

INTO PRINT

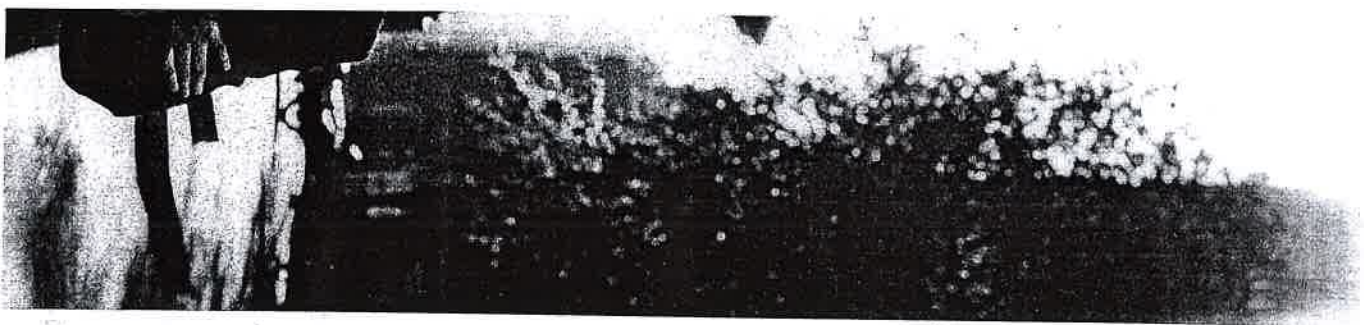


*Selected Writings on
Printing History, Typography
and Book Production*

JOHN DREYFUS



DAVID R. GODINE
Publisher
BOSTON



ent to
1992.

ss. A second commission had been committed to French leading up to 1778. Gibbon mentioning him by name. The Literary and Typographical Society, Beaumarchais.¹⁶ There is a close first appears: for the first time the exchange of secretly instructive to him but mistrustful (had never met) in the typeface for the suggestion, William a stationer, called Baskerville and (d), but that Frenchmen give his opinion on a trip to Paris to him a four-page

ed me the next day to other Letters we had to communicate to us expressed great satisfaction. World: allowed so-united having the best appearance. I have procured Mr. soon as possible Specie a particular pride in the Patronage of Lord to encourage and promote the writer's hand 'A' and the whole of the, added by a different

ent hand and in secret ink of the kind which becomes invisible as it dries but reappears when the paper is heated. This message is unsigned and undated, but from its contents was certainly written in the last week of March 1782, at the time when it was generally realized that there would be peace negotiations and a change of government. On 22 March 1782 Benjamin Franklin had written from Paris to Shelburne, asking to renew their ancient friendship; a week later, Shelburne took office in the new cabinet and became responsible for the peace negotiations. In the following extract from the secret message the allusions to 'the man from Russia' refer to a courier who arrived in London about 28 March 1782, the Empress of Russia having made a secret approach to the British Government to act as an intermediary.

If you have received Lord Shelburne's letter you know all our news. Namely that the King has seemed in a very bad temper since the arrival of the man from Russia.

Lord Germaine said this morning that the King was a terrible man when things don't suit his book – so it seems that the negotiations in Russia have failed.

From Lord Shelburne's wheedling, you will have guessed that you are believed to be better acquainted with political secrets than you usually admit. You can congratulate yourself on the opinion which people have of you here. Lee has written several times that you are an acute fellow on whom one cannot get a hold – what does he mean by that? Anyhow if you think that it might one day be to the advantage of France or yourself, do respond to Shelburne's advances, for he will be very powerful before long... I will draw one thousand francs on your account, I have not received anything from you for a long time.

Although political and typographical activities became so intermingled, Beaumarchais was nevertheless whole-hearted in the promotion of his Literary and Typographical Society. In its prospectus he declared that he was 'a professed disciple and warm admirer of Voltaire', which was indeed true. He was also aware that letters had passed between Voltaire and Baskerville. He intended that the editions should contain prints of both men. 'They were both men of genius. They corresponded while living; and now will mutually contribute to perpetuate each other's memory.' Baskerville's types were widely admired on the Continent, and Beaumarchais had most probably known for some time that they were for sale, being a frequent visitor to England and a friend of two of the Frenchmen to whom Baskerville had offered to sell. So it was not surprising that it was with these types that he decided to print his edition of Voltaire.

A definitive edition had been planned by the ambitious Parisian publisher, Charles-Joseph Panckoucke, who also planned the *Encyclopédie méthodique* in 166 volumes. Voltaire had agreed in November

1777 to correct interleaved volumes of an unsatisfactory edition which had appeared two years earlier. Despite his bad health, Voltaire had set about the revision with surprising vigour, but he wrote in January 1778 strongly advising the publisher to get out of the handling of *une si ridicule marchandise*. Even Pankoucke became alarmed at the extent of the material, and in 1779 he sold his rights and papers for 160000 francs¹⁸ to Beaumarchais – who proceeded with plans for an octavo edition in 70 volumes and a duodecimo edition in 92 volumes, and even attempted a quarto edition as well.

Censorship precluded Voltaire's works from being printed in France. Beaumarchais did not believe that the work would be satisfactory if divided up between a number of foreign printing-houses, and so decided to set up his own establishment abroad. Being still interested principally in gun-running and playwriting, he sought a director for his printing-house. The post was declined by Restif de la Bretonne, who, although trained as a compositor with one of the Fournier family, had unorthodox views on spelling. A disastrous appointment was then made. It is difficult to understand why Jean François Letellier was given this post. He was a headstrong architect with apparently no special qualifications; but he was soon on intimate terms with Beaumarchais's dishonest cashier, Vincent Cantini, a rogue who dealt with many printing-house matters which his master might have ordered differently. Acting always in his own name, Letellier managed to obtain permission from the tolerant Margrave of Baden to print Voltaire's works in a disused fortress at Kehl, in the principality of Baden-Durlach, and a twenty years' lease was eventually granted. The fortress had been built by Vauban on the right bank of the Rhine to protect Strasbourg, but had to be given up by Louis XIV in 1714, after which the works were razed.

As early as August 1779 Letellier began to have difficulty in grasping technical points arising in the negotiations for the purchase of Baskerville's equipment, and asked for an overseer to be found to assist him. The post was given to J. B. Colas, a man with twenty years' experience at the Imprimerie Royale. It was also in August 1779 that Lamy, a former employee of Fournier le Jeune, applied for a position: ten years earlier he had assisted in the establishment of the Decker foundry at Berlin. Lamy was recommended as being an excellent overseer and was also given employment; but his despair at the misuse of Baskerville's equipment was made public three years later in a pamphlet entitled *Lettre d'un Alsacien à son Ami, Souscripteur des Œuvres Complètes de M. de Voltaire, avec les Caractères de Baskerville, Bouillon, 1782.*

factory edition which
 ealth, Voltaire had set
 wrote in January 1778
 he handling of *une si*
 alarmed at the extent
 and papers for 160000
 h plans for an octavo
 in in 92 volumes, and
 om being printed in
 : work would be satis-
 : reign printing-houses,
 : abroad. Being still in-
 : riting, he sought a di-
 eclined by Resif de la
 sitor with one of the
 elling. A disastrous ap-
 understand why Jean
 : a headstrong architect
 ie was soon on intimate
 er, Vincent Cantini, a
 atters which his master
 in his own name, Letel-
 e tolerant Margrave of
 fortress at Kehl, in the
 years' lease was eventu-
 auban on the right bank
 to be given up by Louis
 id.
 ave difficulty in grasping
 is for the purchase of
 rseet to be found to assist
 with twenty years' expe-
 n August 1779 that Lamy,
 ed for a position: ten years
 of the Decker foundry at
 xcellent overseer and was
 ie misuse of Baskerville's
 in a pamphlet entitled *Let-
 Euvres Complettes de M. de
 illon, 1782.*

A most detailed and balanced account of the printing-house at Kehl under Letellier's direction is preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale. It is in manuscript form and is entitled 'Notes recueillies à l'imprimerie du Fort de Kehl sur cet Etablissement' (Acq. Nouv. Fr. 6149). Although this manuscript is unsigned, it is clear from internal evidence that it is the work of Étienne Anisson-Duperron, the last director of the Imprimerie Royale, after a visit to Kehl which lasted from 21 to 25 June 1782. Further information is to be found in the Beaumarchais papers gathered together by F. de Marescot, now in the Bibliothèque Historique at Paris; and in a contribution by C. H. Frenzel to the *Deutsches Museum* for November 1784, under the title 'Schreiben an den Herrn Geheimen Rath Dohn, die Beaumarchaische Buchdruckerei in Kehl betreffend'.¹⁹

Letellier discovered that an old craftsman who had cut punches for Baskerville was still living in Birmingham. (Anisson's report does not give the man's name, but records that he was in his sixties; it is therefore possible that the craftsman was John Handy, whose death did not occur until January 1793 at Wishaw near Birmingham.) He was engaged by Letellier to check, inspect, and put right if necessary all the punches used by Baskerville. Anisson knew that Baskerville frequently varied the cut of his letters, often having several punches cut for the same letter; and since scarcely anyone other than the punch-cutter could distinguish the very fine touches which differentiated them, he inferred that this was one of the main reasons why the man was engaged. As the old man did not wish to leave England, a talented young armourer named Claude Jacob was sent to work as pupil with him, and Anisson learnt that Jacob's first efforts were quite satisfactory. But although the punches were in good hands, the founding of the types was mishandled. English founders were given the order, but they soon became so irritated by Letellier's boorish manner that they abandoned the work. The founding was then carried on by a few English apprentices working on half-pay and without supervision: their founts exceeded the type-height used in France, and had to be abandoned.

Anisson saw four founders working at Kehl, and later met there a Parisian founder named Fournier, whose duties were to cut punches in replacement of those which were spoilt or ugly, and to strike and justify new matrices whenever required. Anisson knew this workman and had a very poor opinion of him. He was, however, shocked to find that the dressing of types (an operation which he believed to demand the greatest skill and experience) was carried on by two children of under fifteen. Letellier explained that he could find no other labour for this

task, and had to pay for their apprenticeship by throwing out thousands of letters. Nevertheless, Anisson noticed in the printed sheets a great many faulty letters, which he remarked arose not from worn type (the metal was new) but from inadequate supervision in founding. Lamy complained not only of the faults in the fit and alignment of the type, but of lack of consistency in capitalization, italicization and punctuation.

Baskerville's success in printing with his types had been largely due to the precision with which his presses were constructed, the secret method by which he compounded his ink, and the skill of his small staff. Letellier bought two of his presses in England but, being an architect and not a printer, he decided that they would not be worth taking back to France, and that it would be sufficient to take measurements and make detailed plans from which presses could be constructed in France. Anisson was bitterly disappointed at this news, for he was especially interested in the construction of presses (a subject on which he addressed the Academy of Sciences). The more he studied the Kehl presses, the harder he found it to believe that they were exact copies of the originals. Faults abounded in the twenty he saw.

The staff at Kehl was recruited from France, Switzerland, and Germany, but Lamy alleged that anybody who presented himself was taken on, 'provided that the wage he demanded was little, and the thinking he did was even less' – thinking being the prerogative of Letellier, the omniscient architect, who earned the nickname 'tyrant of Kehl'. As to the ink, although Baskerville's secret recipe had been bought, ordinary ink from Paris was used after some fruitless experiments by Letellier.

During his visits to Kehl, Anisson was presented with a specimen sheet of the types in use there, together with a printed letter from J. B. Colas to Letellier giving an account of the present state of the types and of the changes it was proposed to make in them. Several criticisms were made of Baskerville's designs: his small capitals were condemned as being too small, several of his italic capitals were to be altered (including his characteristic *N* and *T*), and the alignment of the numerals 3 and 5 was to be changed. It was observed that there were no italic numerals. Both Colas's letter and the type specimens were reprinted in booklet form and a copy can be seen in the Bibliothèque Nationale (v. 37863) *Epreuves des Caractères de Baskerville*. *Juin* 1782. A few typographical errors are to be found in this specimen, but in the editions of Voltaire misprints abounded. In January 1787 Beaumarchais wrote a scathing letter of dismissal to Colas, blaming him for the

numerous
take Anis
organiza
from the
no longer
served, it
how to c
perfectio

Since t
marchais
long let
and on h
ties and
was only
he was f
of his cas
desperate
panes an
November
tained he
the prop
Kehl wer
turn to t
intention
in Kehl to

Althou
was rep
long, no
deserve
permitted
March 17
from the
es were c
into the
could be
printed to

Deeply
topograph
the post
published
German

rowing out thou-
e printed sheets a
e not from worn
rvision in found-
fit and alignment
tion, italicization

I been largely due
ruined, the secret
skill of his small
but, being an ar-
uld not be worth
ent to take mea-
sses could be con-
d at this news, for
presses (a subject
he more he stud-
ve that they were
ie twenty he saw.
erland, and Ger-
I himself was tak-
le, and the think-
rative of Letellier,
; 'tyrant of Kehl'.
I been bought, or-
s experiments by

with a specimen
d letter from J. B.
state of the types
Several criticisms
ipitals were con-
tals were to be al-
; alignment of the
;d that there were
= specimens were
the Bibliothèque
rville. *Juin* 1782. A
;cimen, but in the
y 1787 Beaumar-
aming him for the

numerous mistakes which he had allowed to go through. It did not take Anisson more than five days to discover the shortcomings of the organization, and he concluded his report in 1782 by observing that from the moment the printing-house was established at Kehl, it was no longer the Baskerville Press. 'Though a few of his methods are preserved, they are entrusted to different hands, which do not yet know how to employ them.' He noted a general decline from Baskerville's perfection, and placed Kehl *dans la classe des Etablissements ordinaires*.

Since the early days of his appointment, news had reached Beaumarchais of the difficulties caused by Letellier's unpleasant manner. Long letters were sent from Paris giving advice on technical matters and on how to behave, but Beaumarchais was preoccupied with politics and with the writing and production of *The Marriage of Figaro*. It was only after this play had run its hundred performances in 1784 that he was forced to pay his first visit to Kehl. The sudden disappearance of his cashier, Cantini, had forced him to make a close scrutiny of his desperate financial position. He then discovered Letellier's extravagances and megalomaniac conduct of affairs. After a visit to Kehl in November 1784, Beaumarchais summoned his director to Paris, obtained his signature to a declaration that *all* he had ordered was in fact the property of Beaumarchais – and then dismissed him. The staff at Kehl were informed that reasons of health had obliged Letellier to return to Paris, and that Monsieur de la Hogue, former King's Commissioner in the Island of Saint Domingue, had been chosen to reside in Kehl to direct the establishment.

Although de la Hogue was more popular than his predecessor, he was responsible for a serious loss of equipment. A banker at Strasbourg insisted that the collection of Baskerville's punches should be deposited with him as security for very large sums owing. De la Hogue permitted this material to be transported from Kehl to Strasbourg in March 1785, and it was kept there for a year; but on the return journey, from the jolting of the wagon or from bad packing, several of the cases were crushed or burst open, and many of the punches were thrown into the snow. The printing-house staff turned out to recover all they could find, but in all 347 punches were lost. This accident was not reported to Beaumarchais.

Despite an announcement in the prospectus of the Literary and Typographical Society that the Baskerville types were to be used 'only for the *posthumous* and therefore *complete editions* of works of distinguished merit', Letellier had produced French translations of trivial German comedies and a quantity of ephemeral pieces. Beaumarchais

in turn broke the undertaking by printing his own *Marriage of Figaro* in 1785. It is therefore not surprising that he gave his consent when his wealthy Italian friend, Vittorio Alfieri, asked permission to have a few of his own writings printed with Baskerville types. Alfieri first visited Kehl in October 1787. With commendable tact he selected his five odes, *L'America Libera*, to be printed as a try-out. He was so pleased with the result that he had six of his works printed at Kehl between 1787 and 1789. All six had the imprint 'dalla tipografia di Kehl co' caratteri di Baskerville', but they were given false dates ranging from 1784 to 1810. Alfieri may have done this partly to help in evading the Italian censorship, but his papers²⁰ for 1790 give other motives:

Of my six different works printed at Kehl, I will publish at present only two – *L'America Libera* and *La Virtù Sconosciuta* – reserving the rest for less stormy times... But I still had these works printed because the occasion was favourable, as I said; and I am convinced that for me to leave behind manuscripts is not the same as to leave behind books: no book being completed till it has with great diligence been set up, corrected, polished and seen through the press by the author himself. It is only too true that a book may still not be finished even with all these attentions; but it is certain that it cannot in any real sense be completed without them.

This foible of Alfieri's had a strange sequel, for during the revolution he was obliged to escape hurriedly from France and to leave in Paris the cases containing the sheets of the unpublished works, none of which had been bound. The cases were plundered, and in 1799 Alfieri was shocked to read a prospectus from Molini giving notice of his intention to issue a reprint of all Alfieri's works, including the unpublished writings set up at Kehl. The false dates on Alfieri's works²¹ have led several writers to assert that the Kehl printing-house was active until 1809. In fact its activities stopped twenty years earlier.

In 1789 Beaumarchais witnessed the events of the 14th of July from the scaffolding of an immense house which he was building opposite the Bastille. In this first year of the Revolution, the last volume of his edition of Voltaire was completed. Anticipating new opportunities for type-founding at Paris for a press freed from the old restrictions, he gave instructions for the Baskerville punches to be packed into chests and sent from Kehl to Paris; but difficulties arose there over delivery, and in February 1790 he drafted a letter²² to the Mayor of Paris asking for his help in revoking a delaying order given by the Keeper of the Seals.

I am indeed anxious about the fate of these chests, of which the value to me is 200000 livres; and which contain typographic riches of so precious a kind and of such unique beauty that I am most apprehensive of the veiled insinuations which

have led the Keeper not books, nor found and cast it which is nobody's mous loss to me,

As usual, he printed in France Panckoucke *leur Universel* in been used only presentation of change from at for 1 and 2 November indulgence and to carry the pre-acquired a set henceforth be importance to DU MONTEUR, 13. This fashion imprint 'De l'im no. 4. Caractère and pamphlets 1787, issued by freemasons' led the French Revoguer, and incl who had been 13

In November to Baskerville the the Margrave of the Port of Kehl, ferred to Paris, marcha's re-est some of his Kehl ing details of the *de Baskerville* (re 1033), the address between rue Anne-Marthe', 'The la situation of the

riage of *Figaro* in consent when his ion to have a few lfferi first visited selected his five e was so pleased at Kehl between di Kehl co' carat- anging from 1784 vading the Italian ves:

present only two - rest for less stormy sion was favourable, anuscripts is not the till it has with great the press by the au- e finished even with al sense be complet-

turing the revolu- ce and to leave in ed works, none of and in 1799 Alferi ing notice of his in- luding the unpub- ier's works²¹ have use was active un- atlier.

e 14th of July from ilding opposite the volume of his edi- opportunities for restrictions, he gave ked into chests and ver delivery, and in Paris asking for his er of the Seals.

ich the value to me is precious a kind and of led insinuations which

have led the Keeper of the Seals to issue this peculiar order. For steel punches are not books, nor even characters to print books, but are only what are used to found and cast the most beautiful printing types known, a kind of property which is nobody's concern, the destruction of which would be not only an enormous loss to me, but an irreparable harm to the splendid art of printing.

As usual, he won his argument, and soon a great deal of matter was printed in France with Baskerville types.

Panckoucke had founded in 1789 the *Gazette Nationale ou Le Moniteur Universel* in a handsome folio format which up to that time had been used only in England, but which he considered essential for the presentation of all the events, acts, and discussions which marked the change from absolute to republican power. The issues of this paper for 1 and 2 November 1790 were late. The editors craved their readers' indulgence and explained that, anxious to increase their pleasure and to carry the paper to the highest degree of perfection, they had acquired a set of Baskerville's types, with which the paper would henceforth be printed. The acquisition was considered of sufficient importance to be mentioned daily in the imprint 'DE L'IMPRIMERIE DU MONITEUR, avec les caractères de Baskerville, rue des Poitevins, no. 13'. This fashion was followed by another printing-house. Under the imprint 'De l'imprimerie du Cercle Social, rue du Théâtre François, no. 4. Caractères de Baskerville' there appeared a number of journals and pamphlets including the issues from 3 January 1791 of *La Bouche de l'ér*, issued by *Le Cercle Social*. This organization was primarily a freemasons' lodge which held that the purposes of freemasonry and the French Revolution had a great deal in common. It had a great vogue, and included many notable figures, among them Condorcet, who had been Beaumarchais's co-editor.

In November 1790, whilst the *Gazette Nationale* was changing over to Baskerville type, Beaumarchais's agent made arrangements with the Margrave of Baden for the cancellation of the unexpired lease of the lort of Kehl.²³ Printing type, press and other materials were transferred to Paris, in addition to the punches already sent there. Beaumarchais re-established his type-foundry in Paris, and re-engaged some of his Kehl staff for its operation. In a contemporary notice giving details of the material offered for sale by the *Dépôt des Caractères de Baskerville* (reproduced as Fig. 272 in D. B. Updike, *Printing Types 1022*), the address of the warehouse is given as 'Porte Saint Antoine, between rue Amelot and the Boulevard no. 1, opposite the ruins of the Bastille'. The land purchased by Beaumarchais in 1787 for the construction of his immense house was a long plot between the Boulevard

Saint-Antoine and the rue Amelot, which formerly was part of the thoroughfare of the boulevard. It was indeed in Beaumarchais's house that the warehouse was established. A foundry was set up about a quarter of a mile down the rue du Faubourg Saint-Antoine at no. 1 rue de Montreuil. On 1 February 1791 an agreement²⁴ for the operation of this foundry was made between Beaumarchais and two of his former Kehl staff, Laurent Claude Mercier and François Vernange (brother of Louis Vernange, type-founder at Lyon). Mercier and Vernange agreed to cast type exclusively for Beaumarchais, and an article in their agreement stipulated that any punches or matrices they might require would be furnished by M. de la Hogue against receipt, and that they were to take the greatest care of these precious objects and replace them at their own expense if lost.

The notice advertising the *Dépôt des Caractères de Baskerville* was printed by a Citoyen Colas, who was also named in the text as being in charge of the warehouse at Porte Saint-Antoine. In the Bibliothèque Historique at Paris there are documents relating to this warehouse bearing Colas's signature; it is identical with that given in January 1787 by the overseer at Kehl, J. B. Colas. His notice ended with an announcement that interim proofs of the types would be available and that work was proceeding on a complete specimen book of all the foundry had to offer. It is doubtful whether the latter was ever finished, for no copies of it are known, and it was not before 1793 that the book of interim proofs was ready.

The page from the *Essai d'Épreuves des Caractères de la Fonderie de Baskerville*²⁵ reproduced opposite shows the ugly italic numerals supplied by Fournier at Kehl, and also the alteration in alignment of the roman numerals 3 and 5 to 3 and 5. The text explains that the type shown was cast at Kehl for the abandoned quarto edition. Although it is claimed that the types can be considered as new, they make an uneven impression, partly because of bad inking and slovenly composition, but largely because the founding of the type is very much less accurate than Baskerville's. The swelled rule seen in the heading was a feature of Beaumarchais's typography, though never used by Baskerville.

This *Essai d'Épreuves* was not dated, but the text used on pages 6-14, showing the sizes from *gros romain* to *nomporelle*, was taken from the Constitutional Act preceded by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, presented to the French people by the National Convention on 24 June 1793. To identify this text, I examined a copy of the Act in the British Museum, and found that it too had been printed in Baskerville type at the 'Imprimerie des 86 Départements et de la So-

ly was part of the
aumarchai's house
set up about a quar-
oime at no. 1 rue de
the operation of this
of his former Kehl
ernange (brother of
id Vernange agreed
rticle in their agree-
they might require
cept, and that they
objects and replace

is de Baskerville was
the text as being in
In the Bibliothèque
to this warehouse
given in January 1787
ended with an an-
uld be available and
nen book of all the
er was ever finished,
re 1793 that the book

ères de la *Fonderie de*
italic numerals sup-
alignment of the ro-
s that the type shown
ition. Although it is
they make an uneven
nly composition, but
ch less accurate than
ing was a feature of
y Baskerville.

t used on pages 6-14,
; was taken from the
of the Rights of Man
he National Conven-
ined a copy of the Act
had been printed in
tements et de la So-

GROS ROMAIN SUR LE CORPS DE PETIT PARANGON.

CE Caractère, ainsi que les trois
suivans ont été fondus à Kehl pour une
Édition in-4° des Œuvres de *Voltaire*.
On n'a fait qu'un essai de cette Édition
en 2 volumes, desquels on n'a tiré que
très-peu d'exemplaires ; de sorte que
ces quatre fontes peuvent être confi-
dérées comme neuves.

Celle-ci peut peser environ 4 à 500.
Ceux qui l'acquerront en totalité la
payeront 20 fous, & partiellement
22 fous.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0



L'Italique est proportionné au Romain.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

ciété des Jacobins'. At the same time I noticed an Address issued by the National Convention on 26 June 1793, likewise in Baskerville type, and bearing the imprint of the Imprimerie Nationale.

On 17 March 1791, six weeks after the signing of the agreement with Mercier and Vernange, a decree was passed proclaiming that all trades were free. The number of presses in Paris rapidly increased from two hundred to over one thousand, and Beaumarchais's type-foundry prospered; types were sold to many printers in Paris, and also in Angoulême, Lille and Sedan. Unfortunately, in 1792 Beaumarchais once again got involved in politics. 'Jean Beaumarchais', wrote Carlyle, 'thinking to serve the Fatherland, and do a stroke of trade in the old way, has commissioned sixty-thousand stand of good arms out of Holland; would to heaven, for the Fatherland's sake and his, they were come!' But as they did not come, Beaumarchais went to Holland. There he read in a December issue of the *Gazette de La Haye* that he had been accused of conspiracy and other crimes. He at once decided to return to Paris to answer the charges; after a short period *en route* in a London prison for debt, he reached Paris in March 1793, where he vindicated himself, making use of the Baskerville types to print some handsome quartos²⁶ refuting his accuser.

In June 1793 he left France once again with the title of Commissioner of the Republic for a secret foreign mission. Despite this brittle glory, six months later it was necessary for his wife to get the Committee of Public Safety to declare that Beaumarchais was fulfilling a secret foreign mission and to order that he should not be treated as an émigré. After an interval of only three months this order was annulled by the Committee of General Safety, and Beaumarchais was once again declared an émigré. State officials visited both the warehouse and the foundry on 31 May 1794, but they appear to have been anxious to keep the business going in order to produce revenue for the State.²⁷ According to papers in the Bibliothèque Historique, the foundry continued in activity throughout Beaumarchais's exile; and it may be that Gudrin de la Brenellerie (Beaumarchais's frequently inaccurate biographer) was in error when he wrote that seals were placed on the foundry and the staff dismissed. There is, however, evidence that difficulties arose over the supply and price of metal, and the *Gazette Nationale*, after using battered founts for several months, abandoned the use of Baskerville type for its text after 29 May 1795.

After the Convention had been succeeded by the Directoire, Beaumarchais's name was eventually removed from the list of émigrés, and in July 1796 he returned to Paris. His contract with Mercier and Ver-

nange expired, but the type never renewed. In his family, the types in their founts were used for Jacob, self-style, return from Britain, the opposite of the composer who to set up a fount produced a type specimen to print.

At this period the pressive collector bookseller frieries in the style a few matrices land and Jacob is actually the F don't get the n has sworn to do the punches we *actères dans le g* in 1797. His br later, when De direct from the where it is still from Jacob's sp today believes Baskerville. It is ill-founded.

Beaumarchais' all the Baskerville shown for Bask started to print Bridgewater, a mansion filled Egerton was an to his work, an

s issued by the
ville type, and

reement with
that all trades
ased from two
type-foundry
nd also in An-
marchais once
wrote Carlyle,
rade in the old
ms out of Hol-
his, they were
nt to Holland.
laze that he had
e decided to re-
od *en route* in a
3, where he vin-
s to print some

le of Commis-
spite this brittle
o get the Com-
: was fulfilling a
be treated as an
ter was annulled
rchaïs was once
the warehouse
ive been anxious
le for the State.²⁷
the foundry con-
nd it may be that
inaccurate biog-
re placed on the
n, evidence that
, and the *Gazette*
nths, abandoned
795.
Directoire, Beau-
st of émigrés, and
Mercier and Ver-

range expired six months later, and there is no evidence that it was ever renewed. At his death in 1799, the Baskerville punches remained in his family, unused.

In 1800 the firm of Levrault Brothers issued a specimen book of the types in their foundry at Strasbourg; the first three pages showed *caractères dans le genre de Baskerville*. These types were the work of Claude Jacob, self-styled 'Pupil of Baskerville'. He had left Kehl soon after his return from Birmingham and set up a rival Société Typographique on the opposite bank of the Rhine, taking as partner Henri Rolland, a compositor who had also worked at Kehl. They obtained permission to set up a foundry at Strasbourg in 1784, and in the same year produced a type specimen book. Two years later they were given permission to print.

At this period the Decker foundry of Berlin were building up an impressive collection of types. In 1788, on the recommendation of some bookseller friends in Strasbourg, Georg Jakob Decker bought 500 matrices 'in the style of Baskerville' from Rolland and Jacob. A year later a few matrices were still lacking, and Georg wrote to his son that Rolland and Jacob had fallen out and were going to separate. 'Jacob, who is actually the punch-cutter, has up till now let everything slide, so we don't get the missing matrices. I made a tremendous fuss, and Jacob has sworn to deliver them in a fortnight's time.' After this separation the punches were bought in 1795 by F. G. Levrault, who displayed *caractères dans le genre de Baskerville* in the type-specimen book he issued in 1797. His brother Nicholas joined the foundry in 1800. Two years later, when Decker needed more of Jacob's matrices, he bought them direct from the Levraults.²⁸ Their foundry was later moved to Nancy, where it is still operated by the firm of Berger-Levrault. Types made from Jacob's punches are now sold as Baskerville's types, and the firm today believes that it possesses the original punches engraved by Baskerville. The reproductions printed overleaf show that this belief is ill-founded.

Bcaumarchais's widow died in 1816; two years later his daughter sold all the Baskerville material to Pierre Didot l'aîné, whose early enthusiasm for Baskerville has already been mentioned. In 1812 Didot had started to print books for Francis Henry Egerton, later eighth Earl of Bridgewater, a wealthy and eccentric scholar then living in a Paris mansion filled with cats and dogs dressed as men and women. Egerton was an exacting customer: a special compositor was assigned to his work, and at Egerton's request Didot's foreman was sent to a

QU'UN tissu de malheur. La certitude seule de la mort suffirait pour empoisonner les jours d'ail-

Mais ce jugement serait trop précipité. Quoique l'expérience apprenne à tous les mortels que le bonheur ab-

Nous arrivons tout nouveaux aux divers âges de la vie, et nous y manquons souvent d'expérience,

Nous arrivons tout nouveaux aux divers âges de la vie, et nous y manquons souvent d'expérience, malgré le nombre

Types 'In the Style of Baskerville' cut by Claude Jacob. (Above) from *Épreuves des Caractères de Rolland et Jacob*, à Strasbourg, n.d. (c.1786); 'Great Primer ou Grand Romain' by Jacob élève de Baskerville. (Below) from *Épreuves des Caractères de la Fondrie de Lervault, Frères, à Strasbourg*, 1800; 'Great Primer ou Grand Romain dans le genre de Baskerville'.

sale in 1816 to buy types for him. On 16 January 1819 Didot wrote to Egerton offering him the Baskerville material for six thousand francs. He explained that he had bought the material 'by chance and simply as a matter of curiosity', but that it included all Baskerville's steel punches, over three thousand in all, for different sizes of roman and italic.²⁹ He alleged that Beaumarchais had bought them for twenty thousand pounds sterling, but that he himself had not wanted to pay much for them, since he had spent eight years working on his new foundry, which would soon be ready. The last statement was true, for a specimen of his new types appeared in 1819, dedicated to his son Jules. Egerton nevertheless refused the offer, and when Jules succeeded his father in 1822 he became the new owner of the Baskerville punches.

Readers of Hansard's *Typographia* published in 1825 were told that he believed the Baskerville foundry was still in Paris, but two years lat-

o. La
ffrait
d'ail-
? pré-
renne
ir ab-

eaux
nous
ence,
x aux
quons
ombre

e) from *Éprouves des*
it Primer ou Grand
s des *Caractères de la*
ou Grand Roman

9 Didot wrote to
thousand francs.
tance and simply
Baskerville's steel
res of roman and
them for twenty
not wanted to pay
rking on his new
ent was true, for
licated to his son
en Jules succeed-
of the Baskerville
325 were told that
but two years lat-

It is not, however, merely as a literary curio-
sity that this *Treatyse* is of interest, for inde-
pendently of the information which it contains
of the state of Angling at the period in which it
was written, there are some grounds for pre-
suming that it suggested to Walton the idea of
his popular "Complete Angler," for the most
Type used for *The Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle*.

SMALL PICA ROMAN. No. 1.

Quouique tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra? quam-
diu nos etiam furor iste tuus eludet? quem ad finem sese ef-
frenata iactabit audacia? nihilne te nocturnum præsidium
palatii, nihil urbis vigiliæ, nihil timor populi, nihil consen-
sus bonorum omnium, nihil hic munissimus habendi sena-
tus locus, nihil horum ora vultusque moverunt? patere tua
confilia non sentis? constriclam jam omnium horum consci-
entia teneri conjunctionem tuam non vides? quid proxima,
quid superiore nocte egeris, ubi fueris, quos convocaveris,
quid consilii ceperis, quem nostrum ignorare arbitraris? O
tempora, o mores! Senatus hoc intelligit, consul vidit: hic
tamen vivit. Vivit? immo vero etiam in senatum venit: fit
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X

Fry's Small Pica Roman No. 1, cut in imitation of Baskerville's design. From *A Specimen of Printing Types by Fry and Steele*, London, 1795.

er English readers were offered an edition of *The Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle* which the imprint alleged had been 'printed with the types of John Baskerville, for William Pickering'. In fact the type used was Fry's Small Pica Roman No. 1, which, although cut in imitation of Baskerville, displays an uncharacteristic italic capital T, and has a serif at the apex of the roman capital W. Another misnamed Baskerville font was later supplied by the University Press at Oxford to Dr Daniel, in mistake for the Fell type.³⁰ Although Horace Hart wrote that he had not much doubt that it had once been a real Baskerville font which over a long period had been 'improved' by rejection and

'Baskerville' O. F. Brevier.
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

³⁰Types supplied by the University Press, Oxford, to the Daniel Press circa 1885.

substitution,³¹ the illustration at the foot of p. 33 does not support this statement. But we must return to the history of the original Baskerville punches.

In 1838 poor Jules Didot lost his reason. Part of his foundry was sold to the brothers Plon, described in their specimen book of 1851 as Jules Didot's successors; but neither in this specimen nor in any later book issued by their firm were the Baskerville types shown. However, before the transfer of their printing office from Paris to Meaux in 1898, they decided to sell some unwanted equipment to A. Bertrand, who had established a type-foundry at Paris in 1871. The unwanted equipment included the unrecognized Baskerville punches.

The sale was made only after a report by the foundry foreman at Plon's that the punches had gone rusty, and for this reason the price asked was very low. The greater part of the punches and matrices were sold in 1893, but a few matrices previously overlooked were sold in 1895, when Plon made a condition that Bertrand should supply them with any quantities needed of the types, unless he preferred to lend matrices. Throughout the transaction the Baskerville types were called simply *vieux elzéviens*. Bertrand cast up founts and showed them in his general catalogue under the heading *caractères de labeur par séries* and let them be known as *elzéviens anciens*. In April 1903 he delivered to Meaux a fount of the size now called corps 14 (formerly English); a few years later, Bertrand supplied duplicate matrices of this size to Plon. The type was first used in book-work for Henry Martin's description of the manuscript *La Ténence des Ducs*, printed and published by E. Plon, Nourrit & Cie³² in 1907. For several years this revival of the Baskerville types passed unnoticed, although the printing of *La Ténence des Ducs* was completed in the same year as Straus and Dent's *John Baskerville*, a memoir based on the researches of Samuel Timmins. It fell to an American typographer to recognize the French use of the Birmingham types.

Bruce Rogers³³ saw a prospectus issued by E. Plon, Nourrit & Cie set in these Baskerville types. He thought that they looked like the real thing, but it was not until 1917, when he came as typographical adviser to the University Press at Cambridge and found a Baskerville specimen sheet in a local bookshop, that he had an opportunity of making a comparison with the French types: he was then convinced that they were for the most part genuine. He recommended that the press should buy the matrices if possible, or at least a quantity of the type for special use. Unfortunately this could not be done during the war, but

support this
the original

dry was sold
1851 as Jules
y later book
However, be-
eaux in 1898,
and, who had
d equipment

y foreman at
son the price
natrices were
were sold in
supply them
erred to lend
as were called
d them in his
par séries and
; delivered to
ly English); a
if this size to
Martin's de-
and published
revival of the
of *La Terence*
d Dent's *John*
l Timmins. It
ich use of the

Nourrit & Cie
ed like the real
aphical advis-
skerville spec-
ity of making
ned that they
that the press
of the type for
g the war, but

after his return to America in 1919 he wrote to the French publishers: they agreed to cast up a fount for the Harvard University Press whom he joined in 1920. He first used the type for *The Cemetery at Souain*, privately printed at Harvard in 1921. Interest in the original Baskerville punches was stimulated by the numerous recuttings of his types brought out in the nineteen-twenties by type-founders and makers of type-setting machines. This activity brought new customers to Bertrand, who at last, in 1929, issued a type-specimen devoted to his Baskerville series. In 1930 Marius Audin published at Lyons his monograph on *Le Baskerville*, in which he also considered Jacob's types, and in the summer of 1936 an article appeared in *Printing Review* written by Ellic Howe and illustrated with reproductions of Bertrand's 1929 specimen; it was entitled 'The Fate of the Baskerville Types'; but Bertrand was about to part with the punches.

In November 1936 the material of Bertrand's foundry was sold to Deberny et Peignot, to whom were transferred 2,750 punches and 3,052 matrices for the making of Baskerville type. The punches do not consist exclusively of material made in Birmingham, but I have carefully compared the punches of the Greek type at Oxford cut by Baskerville with the punches bought by Deberny et Peignot: I estimate that approximately three-quarters of the punches in Paris were made under the same supervision as those at Oxford. A great deal of work must be done to produce substitutes for the replacement punches cut by men who were either ignorant of Baskerville's designs or who were out of sympathy with them. Fortunately no foundry in France is better equipped than the present owners to undertake the reconstituting of the material into its original condition, and much preparatory work has already been accomplished.

When Beaumarchais first transferred Baskerville's types to the Font of Kehl, readers in France were already accustomed to certain departures from the Renaissance forms of letters. A feature of the *romain du roi*, which Philippe Grandjean began to cut in 1693 for Louis XIV, was its horizontal serifs; the series also showed a more marked contrast than earlier types between the thick and thin strokes. Frenchmen were therefore prepared to admire the types which Baskerville's contemporaries in England had rejected as departing too much from the accepted forms. In England today the versions of Baskerville's designs used for machine composition are among the most popular of all available types, and the merit of the original design as an extended letter is at last fully appreciated. The original punches now belong to our neighbours in France. Yet if any reader be tempted on that account to

break the tenth commandment, let him turn again to his Bible: he might even turn to the folio edition of 1763, the masterpiece of printing by that 'terrible infidel',

JOHN BASKERVILLE

Postscript: On 12 March 1953, Charles Peignot generously gave the surviving punches and matrices for Baskerville's types to the University of Cambridge. Describing the ceremony at Emmanuel College, where the presentation was made to the Vice-Chancellor in the presence of the French Ambassador, *The Times* reported M. Peignot's admission that he had secretly hoped the question of transferring Baskerville's punches and matrices would be quickly forgotten soon after it was first put to him; but he was now convinced of the appropriateness of their return. The punches and matrices are now in the custody of Cambridge University Library. (Before the presentation of the surviving Baskerville material to Cambridge University, a new set of punches was cut by Deberny Peignot and used to cast new founts for sale. These close copies of the originals passed into the collection of the Swiss typefoundry of Haas at Münchenstein after the closure of Deberny Peignot in 1972.)

My interest in type ornaments had been aroused in 1939 when I learnt to set type by hand at the University Press in Cambridge. There I also learnt a method which Bruce Rogers had used to stamp out arrangements of type ornaments on paper by inking the metal castings by means of a rubber-stamp pad; he then stamped out the impressions one at a time on paper.

Having traced the history of the Baskerville punches, I decided to try to establish the origins of his type ornaments, with results which surprised me.

When Jo
book in 17
letter-foun
still flouri
which he
any type c
prise for t
that entire
types whi
eighteenth
subscriber
spendence
a further's
books. For
the major
inscribed
in letter-f
founts
and Dent,
their book
shown in t
from whic
(formerly
biary, (an
dated 'Bri
that year;
men of Ba
first publi
(1990).