by a hyphen, nor should it be abbreviated so as to confuse the meaning. To secure the greatest effect in display, the shortest words or clauses are desirable; but these are not always to be found in copy. But the wording must not, for that reason, be contracted or distorted, to accommodate it to the type. The type must be adapted to the words; it will not answer to make the words fit a favorite style of type.

Example: Passengers are requested not to smoke aboard this shaft. In this very common notice the words to smoke or smoke are sometimes made the chief display by the compositor disregarding the negative not, which

is certainly fully as important a word as the verb it qualifies. The excuse that there is no type in the office that will make a good full line is inadmissible. If such is the case, the word not should make a separate displayed line. The obvious meaning of the copy should have its full expression, no matter how odd it may appear.

The main display line should be located in the centre or at the head of the work. The compositor will have but little difficulty in obeying this rule: titles, posters and show cards are not prefixed with dedications and introductions. There are occasions, however, in awkwardly-constructed matter, where the display line is placed at or near the foot. Where the compositor can do so, with confidence in its propriety and acceptability, he should alter it to a better position.

The leading display line appears to best advantage in capitals. There is a completeness and perfection in capitals entirely unapproachable in lower-case. What is applicable to a book title may be also applied to show cards and posters. In most cases it is a question of attainable materials. Of two lines—the one a weak line of capitals, the other a bold, showy line of lower-case—the compositor should select that which will produce the best effect. Where he has opportunity to decide between two of great prominence, the preference should be given to the capitals.

The leading display line in close or solid matter should be a full line. In loose or open matter it may be a short line. Where there is an unusual amount of matter, and few white lines or spaces occur in the body of a piece of display, the main display, if not full, has a bad appearance. The great white blanks on each side are in painful contrast with the density of the body. But where the body is loose and open there is no such necessity, and it may be short to better advantage. There are words which no art can expand in a full line without increasing the size of the letter in a great disproportion to the body, and this would make the matter worse. It is better to give the true display line a fair prominence, and no more. If it is not capable of sufficient extension, the adjoining lines must be arranged by spacing or crowding, so as to give it proper relief.

The leading display line must be supported by subordinate minor lines in a proper manner, to produce a good effect. It is generally a very easy matter to pick out the main line, but to lay off the minor points of display is no easy task. The word or words which are selected for the main line are those which are the most significant and definite. To find the minor lines the same rule should be followed, selecting them in the order in which they should stand, until the space is entirely occupied.

The minor displayed lines should be of irregular length. In light and open matters, if they are all made full, the effect is lost. How would a book title look in which every line was full? Even in more solid matter full displayed lines give an unpleasing appearance of squareness. A well-balanced irregularity of form in the outline of a job is as necessary to perspicuity as are variety in face and diversity in size of type. It is almost impossible to carry out this rule in jobs where an excess of display