

A Latter Day Cadmus . . .

the Typhochondriac Doctor Eckman



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STEVENS L. WATTS

With words borrowed from Mr. Manuel boy Frank, the friend of subject and scribe alike, and from the files of *The Rochester Post-Bulletin*, hear now the story about Cadmus, born probably 5000 years ago: who lives at this day in the person of James Eckman at Rochester in Minnesota: Dr. Eckman of the Mayo publications division, Jim Eckman of THE DOOMSDAY PRESS.

Cadmus, you remember, was said to have been a Phœnician, who was the reputed introducer of letters into ancient Greece, and the founder of Thebes in Bœotia. *Ein Mann für alles* in his day and time, he decided that it would be a good thing if the Greeks had an alphabet; so he sat down and wrote one out. The Greeks, doubtless after much argument, agreed upon rules for using it; whereafter they had a written language and literature, and the wisdom born of them. Cadmus started something in visual communication that has been going on for all these years, and every generation knows one of his followers who goes out of the way to carry on.

James and Frances Eckman live at 921 8th Ave., Southwest, in Rochester. Type vendors the world over know this address of THE DOOMSDAY PRESS; but it is known to exceeding few that the private press has been financially in the red since its onset in 1939. Dr. Eckman's gracious consort mails out checks to pay DOOMSDAY bills every month, and well does *she* know the shop will never make a nickel before the crack o' doom.



Dr. Eckman supports his private press by putting in a full day's work at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, after which he hurries home to dinner and communion with his beloved types belowstairs. Paul Gieseey of Oregon says types are a bunch of characters. Jim Eckman has a cellarful of types, and he savvies their anatomy, all their moods and typical characteristics.

Quousque tandem abutere, Cato?
Doomsday Press invaded by goat
The checkbook, quick, Francesca
1234567890 D e o f l l r s f e t

STATIONERS SEMISCHRIFT, 12 POINT
 Barnhart Brothers & Spindler

How far, O Catiline, wilt thou
abuse our patience? 123456789
ACEY dency Ph D

CANCELLARESCA BASTARDA, CORPS 16
 J. van Krimpen Enschedé & Zonen

Howcome this Doctor, a foremost contributor to the American Illustrated Medical Dictionary and himself regarded by associates as a perambulating lexicon of abstruse scientific nomenclature and terminology, to get exposed to *pediculus typographicus*, the common type louse? Reaction to its bite was positive; resultant condition chronic. The victim is a confirmed four-nick *aficionado de tipos*, fouled up inextricably, not unlike Laocoön or the legendary goat of Señor Miguel Hogán.

The erudite Dr. Eckman is a meticulous specifier in prescribing format, typographical treatment and so forth for the professional papers of his colleagues and for printed matter that channels through his office at Mayo Clinic. With him, nothing is "about right;" it is *all* right or it is wrong. His scholarly mien goes well



THE MAN ON THE CORNER


with his PhD degree from Georgetown University; on him it looks good. But he can fly off the handle when somebody goofs, and categorize the culprit as an oafish illegitimate, a rogue and the son of a witch. Grass-roots idiom stems from the soil of his native Iowa.

Envisioning what he wanted in typography, but not getting it from specifications he sent to the printer, the Doctor decided that a shop, where he could test his copyfitting and typesetting ideas, was indicated. At about that time, Dr. H. L. Smith, since retired as senior consultant in the medical section, and Mr. Thomas E. Keys, library chief at Mayo Clinic, came to him with a manuscript recounting Dr. Smith's adventures as an ambulance company officer in World War I. Publication of the book being a private venture, they decided to set up a kittypot and print it themselves (all three having an interest in the mysteries of the Art Preservative) and share as co-partners in a financially hopeless private printery. They picked up a nondescript small press, enough type and other stuff to get started, employing John Dietz as printer. By 1940, the book was done, 250 pages having been set by hand and printed on the old platen press.



Upon completion of the project, Dr. Jim decided to take over the equipment and add to it. Developing a taste for the ornate letterforms of the horse-and-buggy days, he found old fonts in backroads printing offices, and swapped with others of his ilk for those Late Garfield stinkers and stillborn monstrosities of the Rubber Collar Generation. Most of the same, for my money, should be allowed to corrode in the hellbox for all time. Jim regards antique faces as authentic Americana, relics of a romantic past. He is an earnest researcher into the history of letterfounding, whereas I had to dig those bottle-arsed types out of a case and make them lift, ere Jeems doffed three-cornered pants.

ARREY CONDENSED, 24 POINT, A. D. FARMER & SON, circa 1892

Elegant  Charming, Maj W!

Dr. Jim and your scribe see eye-to-eye on everything but certain Victorian types. He calls me a Modernist. About as *moderne*, I should say, as "23 Skidoo!"

His collection of ancient woodcuts is something to behold. It occupies a place of honor in a cabinet he built, and visitors may look at the mouth-watering collection of Federal eagle emblems and other nicely designed subjects of pre-Centennial origin. Pin-marks are meaningless to many present-day typographers, but quite significant to devotees of type lore, therefore a handy multiple-expansion magnifier was provided so visitors can marvel at the hallmarks on Jim's typographical treasures.



No new typeface is developed that doesn't soon come to Jim's attention. He jumps on it like a rooster on a Junebug, if it suits his discriminative fancy. He has many imported types, the oldest being 22 point Union Pearl, believed to have first appeared in 1690, and still being cast at Sheffield, England. Specimen lines of DOOMSDAY types, and a story about printing Jim Eckman does, will come later.

The house on Eighth Avenue is distinguished by iron-lace supports about the entrance, an attractive decoration "imported" from York, Pennsylvania, and made by an old iron foundry. Upstairs and down, the house is filled with row on row of books in splendid bindings. Many are type specimens, in new bindings.

Something new has been added in the DOOMSDAY shop: a Linotype with 18 fonts of mats. But presently Jim is "cadmussing" a story about the Keystone Type Foundry, second in a series of articles on which we are now collaborating. The first article, "The Pelouze Family of Typefounders," was published in the May 1956 quarterly number of *Printing and Graphic Arts*.