On October 3rd, 1931, a revolution took place in the art of composing newspapers. On that date the Times, the leading organ of the British press, considered by many to be the absolute, indeed immovable, tradition of English, astonished its readers by assuming a completely new dress. The revised type which was used both for texts and headlines throughout its pages marked at once an entire departure from custom and a great advance in design. Its legibility, attractiveness and economy the new types were superior to all the fonts that had appeared in newspapers before.

Such a far-reaching change might well have brought lively protests from readers accustomed to the Times in its historic form. In fact, the immediate reception was entirely favourable. Any questioning arose not over the new body types but over the suppression of the Gothic title on the front page in favour of Roman lettering. This amounted to a sensation as the Gothic lettering had been in use for over a hundred and twenty years. It was not long, however, before the logic underlying the adoption of Roman capitals for the title of a newspaper pointed throughout in Roman began to be appreciated by readers of the paper.

Up till October 1931, the typographical material used at the Times office in Printing House Square had been early Victorian in detail and layout. When the question of altering it to suit modern requirements arose, it was decided, after much deliberation, not to seek outside help from the printing trade but to re-design the material on the spot in accordance with the specific purposes of the Times. Under the guidance of Mr. Stanley Morison, now Editor of The Times Literary Supplement, himself mainly responsible for the change, the considerable task of designing new fonts was taken in hand. In three years a total of 22 headline fonts of capitals, seven fonts of bold upper and lower case and five fonts of bold type in Roman, italic, small capitals and accented sorts were designed and cut.

The Times New Roman, as the revised type is called, differs from the fonts of every other press or newspaper or book printer in the world. But, although new, it can nevertheless trace its descent from a distinguished fore-runner, as it has many structural features in common with a Roman first used by Aldus in 1491. A marked feature of the new design is that the stems and curves of the letters are thicker and carry more ink than in previous fonts. The letters look bolder and, in consequence, greater legibility is assured.

The typographical rules for the present layout of the Times were never drawn up into a written code. Instead of being drafted they were illustrated by way of example, i.e. in the shape of a complete specimen number or "dummy", as it is called. The Times owes the exceptional quality of its typography less to formulated rules than to the existence of a tradition and a staff brought up, more or less unconsciously, in a set of habits formed in Printing House Square as the result of experience and enterprise in composition, machining and