



WILLIAM A. READE

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WILLIAM A. READE, president of the Ludlow Typograph Company, passed away suddenly at his home in Evanston, Illinois, on the afternoon of Tuesday, February 18, at the age of sixty-three.

Mr. Reade was born in Dighton, Massachusetts. His elementary education closed at the age of thirteen but, in his own words, he "had the inestimable advantage of attending a country school in a one-room schoolhouse, where pupils in the lower classes may hear the recitations of pupils in the higher classes." Later he attended business college for a brief period and, at the age of eighteen, began his business career in the machine tool business in Providence, R. I. In a wider sense, however his education continued throughout his

lifetime, for he studied and read continually in his free time.

At the age of twenty-two, he came to Chicago, becoming western manager of the Diamond Machine Company. Three years later he moved to Cleveland to take a similar position in that city, in which he spent many years of his life.

In the sales end of the machine tool business, he sold equipment to a number of companies that were organized to develop typesetting machines, among them being the Rogers Typograph Company, the Sears Typo Matrix Company, and the Palace Electrical Compositor. All these projects were eventually given up and from each he bought back machinery. Being familiar with the outcome of these enterprises, he became skeptical of any scheme for mechanical typesetting, so when Washington I. Ludlow brought to him the idea of a simple composing machine, his first reaction was as unfavorable as it could be.

However, Mr. Reade eventually became interested in the project, and in 1906 incorporated the Ludlow Typograph Company to develop the machine, naming the company for Mr. Ludlow. The original idea called for a machine provided with a set of matrix bars, approximately two feet long, each of which carried the entire alphabet, points, and figures. These bars were wedge-shaped, the wide letters being on the wide part, with the

progressively narrower letters following in order as the thinner end of the bar was approached. When each bar was positioned with the desired character in each instance over the mold, the line was cast. This machine was intended for use as a body matter machine for small newspapers which could not afford the expense of a keyboard machine. It set eight, ten, and twelve point matter only. The necessity of hand operation would remain, but worries regarding shortage of type or type replacements would be obviated entirely.

In spite of many difficulties encountered, particularly in making the matrix bars, this machine was brought successfully to completion. The first five machines of this type were built during 1909, but it soon became evident that the idea as originally conceived was impractical. It was, therefore, abandoned. The enterprise was thus back at scratch, with the only asset a wider experience on the part of Mr. Reade and his associates regarding the needs of the printer. During this experimental period Mr. Reade had become convinced that the great need in the composing room was for equipment to set display and job composition in some more effective way than was then available.

Making this fresh start, he conceived the idea of matrices for single characters, to be set by hand, and cast in slug form. This constitutes the

essence of the Ludlow System as it operates today, and bears no resemblance to the device the company was originally formed to develop. The first single matrices, which were engraved, were set publicly in January, 1911. This was the turning point in the fortunes of the organization and, being now on the right track, progress was steady and sure.

The casting mechanism was redesigned and twenty machines were built during 1911. But it soon became evident that the real task was not to make machines, but to provide an adequate variety of matrices. Newspapers would not and could not use a system for which matrices of but a few point sizes were available.

The manufacture in quantity of matrices in the large point sizes proved a problem of no mean proportions, the like of which had never been encountered before. Typefounders were under necessity of providing one matrix only for any given character, whereas with the Ludlow there was requisite a method of manufacturing matrices of any letter by the thousands. The typefounders could engrave directly, at small expense, the single matrix they required, while it was evident that to produce large matrices in quantity they would have to be driven.

No machines were available for this purpose, so the company had to design and build its own

presses. These embodied many new ideas and the perfection of these presses has contributed greatly to the accuracy of Ludlow matrices and—in consequence—to the success of the Ludlow system. A great deal of other special machinery also had to be designed and built.

George O. Cromwell had become associated with Mr. Reade in 1908 and a year later Arthur H. Hedly joined the organization. Both of these men played a large part in the working out of Mr. Reade's plans. In 1909, the company established its own factory on the ground floor of the building occupied by the late Robert Wiebking, who had been engraving matrices and later engraving master punches with which the matrices were driven.

Early in 1912 fonts of single matrices for 36 point Caslon Bold were produced, and late in 1913 matrices for 24 point Caslon Light were completed. The italic matrices were on angular bodies, a feature which has to this day remained unique with the Ludlow.

In August, 1913, the first Ludlow designed according to the new and successful principle was installed in a daily newspaper composing room by the Chicago Evening Post. This paper has been a satisfied user ever since. In 1914, a two-machine equipment was placed in the composing room of the Cleveland Press, proving a

success from the start. This was the first plant to approach entire elimination of single types from the make-up of the paper, a condition which is now encountered frequently.

Up to this point the financing of the Ludlow had proved a serious problem indeed, the burden of which rested entirely on the shoulders of Mr. Reade. It was he also on whom fell the difficult problem of selling the new and untried equipment to skeptical printers and publishers. However, the fundamental rightness in principle and the potential importance of the new idea had now been demonstrated, and the financial tide was destined soon to turn.

In 1916 the first building in the group now owned and occupied by the Ludlow Typograph Company was leased as a factory. The general offices were still in Cleveland, and a Chicago office was maintained in the Peoples Gas Building. The following year an arrangement was effected with the Mergenthaler Linotype Company whereby that organization would handle the sales of Ludlow equipment. Sales were handled according to this plan until January 1, 1919, when the Ludlow organized its own selling force.

Arrangements were effected in 1920 whereby the Ludlow Typograph Company undertook the manufacture and sale of the Elrod lead, slug, and rule caster. The metal crucible of this machine

was at first heated by gas only, but in 1929, after extensive experimentation, an electrically heated Elrod, redesigned and improved in many particulars, was placed on the market.

During the last ten years, the principle task before the company has been the production of matrices representing an adequate assortment of typefaces to meet any reasonable requirement of printers and publishers.

Within the last few years tools insuring even greater precision in the product have been developed and put in use, to effect constant improvement in the quality and accuracy of the matrices, on which the ease of make-ready and the character of the printed product so largely depend. Great progress has also been made in perfecting the mechanical efficiency of the casting machine, effecting constant betterment of the slugs produced. The Ludlow now delivers composition of a quality adequate for the printing of the highest standards.

After going through the seemingly endless job of producing the standard faces demanded by its users, the Ludlow organization embarked on a program of original type design, in which Mr. Reade personally was deeply interested. The present Ludlow type specimen book shows the extent of the achievement in matrix making, starting with nothing only a few years ago.

From its original beginning as a one-man concern, Mr. Reade developed an organization as well as a system of composition. Most of the men occupying key positions in the company are men of ability who were associated with Mr. Reade for many years, and are well equipped to build on the foundation he laid in so workmanlike a manner.

Financial worries are, of course, a matter of history. Mr. Reade made of the Ludlow one of the outstanding successes in the printing equipment field, the system being now used by printers and newspapers all over the world. The company is in a strong situation as regards both assets and earning power. In short, Mr. Reade's life work has been brought to successful fruition.

He stood for the standards of business integrity and square dealing which elicited the wholehearted admiration of both competitor and ally, and he impressed these standards on the organization of which he was the head.

William A. Reade was loved personally by all of his business associates. He had a faculty of inspiring loyalty and enthusiasm which is encountered all too seldom these days. He did not come in contact with many outside his own business circle, but those he did meet, through the simple influence of his kindness, wisdom, and personal charm, were led to cherish for him a lifelong

affection and admiration. He laid hold on men, as it were, and made them his.

Mr. Reade was a pioneer who did not know what it meant to give up, an inventor of genius, an executive of rare ability and discernment, and—to his associates—a friend for whom there can never be a substitute.

From a wider point of view he rendered a service to printers which will be thrown in larger and larger perspective in the years to come.