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A glance at the trade press reveals that the question of the future of our modern typography is occupying a good many people's minds at the present time. The extremely forceful period of "storm and stress" which set in hardly five years ago seems to have abated; one is almost tempted to talk of a new classicism. To be sure, we notice at the same time the spread of a certain playful grasping for effects which accepts any type-form of the past as current coin, as if the present day had foregone its right to specify the currency. The type-founders are a little too eager in proffering types which are supposed to be destined to break with the dictatorship of the new grotesque types.

One can never say with certainty what the future will bring. Political idiocy, growing more violent and more and more of a storm center from day to day, may one day sweep the whole fabric of Western culture to the ground with its muddy sleeve. None of us can be sure whether in three years' time he may not condemn as crooked much that he now applauds as right and straight. But in any case it must be good in the case of typography as with its sister crafts, to preserve the connection with the other arts. Less than a year ago, it was possible for the mayor of a South German cultural center to declare that with the exception of certain postal buildings, his town had so far escaped the modern utilitarian style. But when over 300 designs for a new glass palace in this same town were put on exhibition a few days ago, it was revealed that there were scarcely a dozen designs which did not conform, willy-nilly, to the modern utilitarian style. It is plain that the great cleansing process cannot be held up, and where it is less apparent, the reason is usually that there has been less building done here than in other towns. In the battle of wits, the decision has long since been reached. The new typography, however, is fed from the same fount as the new architecture. The wish is father to the thought, when a speedy and inglorious end is prophesied for the new typography.

We are always inclined to regard our own sphere of work as strictly fenced in on all sides against all other spheres, and the more thoroughly we farm our own field, the more do we incline to the intellectual attitude peculiar to the expert, to whom the past of his own particular craft is nearer and more familiar than the present aspect of any neighbouring craft. We need not therefore be astonished to find that the renaissance of style which we have experienced in all regions of creative work during the last fifty years, and especially during the past decade should so often have been imported into the several crafts by non-professionals from outside. This applies to architecture just as much as to typography. When these upstarts, usually painters or graphic artists, became at home in their new sphere and began to revel in the rich variety of forms which they discovered and which they had hitherto damned and despised, they merely followed an old historical law.

The great process of enrichment which goes on in the whole world, including the world of form, will hardly be held up by any such phenomena. In our age of rapid living, generation follows upon generation as rapidly as one Olympian Games upon another. Or can it be the real task of every generation in its turn to knock down the ninepins set up by the generation before it and then to set them up again, so that the following generation may be sure of finding something to do?

Trans. by E. T. Scheffauer.