A technical description of letterpress printing in 1780

Some years ago I compiled a list of Dutch-language texts published before 1860 and containing technical data on typography. It comprised twenty-six items. I knew the title of No. 9, Korte en beknopthe beschryving der hedendaagsche boedrukkerye [A Short and Concise Description of Modern Printing] (Haarlem, master-piece (guild test) of François Bohn, 1780) from a card in the Tetterode Collection catalogue in Amsterdam University Library, but I was disappointed to find that the work itself had disappeared. Since then efforts to trace it in libraries and archives (including the Gemeentearchief at Haarlem, which contains the archives of the Haarlem printers’ guild, and the University Library in Leiden, which has the archives of Bohn’s printing firm) have remained without result. In 1976, thanks to the detective work of the Keeper of the Tetterode Collection, Mr. A. R. A. Croiset van Uchelen, the little book was found (see Pl. 1 and 2). The work was seemingly of great importance, not only because apart from a dialogue of 1567 ascribed to Plantin it was supposed to be the oldest Dutch technical description of composing and printing written by an expert, but also because Bigmore-Wyman’s note against this title was so promising: ‘A handbook of typography’. Actually it proved to be neither, but it remains interesting enough to warrant a detailed description.

François Bohn (1757–1819), a German who settled in Holland in 1739 and in 1752 took

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1 The list is published in the introduction to: Pieter Marius van Cleef Jzn, Handboeck ter boeefening der boedrukkunst in Nederland (1844). Photo-reprint with introduction and indexes by Frans A. Janssen (Amsterdam 1974), pp. 23*–30*.

2 I am grateful to Mr. R. Breugelmans for his assistance; for the present article it was not possible to consult the Bohn archives, which are not yet available for general scrutiny, any further.


5 These biographical data on François Bohn are based on C. H. Bohn en zijn opvolgers 1752–1952 (Haarlem 1952), pp. 7–37.
KORTE EN BEKNOPTE

BESCHRYVING

DER

HEDEHDAAGSCHEN

BOEKGDRUKKERYE.

Te Haarlem gezet en gedrukt, door François Bobin,

17 80.

1. Korte en beknopte beschryving der hedendaagsche boek-
drukkerye (Haarlem 1780), fo. A 1r., title. Reduced:
actual size 17.5 x 11 cm.

2. Korte en beknopte beschryving der hedendaagsche boek-
drukkerye (Haarlem 1780), fo. A 2r. Reduced