

GOUDY

BY ROBERT O. BALLOU

FREDERIC WILLIAM GOUDY is the occasional proof which sharpens the teeth of the old saw about better mouse-traps and the path the world beats to their maker's door. Fifteen years ago he was an obscure designer of advertising ornaments, a letterer, a printer making little books at his Village Press, known only to the initiate. Today you introduce him to the most obscure printer in America and he asks, "Are you related to the Goudy who drew all those wonderful types?" Goudy has made better types; that is why. He is a curiosity in printing history. Other type designers have made one, two, perhaps three, good type faces. Goudy has made half a hundred—all of them, with one or two possible exceptions, excellent. A dozen or more are famous wherever the Roman alphabet is printed.

One thinks of the date of a man's birth as his beginning. As a matter of fact, the determining factors in his personality are in the annals of his ancestors, in their physical beings, their impulses, the fortunes which drove them here and there. In the case of Goudy one sees a long line of solid, hard-working men wandering about restlessly, expressing now and then a creative urge somewhat repressed through the need to earn a living, loving learning more than material success. Such a history will inevitably produce at least one school teacher. In the Goudy family it was John F., the father of Frederic and the husband of Amanda, who bore Frederic at Bloomington, Illinois, on March 8, 1865.

What was printing like in 1865? Ottmar Mergenthaler was eleven years old and had not yet begun to think about "the

significance of the slug." Mechanical paper-making, as we know it, was in its infancy. Fourdrinier, inventor of the *deus ex machina* of the paper mills, had died but eleven years before. Power presses were only half a century old. William Morris was a boy; there was no Kelmscott Press. Printing had hardly become conscious as yet of the doldrums into which it had drifted. It was the period of which Douglas C. McMurtrie, in "American Type Design," has written:

American typography, like that of all the European countries, passed through a dark and discouraging period during the last half of the Nineteenth Century. This was the age of types abnormal in every particular, of the decorated monstrosities that made printing in general, and display composition especially, hideous.

Not that abnormal or hideous types bothered any member of the Goudy family in those days; least of all the Goudy baby. John F. Goudy, superintendent of schools at Bloomington, was a harmonious part of the age in which he lived. Between 1865 and 1870 he and his family lived in four different towns, and in one of them twice. Young Frederic's teens found him at the Butler, Illinois, school, a janitor at sixteen, earning ten dollars a month.

Here he became marked for an engineer, or at least a mechanic. For his first ten dollars went into a lathe, which he bought from Perry Mason of Boston, publisher, then, of the *Youth's Companion*. Right away he started to make a steam engine of his own. It couldn't all be wood, and he had no boring machine to make a metal cylinder. But he found that Babbitt metal could be melted and poured, so he turned a mold and a core of wood, poured Babbitt

metal into it, and had a cylinder. His steam engine ran. That's the way he has been ever since. If he finds it impossible to get the right tool to cut his type matrices he uses what is at hand, and ends by making the most satisfactory tool he has ever used out of a rat-tail file.

But Fred Goudy never became an engineer. Ten dollars a month was evidently not enough spending money for him, for a bit later on, while in the Shelbyville High-school, he took to helping a local paper-hanger. The Sunday-school was being papered, and he was asked to give the finishing touches. There were some panels about the wall which looked rather empty, and the young consultant thought that some Bible texts would look well there. Before he had finished, he had the whole place pasted up with texts made of letters which he had laboriously cut out of brilliant wall paper, redrawing the ornamental letters he needed from specimens in an old Bruce Foundry specimen book borrowed from a local print-shop. Those panels would make an interesting picture now, placed beside specimens of Forum, Kennerley, and Garamont. Perhaps they were good letters. But they have long since disappeared.

In 1883 John F. Goudy went to South Dakota, where three years later he became probate judge and a real-estate operator. In his office Frederic became partner, clerk, bookkeeper and advertising manager. Here he did his first layout work. But he was restless and soon he left Dakota for the city—Minneapolis. Here he kept books again, for a few months; then, unexplainably, he went to Springfield, Illinois, where he stayed a little longer than he had at Minneapolis. Wanderers go home now and then, and Goudy started back to South Dakota. But he never finished the trip. He stopped off in Chicago.

Up to this time Goudy had been doing other things beside keeping books. Beginning with his experience with printers in South Dakota, in writing and laying out real estate advertisements, he had discov-

ered in himself an interest in advertising, and here and there had dabbled in it. When he found himself in Chicago, in 1890 or thereabouts, this interest was crystallizing. He booked a few commissions to write advertisements, and while hunting for others he found a vivid young person who gradually interested him more than the men who paid his bills. Her name was Bertha Sprinks. Today she is Bertha M. Goudy. She set most of the books printed by the Village Press.

II

About this time Goudy drew the first Goudy type. He wanted not only to use types, but to create them. He did not know anything about it; that is, about the technique of making type designs. But his skill with the pencil, which had shown itself back in Shelbyville when he had won first prize at a county fair for copying a wood-engraving, coupled with the fascination which types now had for him, could have but one outcome.

One evening he drew an alphabet of capitals in letters half an inch high. When he had finished them he folded them up and put them in an envelope and sent them to the Dickinson branch of the American Type Founders Company, asking if they were worth five dollars. A letter came back enclosing a check for ten dollars, and Goudy thought that if he could make money as fast as that he had better give up bookkeeping and cashiering forever.

But he soon found that he could not make a living drawing alphabets. So he connected himself with a Chicago real-estate concern, and while working there he met C. Lauren Hooper, then a teacher of English. They became fast friends, and Hooper soon learned of Goudy's love of printing. The two decided to establish a press in which fine booklet work could be done. In 1895 they opened the Booklet Press, subletting space in a printing establishment in South Dearborn street, with an 8 by 12 Gordon press, a stone, and a

half-dozen fonts of type. Thus Goudy became a printer.

About this time Stone and Kimball came to Chicago from Harvard with the *Chap Book*. They somehow heard about Goudy and his love for good printing, and asked him if he would print the *Chap Book*. He consented and, with a steady monthly job to do, hired a printer to help him in the shop. It was soon evident that new type was necessary. The *Chap Book* needed to put a great deal on one page because it was small, but Goudy didn't wish to risk ruining the appearance of the page by printing it in too small a face. The one which pleased him best was the McKellar, Smith and Jordan Original Old Style. He had a fount specially cast, and made the old-time printers who looked at the *Chap Book* wonder how he fitted his type so closely. He was already doing good printing.

Some of the men who knew him in Chicago at that time—Oswald Cooper, who has since made Cooper type, and others—like to tell stories of the way Goudy did his work. A customer would come into his office, perhaps at two o'clock in the afternoon, with a job that must be completed the next morning at eight o'clock. Goudy would take it on and give the most solemn promise in the world, planning to devote the rest of the day to the job. But about the time the customer's footsteps died away, one of the boys would come in and suggest gallery seats at the Majestic, and Goudy would go. Then it would be dinner time and there would be some friends to talk to. About bed time the eight o'clock promise would be remembered, and Goudy would go back to the office and start his work; perhaps at two o'clock he would leave with the job finished.

Meanwhile another young enthusiast had joined him. Will Ransom, who had come to Chicago to learn how to design types, had gone expectantly to the Art Institute, where he had been told that there was an art school. But it had no courses in type design. By chance he wand-

ered into Goudy's office, and there he stayed at a drawing board. Here, then, were two enthusiasts. The result was inevitable. They established a private press. On a hot July day in 1903, in the barn back of Goudy's house in Park Ridge, the Village Press was born.

The first piece of printing done by the Village Press was an announcement, dated July 24, 1903, of which seventy-six copies were printed and distributed to friends of the printers. "The founders of the Press," it tells us, "intend to make beautiful books of those things in literature which they enjoy. Each book will be planned and executed in what manner seems most appropriate to the character of that book, and the decoration will be considered in relation to the printed page rather than to the intent of the matter. By 'book' in this connection is meant a piece of artistic handicraft, and not its literary content. Generally speaking, the books which the printers have in mind will be strong and dignified; beautiful, too, but of the whole rather than of any one part. This strength will be a feature of their production."

In this announcement was the first showing of the now famous Village Type, "a letter," as the announcement says, "generous in form, with solid lines and strong serifs, and without preposterous thicks and thins. Legibility of the text as a whole was the first consideration, and the founders of the Press trust that the letter will prove acceptable to the readers of their productions." In March of the following year the Village Press was moved to Hingham, Massachusetts, and two years later to New York City, where Goudy established himself in the building then occupied also by Mitchell Kennerley. Here Goudy and Kennerley met and entered into a friendship which has lasted ever since.

In 1907 the Village Press, still in the Parker Building, went at the work of printing books with new energy. One of Goudy's most ambitious projects was begun here: the Sermon on the Mount, with illustrations by R. Anning Bell, and borders

and initials by Goudy himself. But, before it was completed, the Parker Building burned, the only complete set of Village Press publications burned, the Sermon on the Mount burned, and a gorgeous collection of Goudy initial letters and border designs burned. The only Village type which had ever been cast became little lumps of metal somewhere in the ashes that filled the basement. The drawings for the Village type were gone. In brief, the Village Press was obliterated from the world.

III

What was to be done next? There wasn't any money in the Goudy family; there was no press to print anything on; there was no type. Goudy tells how, the day after the fire, some society for the help of the worthy poor called and told him that they could arrange to give him a small amount of money, and he says that when it was refused there was a noticeable surprise in the voice of the person who offered it, which showed, perhaps, where Goudy stood in the popular mind of 1908.

One evening, after the destruction of the Press, he and his wife took a street car out to Brighton Park. Walking along the beach Goudy suddenly stopped. Who has ever looked at the Atlantic from an American shore without looking beyond to the Old World? Goudy did it that night. In his mind was the roar of London which he had never heard—and the British Museum; the land of William Morris and Caxton, and the Caslon Foundry; and he said:

"I wish I could go to Europe."

"Well, why don't you?" asked Mrs. Goudy.

As they rattled home that night a plan was perfected. Goudy was to earn enough money by July, not only to pay his expenses to Europe and back, but to leave enough in New York to take care of Mrs. Goudy and Frederic, Junior, while he was away. Their wants were modest enough, and the plan was jovially entered into. On July 9, 1909, Goudy sailed for Europe.

Not a great deal of significance in the history of type design happened on that first trip abroad. Goudy was still interested less in type design than he was in book-making as a whole. He was still primarily the booklover rather than the type designer. Returning in August, 1909, he took an office and continued his work in lettering. But two years later he designed the lovely Kennerley type, which B. H. Newdigate has called "the most beautiful type put within the reach of English printers since the first Caslon began casting about the year 1724."

In nothing which Goudy had done before had his clear vision of letter forms so shown itself as in this Kennerley. The response from discriminating printers was almost instantaneous. It is doubtful if any face, with the exception of Caslon, has achieved such a wide popularity so quickly, and such high praise from eminent typographers. It has been paid the tribute of imitation both in America and abroad. In March, 1924, thirteen experts in America and England were asked to list the ten best types available to English-speaking printers. Of these, seven put Kennerley on their lists.

The rest of Goudy's story is a story of success, begun as so many successes have been begun, outside of the country of its origin. In 1913 the Caslon Foundry in England bought the right to cast Kennerley Oldstyle, Forum Title, and the type which he had originally named Goudy Oldstyle (later renamed Goudy Antique and called Ratdoldt by the Caslons). The Caslons also agreed to buy a black letter which Goudy had begun to draw, but this has never been cut nor cast in the twelve years which have followed because its designer is not yet satisfied with it! The next year Goudy sold the Caslons five new type designs in a fifteen minute interview.

Recognition in Europe was the beginning of recognition in America. The American Type Founders Company asked Goudy to draw a face for them and the types now known as Goudy Oldstyle and Goudy

Italic, the father and mother of the Goudy family, were the result. Realizing the excellence of the type, the foundry not only cast the two parents but also enlarged the small capitals of the font to make Goudy Title, commissioned Goudy to draw special initials for the italic to make Goudy Cur-sive, had Mr. Benton redraw both Roman and italic with a little added weight to make Goudy Bold, and tooled a line out of Goudy Bold to make Goudy Handtooled.

For a time following this Goudy worked under an agreement with the American Type Founders Company which provided that he deliver a specified number of designs every year. Under this agreement he gave the foundry several new designs, only one of which, National Oldstyle, has yet appeared. In 1920 he made a new and fortunate alliance. He was retained by the Lanston Monotype Machine Company as its art director, under an agreement which gave him general supervision of all matters pertaining to its typographic designs and the company assurance that he would create a specified number of new designs yearly.

As a result of this connection, the Monotype Company announced eight Goudy types for machine composition. The first type produced was a sensation in printing. It was Garamont, the type which you are reading now, and which has been used by THE AMERICAN MERCURY since its first issue. The other Goudy types which have been put on the monotype are: Goudy Heavy; Kennerley, with Roman and Italic; Kennerley Bold, with Roman and Italic; Forum title; Goudy Modern, with Roman and italic; Goudy Open, with Roman and italic; and Italian Oldstyle, with Roman and italic.

As a group, they are without any doubt the most distinguished group of machine-set types ever offered to printers. A good printer could do all his printing today with monotype Goudy types and all of his printing would be adequate. Goudy will probably be remembered longer for these monotype faces than for those which were cast to be handset.

But he is still at it. A few weeks ago, on a Friday, he called me from a Chicago station saying that he was in town. I went down and found him with a complete set of drawings for a new font of type, which he had brought to Chicago to have cut. The idea had occurred to him about noon on the previous Monday. He had begun work immediately and had left New York Thursday morning with the work completed. I think it is one of the most beautiful letters he has ever drawn. It is not yet named nor has it been shown. The drawings for Hadriano were made between noon and three o'clock the following morning. But he is still working on that black letter, begun in 1913!

Sixty miles or so up the Hudson from New York Goudy has now settled down (he hopes) for the rest of his life. For years he has wanted to cast types of his own design in a foundry of his own. Today the Village Letter Foundry is casting Goudy types in an old mill over a beautiful stream at Marlboro-on-Hudson. Much of the manual labor necessary to the many processes of matrix-cutting and type casting he does himself and probably he gets more fun out of it than out of anything else which he does. He is essentially a playboy and he will remain one to his death.

CLINICAL NOTES

BY GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

No. 18.—One can't but look with a humorous pity upon those deluded souls who are confident that the Eighteenth Amendment will be repealed during their time on earth and that once again the lithograph capricornus, the free lunch, the basket of pretzels, the soaped mirror, the white apron, the dish of cloves, the brightly shined foot-rail and the succulent dill-pickle will appear to gladden the street-corner. Politicians may change all they want to, but so long as human nature doesn't change the Eighteenth Amendment stands no more chance of being stricken from the national legal bible than the Thirteenth. In order to get rid of Prohibition, an immense amount of lucre would be needed to bribe, buy up, shanghai and blackmail the dry members of Congress, and such an amount of lucre will never be forthcoming during our lifetime. And for a very simple reason.

Every American who is well enough off in worldly goods to contribute so much as even a measly ten dollars to any cause, or to the cause of the wets in particular, today has all he wants to drink or, if he hasn't, knows where he can get it either simply by lifting the telephone receiver off the hook or walking around the corner to a convenient blind-pig, "club" or restaurant back-room. To persuade this contented fellow to grow sufficiently excited to contribute a nickel toward the alcoholic happiness of men less fortunate than he is to have a respect for human nature that centuries of experience with human nature hardly warrant. Since Prohibition doesn't bother him in the least, he has ceased to have any concern with it the one way or the other, and doesn't give a tinker's dam whether the Eighteenth Amendment re-

mains on the books or not. And so, filling up another glass of excellent stuff got in by his bootlegger by way of Canada, Bermuda, Cuba or crooked revenue officers working the North Atlantic coast, he allows the brewers idiotically to campaign themselves to death with negligible amounts of money, the newspaper editorial writers vainly to get writer's cramp and the parched paupers of the country to protest all they want to and go thirsty.

Never since Prohibition went into effect has it been so easy to get good, drinkable *Schnapps* at fair prices as it is now. And it is constantly getting easier. On that day when a man with a double Daiquiri cocktail in his fist feels his heart breaking because some yokel out in the farm-tractor belt hasn't got one too, on that day will the Eighteenth Amendment feel the ground under it getting weak. But until that day comes, it is founded upon the Gibraltar rock of human nature that doesn't give a hoot so long as it itself has got a bottle hidden in the book-case. Prohibition could doubtless be soon got rid of with a hundred million dollars. But the hundred million necessary dollars, unfortunately or otherwise, happen to be in the pants of men who know of Prohibition only by hearsay.

The War and Sex Morals.—The attributing of the present looseness of sex morals to the late war seems to me to be for the most part nonsensical. While it is unquestionably true that the war inspired sexual nonchalance among women more or less directly concerned in it, such, for example, as volunteer nurses, young women resident within sound of the guns and others close to the actual scenes of conflict, I doubt