MODERN LETTERING

AN EASY GUIDE FOR BEGINNERS

A USEFUL BOOK OF REFERENCE FOR THE COMMERCIAL ARTIST COPY WRITER TICKET AND SIGN WRITER SHOPKEEPER CLUB SECRETARY AND OTHERS

INCLUDES LAYOUTS AND DESIGNS

FOR ALL BRANCHES OF COMMERCIAL ART
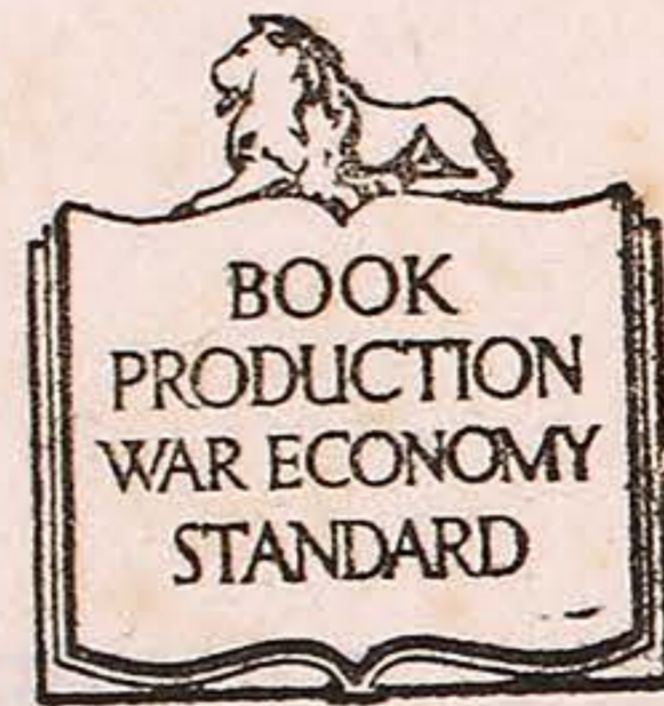
BY 'DRAUGHTSMAN'

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1940

ABCDE FGHI KL OP TU X A

A B DE G J

TOE

MODERN LETTERING

MODERN LETTERING

By
"DRAUGHTSMAN"

Profusely Illustrated with
27 PAGES OF SPECIMEN
LETTERINGS, LAYOUTS,
DESIGNS AND DIAGRAMS

PREFACE

The object of this volume is to present at a price within the reach of all, examples of a number of various styles of lettering in use to-day, which will provide helpful and up-to-date reference for commercial artists, ticket and showcard writers, copy writers, club secretaries, shopkeepers—in fact, all who either draw or choose the style of lettering to be employed in an announcement.

Incorporated within these pages are hints for the embryo lettering artist, comments of general interest concerning each plate of specimen lettering, and several helpful examples of layout and design.

For some of the styles illustrated, it will be obvious that there can be no lower case characters; for others, if no lower case letters are included, it is equally obvious how they should be formed.

MODERN LETTERING

HINTS TO BEGINNERS

General.—Good work of any sort cannot be executed hurriedly; good lettering and layout are no exceptions to this rule. This does not imply, however, that one should not try to develop speed in conjunction with proficiency. Work must, sometimes, be carried out at very short notice, and commercially, one finds it necessary to set a time limit according to the monetary value of the commission. The saying " time is money " is in many cases only too true.

The quality of the work produced depends on many things, but primarily on the originality and skill of the craftsman. Other factors leading to success are: good tools, and a knowledge of when and how to use them; good colours, and a good sense of colour and tone values; cleanliness of hands and instruments, which means cleanliness in the finished work.

Originality.—Don't copy designs and layouts of others; invent new schemes for yourself. By all means take *hints* from other people's work *if it is good*, but develop these borrowed ideas so as to stamp them with an individuality of your own imparting.

Skill.—Develop speed; learn to outline letters and to block in large masses quickly. Learn how to run your brush quickly down a line without

crossing it, and how to rule lines quickly and accurately with the ruling pen. Constant practice will bring about these accomplishments.

Materials and other Requisites.—The quality and quantity of materials and instruments stocked by the lettering artist must depend solely upon his or her financial resources. All requisites can usually be obtained through a local Artists' Colourman, but many will find it useful to procure catalogues of Artists' Materials from several London manufacturers, such as Messrs. Clifford Milburn & Co., 54 Fleet Street, London, E.C.4, and 184a Oxford Street, London, W.1.; Messrs. Reeves & Son, Ltd., 13 Charing Cross Road, London, W.C.2, and 113 Cheapside, London, E.C.2; Messrs. C. Roberson & Co. Ltd., 155 Piccadilly, London, W.1; or Messrs. Winsor & Newton, Ltd., 38 Rathbone Place, London, W.1; also a catalogue of Drawing Instruments from Messrs. W. H. Harling, Ltd., 117 Moorgate, London, E.C.2.

The following should, if possible, be procured :—

INSTRUMENTS AND ACCESSORIES

DRAWING BOARD—Imperial size (10s. to 27s. 6d.)
DRAWING PINS—One box (1d.)
RULER—24 in. with metal bevelled edge (2s. 6d.)
T-SQUARE—32 in. Blade (2s. 9d. to 13s. 9d.)
60° SET-SQUARE—12 in. Celluloid (2s.)
45° SET-SQUARE—12 in. Celluloid (3s.)
PROTRACTOR—4 in. Celluloid (3d.)
PENCILS—one H. one 2H. one B. one BB.
DRAWING PENS—Joseph Gillott's card of 11 (6d.)
SCRIPT PENS—card of 1 doz. assorted (6d.)

POSTER PENS—½ in. (1s. 3d.)—¾ in. (1s. 6d.)
RULING PEN—(3s.)
COMPASSES—One half-set 6 in. with a set of ink and pencil spring bows (8s. 6d. complete).
BRUSHES—One large brush for blocking in and two small *red* sable brushes for fine work.

N.B.—The prices quoted are subject to wartime increases.

PAPER AND BOARDS

MATT-SURFACED POSTER PAPER—Good selection of colours should be stocked.
ROYAL POSTER CARDS—An assortment of coloured and white. Bristol boards are recommended for the latter.
CARTRIDGE DRAWING PAPER—1 quire (90 lb.) Imperial size.
IMPERIAL BOARDS (H.P. Surface)—Half dozen or a dozen either Drawing, Fashion or Ticket Boards according to preference.

PAINT AND INK

The selection of colours is a matter for individual requirements, but poster colours will be found the most satisfactory medium and should be procured in the small-sized pots. The lettering artist should, however, definitely possess a small bottle of Process White and a large bottle of Waterproof Black Indian Ink.

How to Use the Instruments.—The paper or card is placed on the drawing board, and its position adjusted so that the top edge of the sheet is parallel with the edge of the T-square (see

below). It is held in this position by *two* pins in each of the top corners—four pins tend to restrict the movements of the T-square and set squares.

All horizontal lines are ruled with the T-square, and all vertical lines by means of a set square on the T-square. Never use the T-square against the top of the board for drawing vertical lines. The edges of the board may not be at right angles, and inaccurate work will result. *Use the T-square on the left-hand edge of the board only.* Lines at 30°, 45° and 60° to the horizontal may be drawn by means of the set squares; lines at other angles must be drawn with a ruler, their direction being ascertained by means of the protractor.

Script pens are used for the style of lettering which their name implies, as illustrated in Plates XIX to XXII. Poster pens are of the same type of pen but larger, for the execution of lettering on poster work.

The Script pen is extremely useful for rapid ticket and showcard writing.

Before using the ruling pen, the edge which runs along the ruler should be wiped clear of ink. This prevents innumerable blotches from spoiling a good piece of work.

When ruling in ink, always use the ruler with its bevelled edge sloping up, away from the paper or board.

All instruments should be perfectly clean. T-squares, set squares, and rulers should be wiped with a damp sponge, and dried with a clean cloth.

Indian ink dries quickly, and often clogs the

ruling pen by drying between the blades. The pen should be wiped frequently with a cloth, and always thoroughly cleaned and dried after use.

The ruling pen will, after much use, become worn, and fine lines will be hard to produce. The blades may be sharpened on a fine, close-grained oilstone, which may be purchased for three shillings from Messrs. W. H. Harling, Ltd. The two blades are first ground together to a common level and shape. This makes them even more blunt than formerly, and they are now sharpened separately by rubbing them to and from the operator in a straight line, at the same time twisting the pen from side to side. The pen should be held at an angle of 15° to the stone. Only the outsides of the blades must be sharpened. The insides should be *lightly* rubbed to remove any burr. Sharpening is difficult, and the beginner is recommended to return the pen to the makers, who will resharpen it for a few pence.

How to Draw Parallel Lines.—Parallel lines, which are neither horizontal nor vertical, may be drawn as follows : Suppose you wish to draw a line through X parallel to CD (see fig. 1, Plate I). Place one edge, ab, of the set-square A along cd, and place the other set-square B against one of the remaining edges of A, holding it fast with the left hand ; then move the set-square A along the edge of B. The edge ab will be parallel to the line cd. When ab reaches X, hold both set-squares stationary with the left hand, and draw the required line through the point, by passing the pencil along ab. The pencil should be a 2H.,

and it should be sharpened to a chisel point as in fig. 3, Plate I.

One can, of course, purchase a set of parallel rulers, but this is a rather expensive item.

Spacing.—Correct spacing is usually a difficulty with beginners, who find that although they can space such capitals as E, H and N correctly, by setting them a fixed distance apart, other letters such as W and A, which vary widely in form, are much more difficult to space accurately.

Try spacing the letters of the word WALL, with a fixed measured distance between the extremities of each; the result is shown in fig. 2, Plate II.

Notice how the letters are correctly spaced, by balancing the space between them, as in fig. 3, Plate II. Notice also how L and T coming together upset the continuity and balance of the word SALTED in fig. 4, Plate II; whereas if the cross-piece of the T overlaps the base of the L, as in fig. 5, Plate II, the letters appear to be perfectly spaced.

So remember, spacing cannot be measured; it must be judged by the artist. The *area* between each letter, and *not the distance*, should be equal.

How to Remedy Mistakes.—All work except script-pen lettering must be carefully drawn in pencil before any ink or colour is used. The pencil lines are then ruled over with ink, and any superfluous lines erased with a soft rubber. Should a slip occur when you are using Indian ink on white paper, let the ink dry thoroughly, then
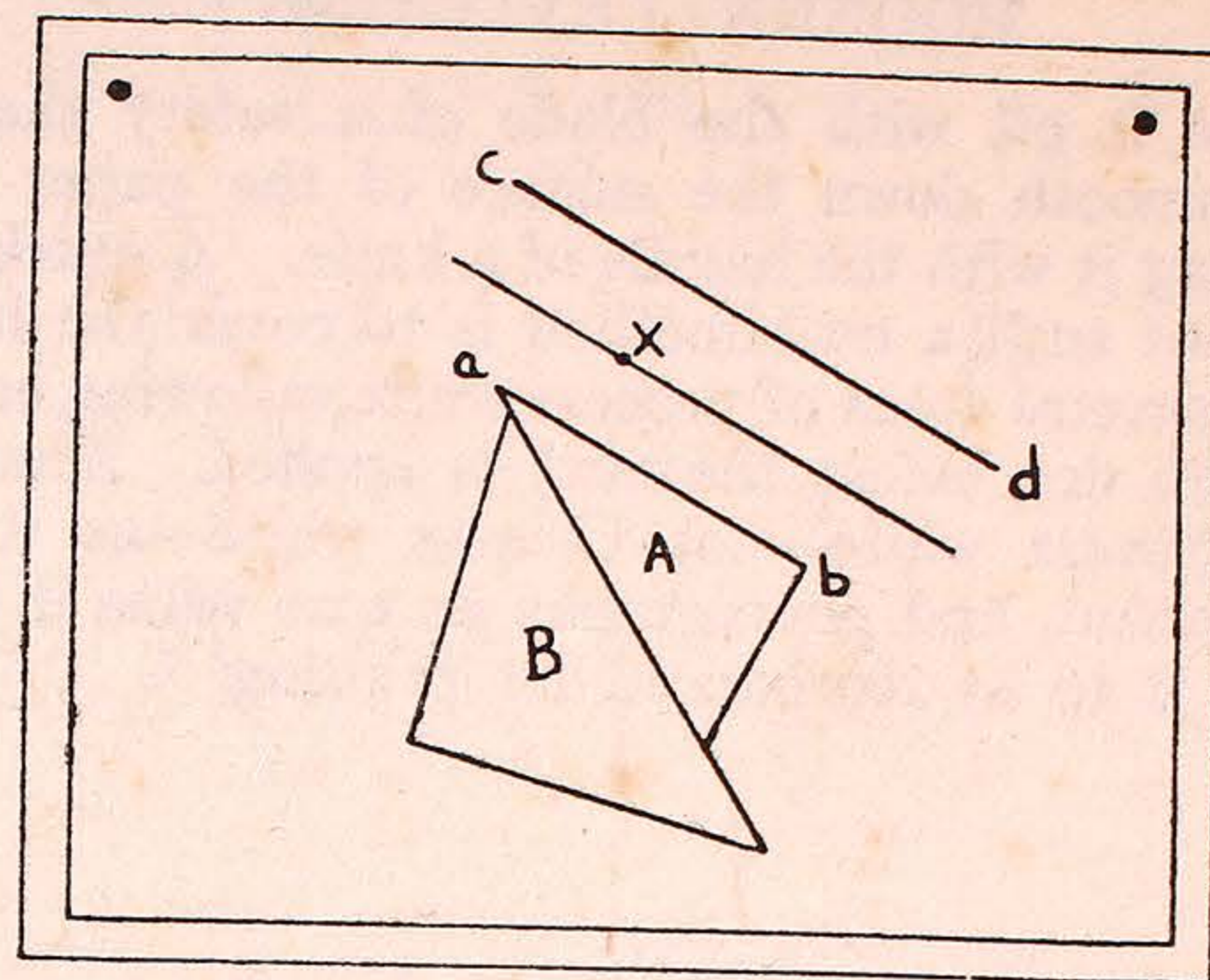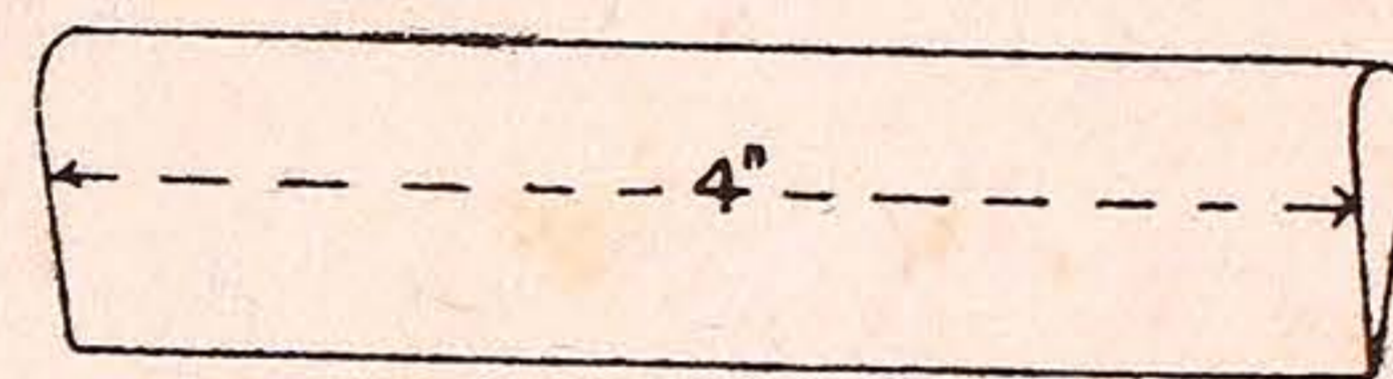
FIG. 1

FIG. 2
OILSTONE FOR SHARPENING PEN BLADES.

FIG. 3
HOW A PENCIL SHOULD BE SHARPENED
THE CHISEL POINT IS FORMED BY GRINDING THE LEAD ON FINE GLASSPAPER, OR A PIECE OF GROUND GLASS.

PLATE I

scrape it off with the blade of a safety razor, and smooth down the surface of the paper by rubbing it with the handle of a knife. A quicker, but not such a neat method is to cover the blot with several coats of process white, allowing each coat to dry before the next is applied. Always use *process* white—not Chinese white—as it is permanent, and photographs its true value if the work is to be reproduced for printing.

HEN FIG. 1

WALL 2

WALL 3

SALTED 4

SALTED 5

WATER 6

WATER 7

PLATE II

PLATE III

BLOCKED-IN CAPITALS—A to O

This style is both bold and outstanding. The letters are built in a square, but other variations are of course possible, and some examples are illustrated in Plate V.

Variation of form, as well as variation of proportion, is also possible. Note how the letter E, in Plate V, differs from the E in this plate. Also the difference in the J's, the A's and the B's.

This style should not be used too frequently ; a little goes a long way.

Instructions as to the formation of the letters, are given on page 16.

14

PLATE III

15

PLATE IV

BLOCKED-IN CAPITALS—P to Z

The following instructions should be observed in the formation of the characters illustrated in Plates III and IV.

The letters must first be drawn in pencil, and the pencil lines inked over with a fine nib. The fine line produced is then thickened *on the inside* to a width of approximately one-sixteenth of one inch. If the letter is outlined thus, it is much easier to block it in; and mistakes, due to an unsteady hand causing the brush to cross the line, are less likely to occur.

This style of lettering may be seen in white, on a black ground, in the top illustration of Plate XXIV. When working for this reverse or cut-out effect, remember to thicken the outline of each letter *on the outside*, before blocking in the background.

16

PLATE IV

17
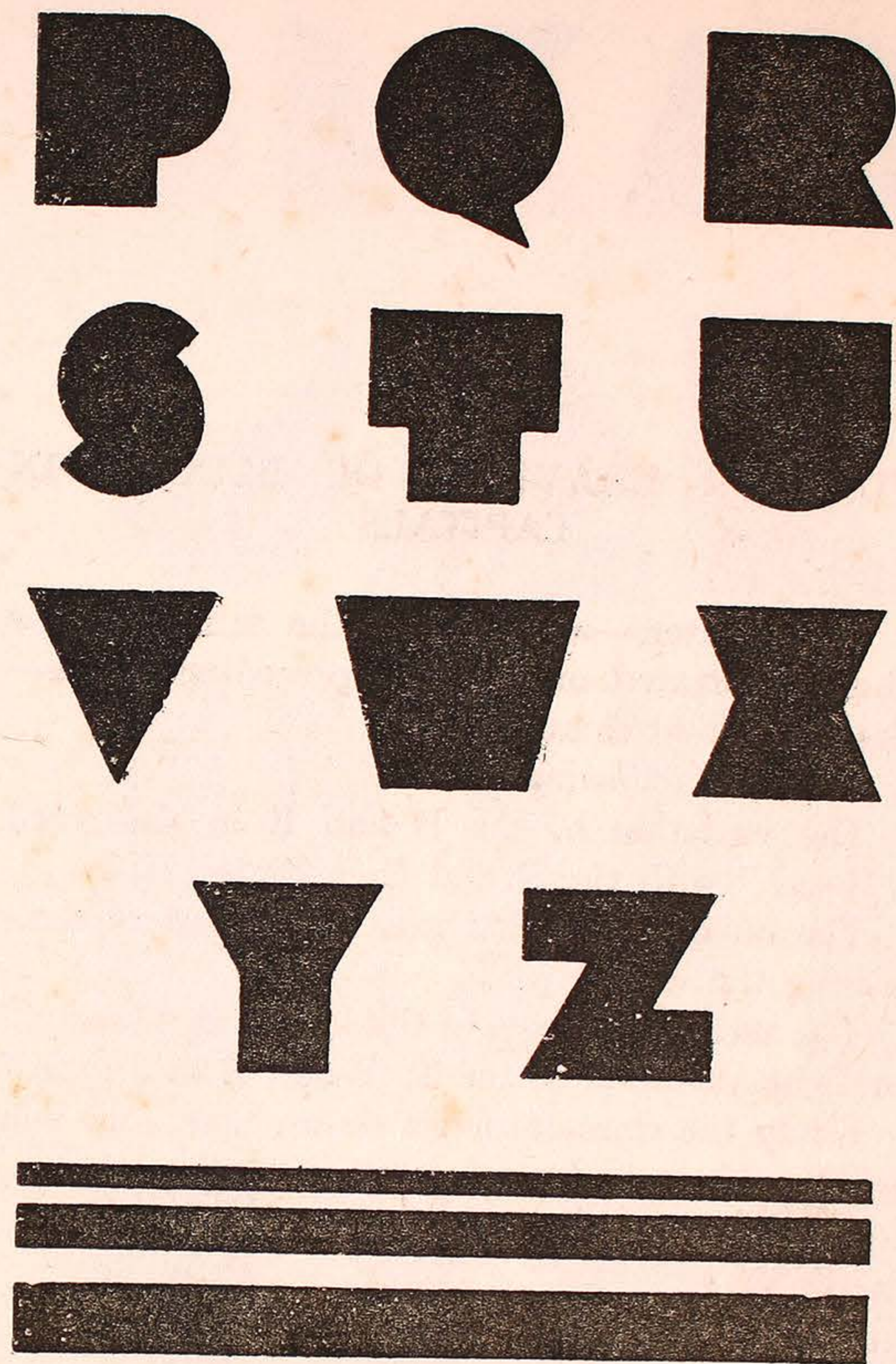
PLATE V

FURTHER EXAMPLES OF BLOCKED-IN CAPITALS

These letters—although of the same type as those illustrated on the two preceding plates—are of different characters.

Note the following :—

The variation of the B and E in the word " bread " with the B and E in Plate III.

The novelty and character of the letters comprising the word " jar."

The actual heaviness of the letters in " heavy," and the variation of the T, Y and E in " type."

Study the characteristics shown here, and you will be able to evolve other letters of the alphabet, in consistent styles, for yourself.

BREAD
JAR
HEAVY
TYPE

PLATE V

PLATE VI

OUTLINED CAPITALS (THICK—THIN)

These letters differ from block letters in form and construction. The block letter is of one thickness throughout. These have their vertical lines thickened similar to Roman lettering. It is on the character illustrated here that the variations, shown in the three following plates, are based.

Particular attention should be paid to the formation of the letter S. This letter is usually difficult to construct with instruments. Note here how the letter has been simplified and, incidentally, modernized.

20

ABCD
EFGH
IJKL
MN OP
QRST
UVWX
— YZ —

PLATE VI

21

PLATE VII

DECORATED CAPITALS (THICK—THIN)

This style is another modification of the Roman lettering. It is also a development of the style illustrated in Plate VI, to which a heavy band has been inserted between the vertical lines, and serifs have been added.

Note the difference in character of the letters comprising the word APSE. The omission of the serifs and dropped horizontals render them more modern, but they are less suitable for decorative work.

This style may be used liberally, as it is easy to read. It is also fairly simple to construct.

22

ABCDE
FGHIJ
KLMN
OPQRS
TUVW
XYZ
APSE

PLATE VII

23
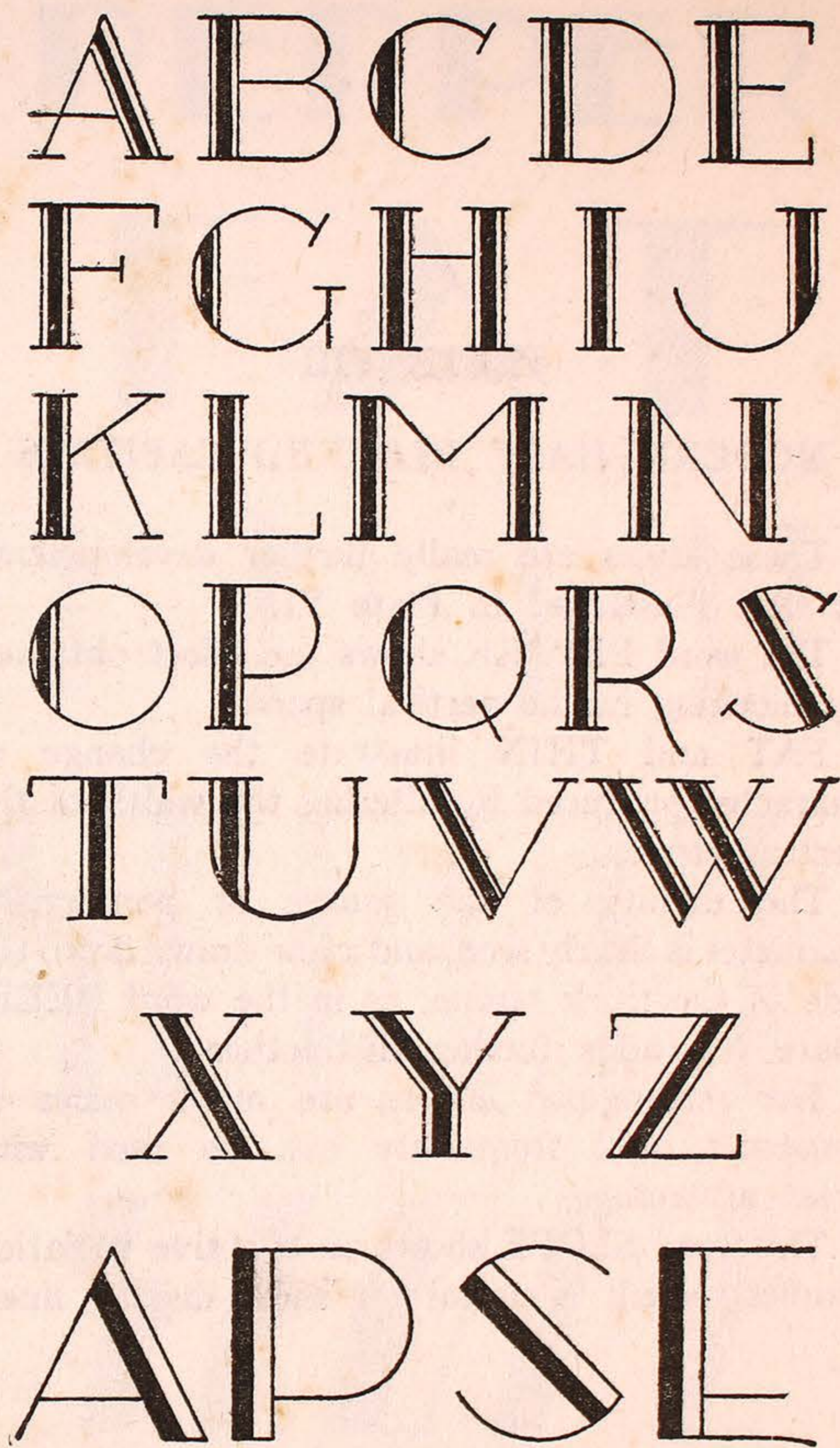
PLATE VIII

MODERN HALF BLOCKED CAPITALS

These styles are really further developments of that illustrated in Plate VI.

The word PEPPER shows the effect obtained by blocking in the vertical spaces.

FAT and THIN illustrate the change of character produced by altering the width of the vertical stroke.

The dignity of the square or rectangular character is clearly seen, and a line drawn down the side of the thick stroke, as in the word BEER, Plate XI, adds further distinction.

The rectangular letters are much easier to construct, and frequently can be used with great advantage.

The word SLOPE shows an effective variation (Italics) which is useful for short display lines.

24

PEPPER
FAT THIN
SQUARE
SLOPE

PLATE VIII

25

PLATE IX

DECORATED CAPITALS

These, too, have as their foundation the outline capitals of Plate VI.

The letters in AVON are essentially modern and dignified.

Those in MOTOR are no less modern, but less dignified. They are, however, decidedly novel, especially in the formation of the letter O.

The letters in IDEA are somewhat similar to Roman lettering. The serifs do not, however, taper into the letters, and the thin white line adds distinction.

Those in SPEED are angular in form. Easy to read, easy to construct.

The word GAS shows the effect obtained by increasing the space between the vertical lines of the outline capitals in Plate VI. The vertical spaces may be decorated if desired, in any manner fancied by the artist.

26

AVON
MOTOR
IDEA
SPEED
GAS

PLATE IX

27

PLATE X

MULTI-LINE LETTERING

This style of lettering possesses a distinct and pleasing character. It is, moreover, very simple in formation.

When one plans a trade announcement, it is usually desirable that certain words should be more prominent than others. Good contrast, for this purpose, can be gained by the use of the style shown in the word OAR in conjunction with that of the word RADIO. The two characteristics blend well together, because they have the same foundation—one might say, they are of the same family. This is a desirable feature in the choice of two display styles to appear in the same announcement or design.

Modifications are the angular letters as in SPEED, while the outside spaces may be blocked in, as in SPIRIT, instead of the centre space, as in OAR.
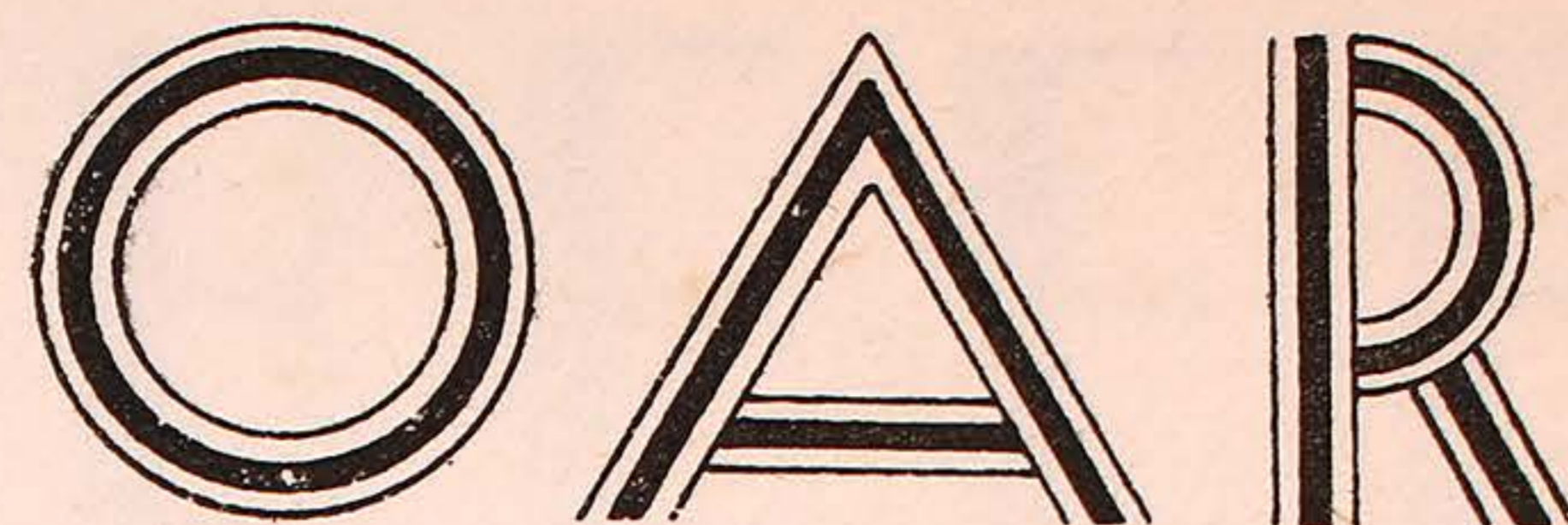
OAR
RADIO
SPEED
SPIRIT
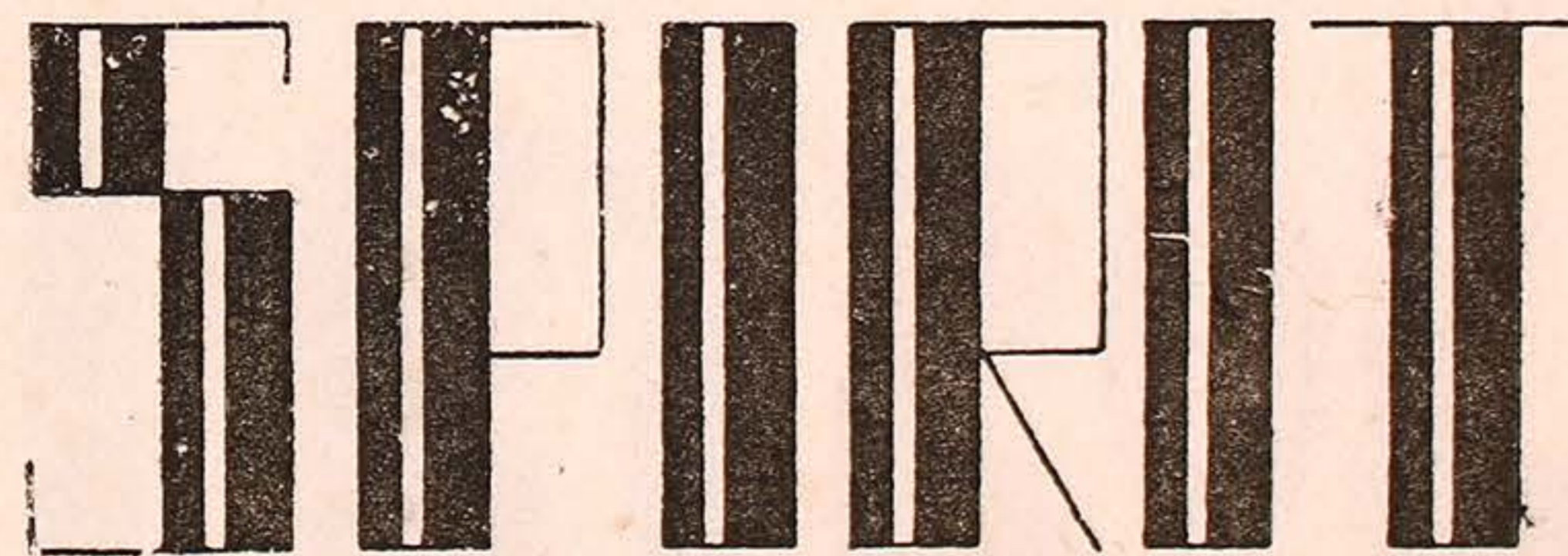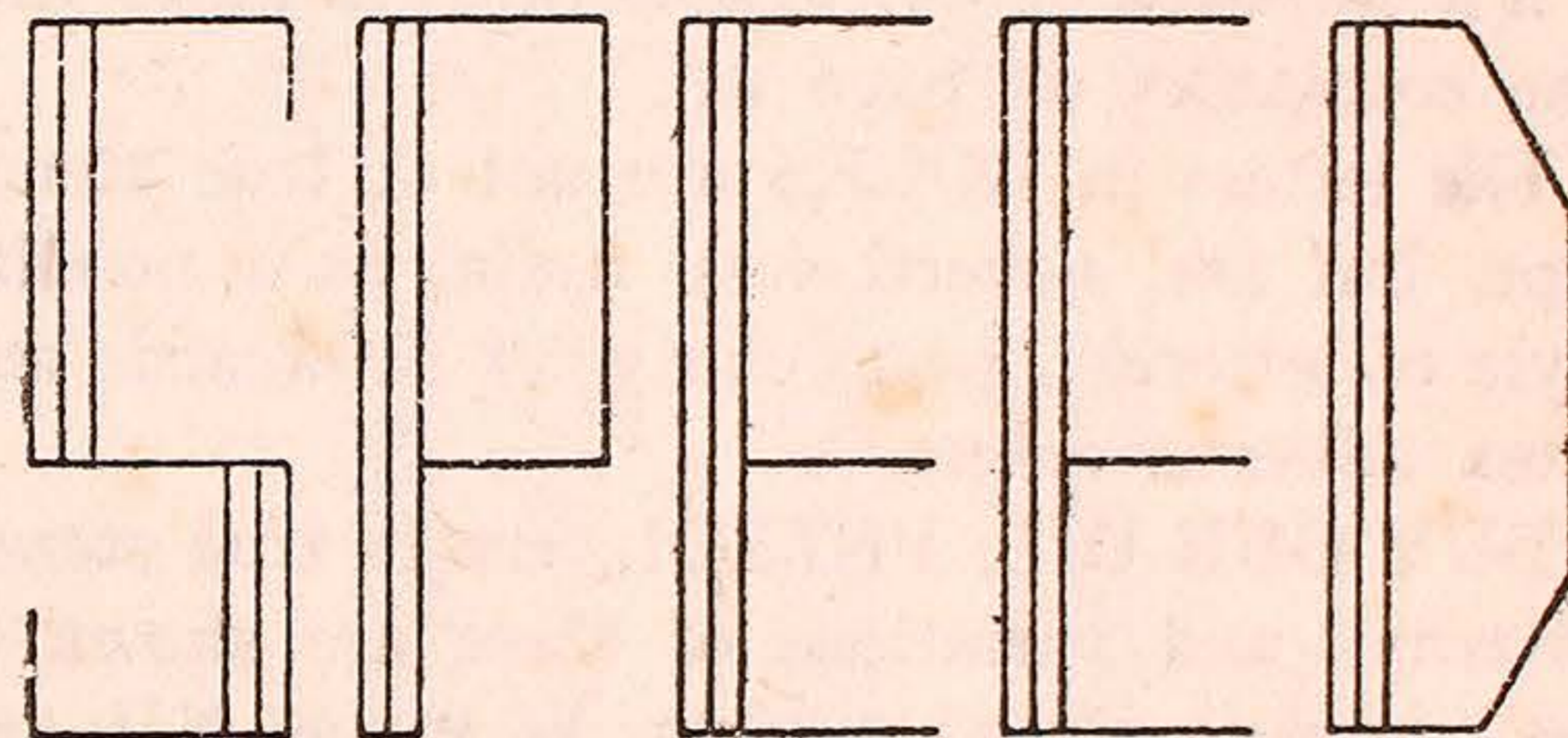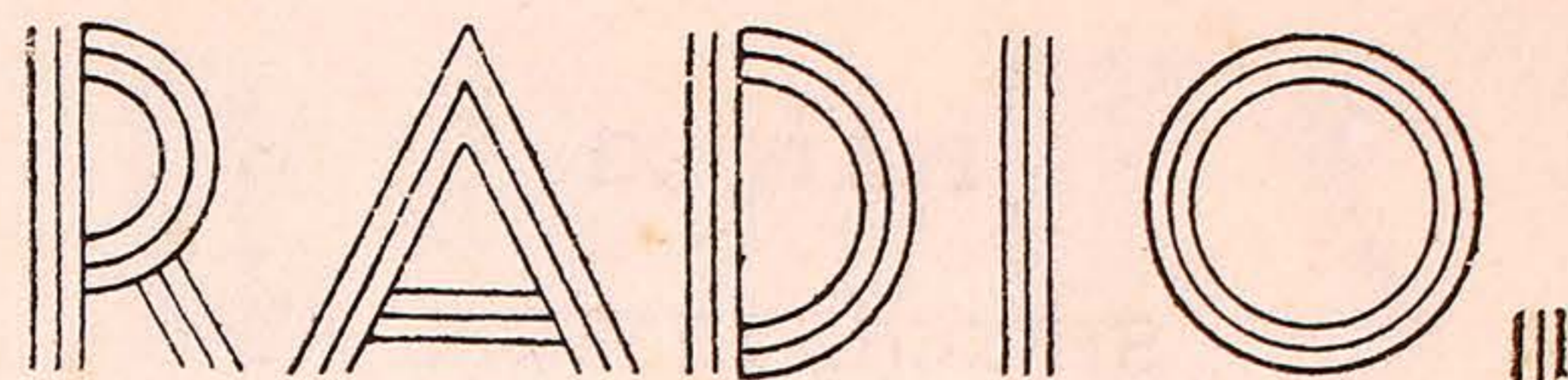
PLATE X

PLATE XI

STENCIL LETTERS

The word BEER is not a stencil character. It is a variation of a style illustrated in Plate VIII (see comments on page 24).

The letters in BOOKS are not of true stencil type, but are, nevertheless, useful as a novelty style of lettering, particularly for showcards and press advertisements.

BUY OUR OIL, PETROL, are in true stencil lettering, and variations of these are shown in the complete alphabet given in Plates XII and XIII.

30

BEER
BOOKS
BUY OUR
OIL
PETROL

PLATE XI

31

PLATE XII

MODERN STENCIL LETTERING—A to N

These letters may be constructed by pencil, ruler, compass and brush directly on to the paper ; but an alternative method is to draw the alphabet and cut a set of stencils on stencil paper, and use them as such.

The following instructions regarding stencil cutting, should be followed closely.

The stencil paper should be placed on a sheet of plate glass, or a piece of sheet iron. The letters are cut with a penknife, the blade of which has been ground to a very sharp, fine point. The knife should be held at an angle of approximately 60° to the paper. Straight lines should be cut by guiding the knife along the edge of a ruler. Curves should, where possible, be cut with one draw of the knife, as halts often cause irregularities in the curve.

ABC
DEF
GHI
JKL
VN

PLATE XII

PLATE XIII

MODERN STENCIL LETTERING—O to Z

HOW TO USE A STENCIL

The plate (i.e. the stencil) is laid in the desired position over the surface on which the letters are to be formed, and a stencil brush (which may be obtained from your local artists' colourman or from Messrs. Winsor and Newton) is charged with a little colour. The colour should not be too liquid, or else the pattern will tend to "run".

The brush, containing the colour, is dabbed over the cuts of the required letter in the plate, and when all the spaces are covered, the plate is *lifted* away and then placed down in position for the next letter required. Never slide the plate away, as the colour will not be dry, and *smudges* will result.

It is, of course, advisable to sketch out lightly in pencil, on the paper or board, a rough indication of the lettering to serve as a guide when stencilling.

It is often profitable to fix the plate with drawing pins, and allow it to remain until the colour has dried.

34

PLATE XIII

35

PLATE XIV

### SOME DEVELOPMENTS IN LINE AND STROKE

The plate opposite shows how normal single-line letters may be developed in order that new alphabets may be formed.

Note the effect of intermixing lower case letters such as " e ", " f " and " m " among the capitals.

Nowadays, display lines are quite frequently designed entirely in large lower case characters of modern style.

Observe the difference in character of the " E's " and the " F's " when the horizontal line is raised or lowered.

With these hints before you, you should be able to develop several new alphabets for yourself.

36

PLATE XIV

37
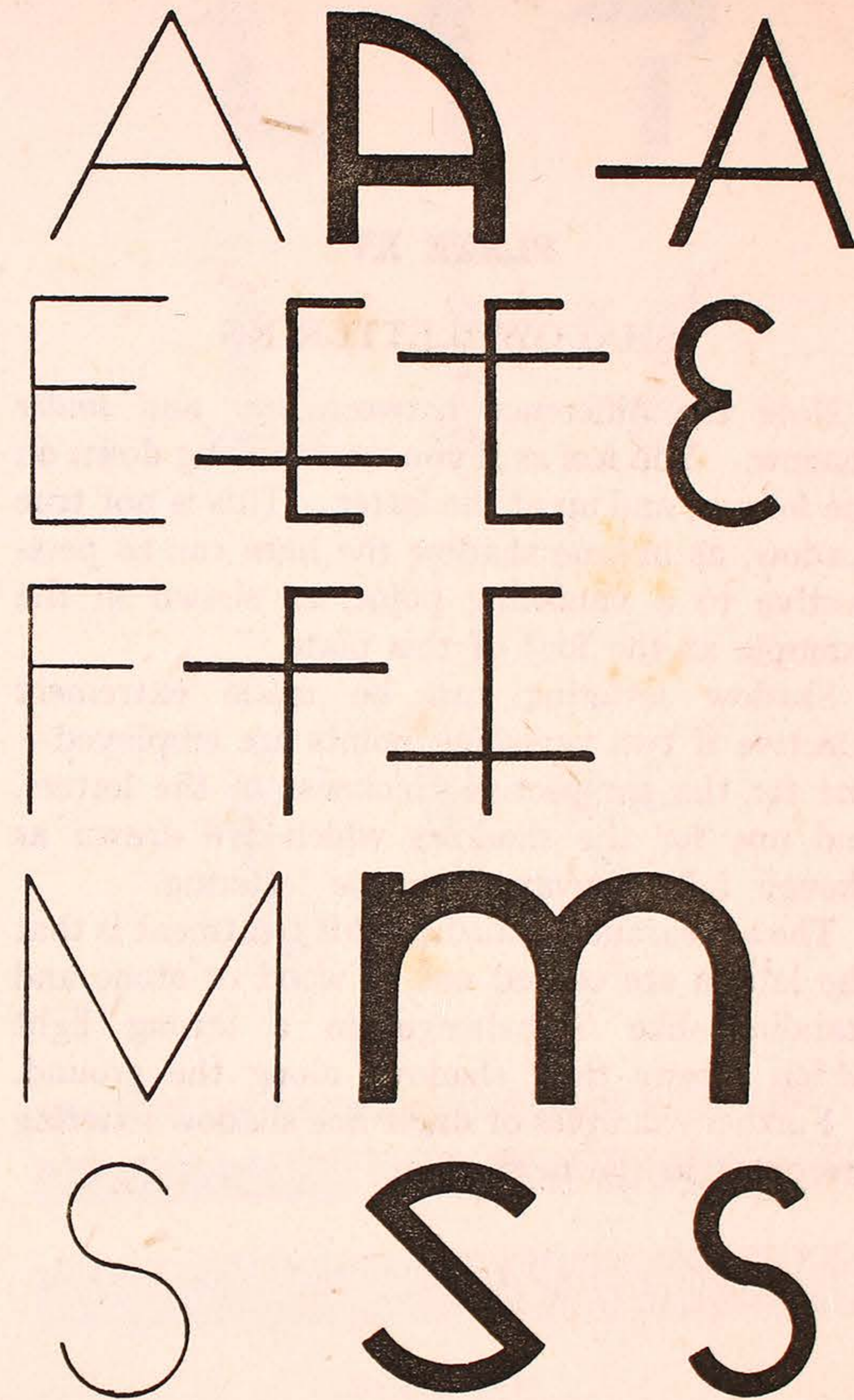
PLATE XV

SHADOW LETTERING

Note the difference between *over* and *under* shadow. You feel as if you were looking down on the former, and up at the latter. This is not true shadow, as in true shadow the lines run in perspective to a vanishing point, as shown in the example at the foot of this plate.

Shadow lettering can be made extremely effective if two vanishing points are employed—one for the perspective thickness of the letters, and one for the shadows which are drawn as though falling away from the lettering.

The appearance gained by this treatment is that the letters are carved out of wood or stone and standing—like Stonehenge—in a strong light which throws their shadows along the ground.

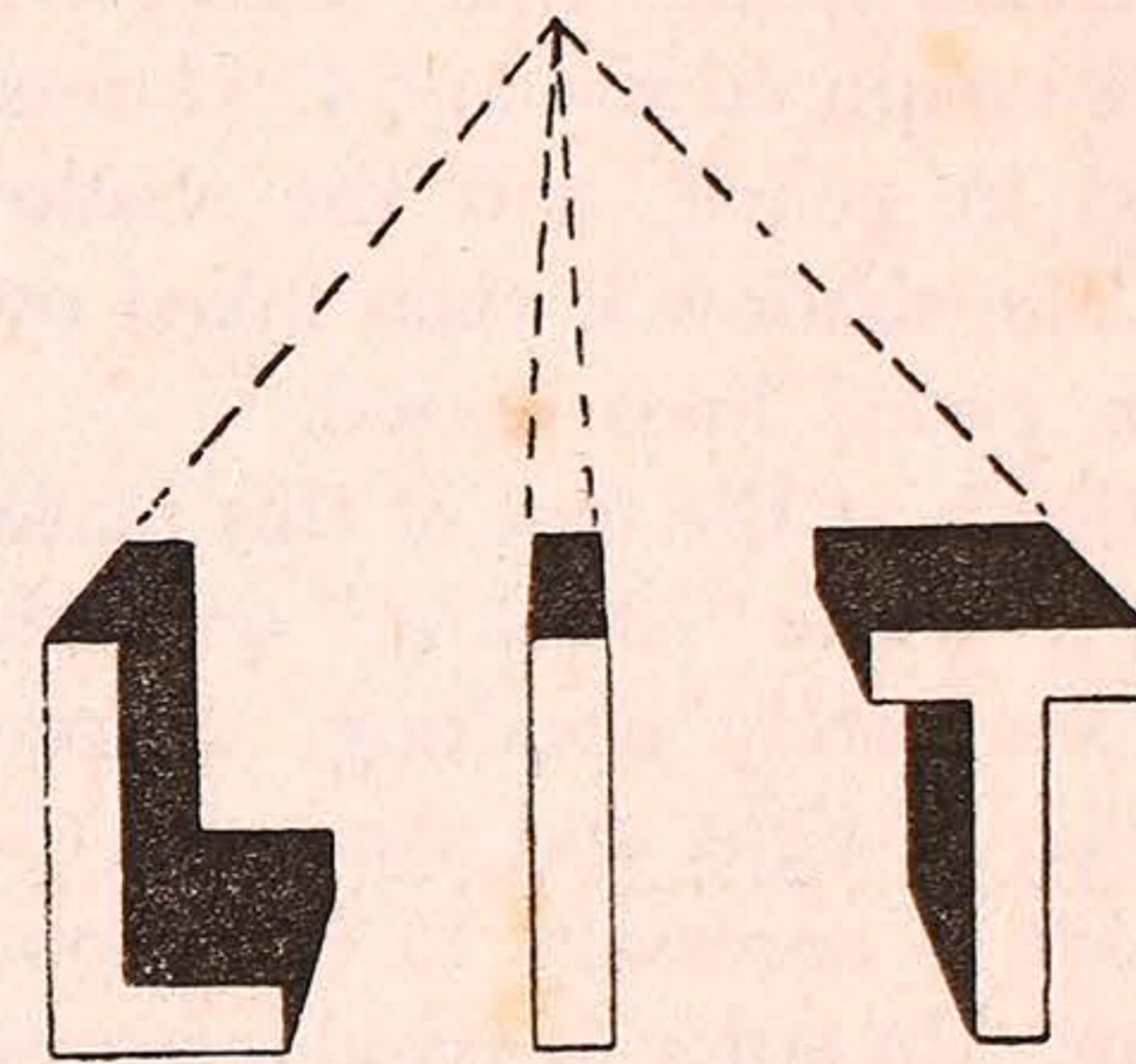Further examples of single line shadow lettering are given in the next plate.

38

PLATE XV

39
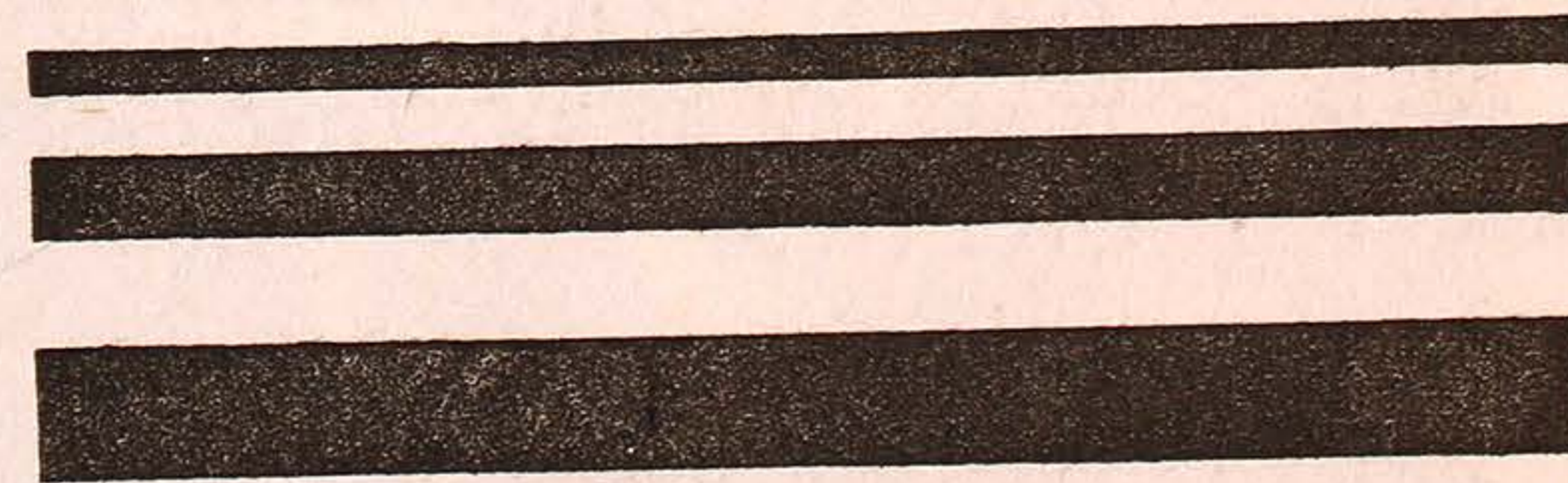
PLATE XVI

SHADOW LETTERING

The style illustrated is known as single line shadow lettering. The thickness and outline of the letter is merely suggested by the shadow line.

When constructing this character, complete letters in the required size and thickness, should be drawn first in pencil, and the shadow lined in heavily. The shadow is then inked over and the superfluous pencil lines erased.

The example at the foot of this plate shows the bold effect of white " shadow " on a black ground or, more accurately speaking, of reversing the usual placing of light and shade on the lettering.

Great care is necessary to carry out this style successfully. In order to avoid errors when inking in or blocking in with colour, it is advisable to first indicate the shadow in pencil.

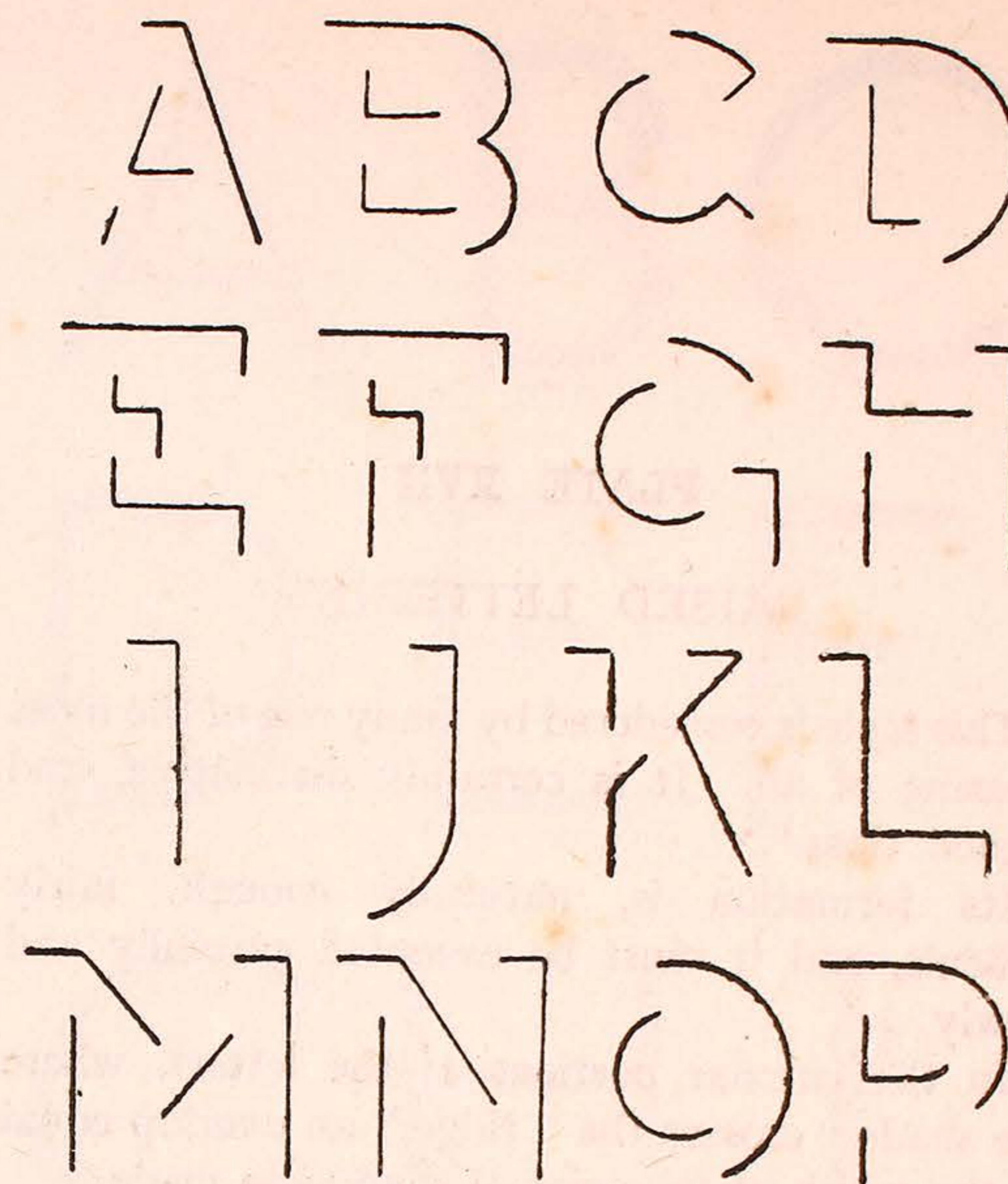The result repays one for any extra trouble incurred.

PLATE XVI

PLATE XVII

RAISED LETTERING

This style is considered by many one of the most pleasing of all. It is certainly distinctive, and " good class."

Its formation is, naturally enough, fairly difficult, and it must be executed carefully and slowly.

In the circular portions of the letters, where the shadow crosses the " ridge," an overlap equal to the width of the original shadow is made.

42

A B C
D E F
G H I
J K L

PLATE XVII

43

PLATE XVIII

ALTERNATING BACKGROUND AND FOREGROUND LETTERING

This type is subdivided into three modifications :
Vertical : As in ROTOR
Horizontal : As in OIL
Harlequin : As in FIX
This lettering should be used sparingly. Its formation is very difficult, and its legibility leaves much to be desired.

The horizontal type is the most legible, and, incidentally, the easiest to carry out.
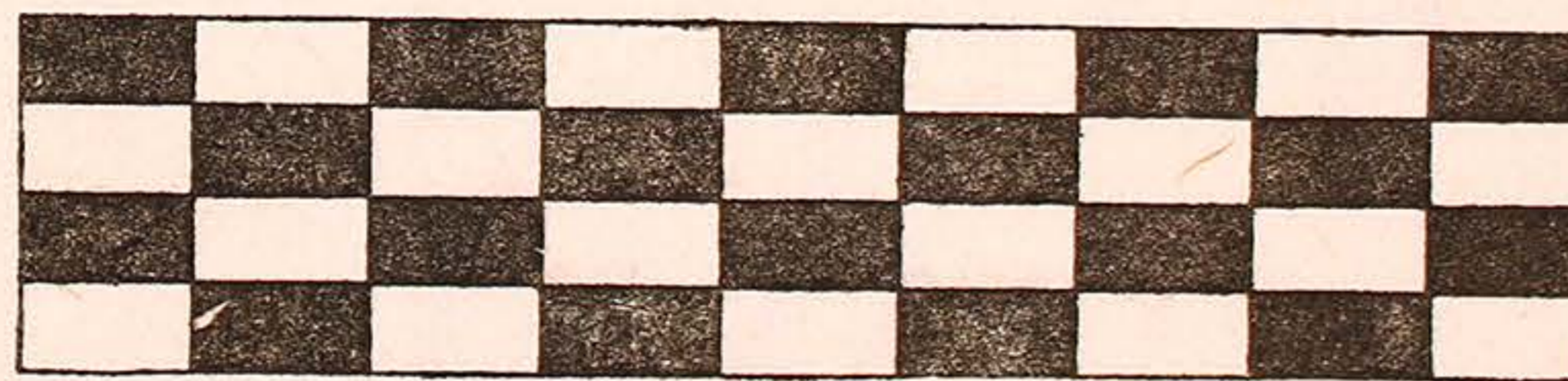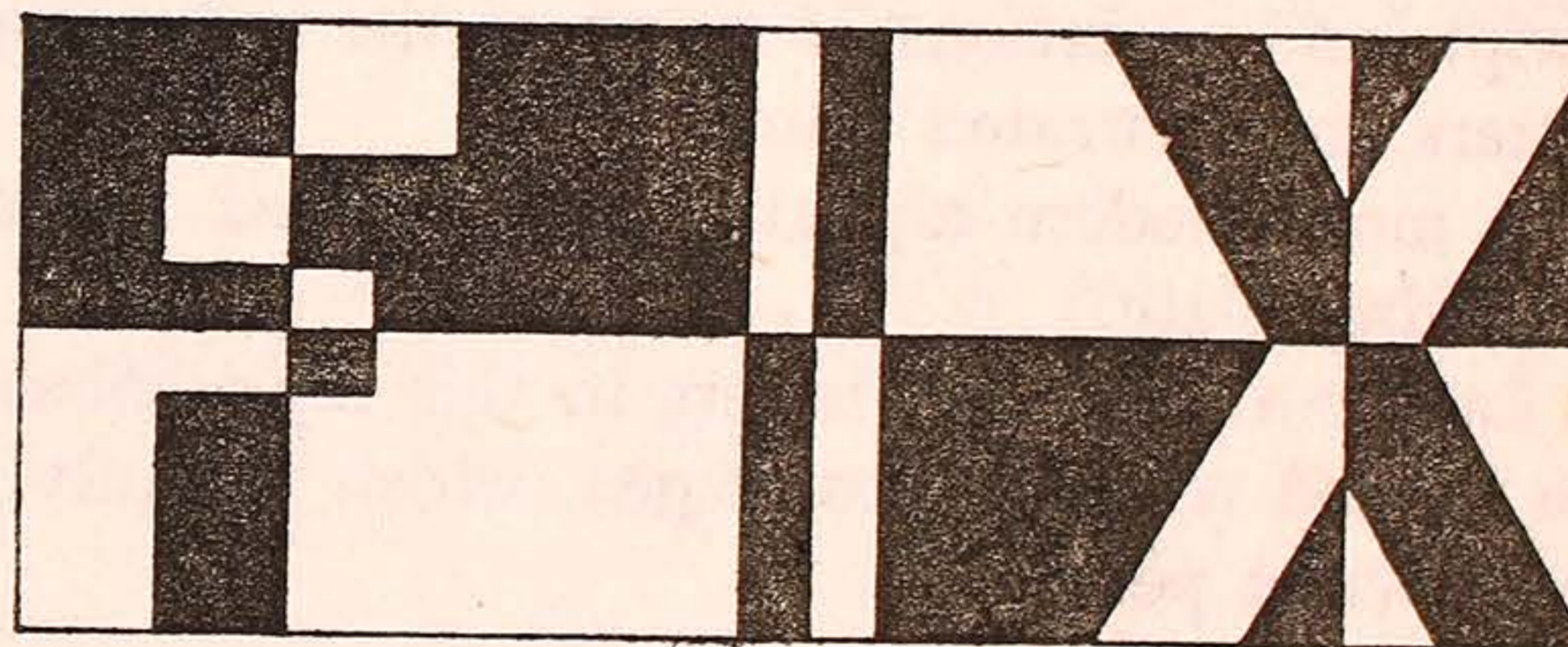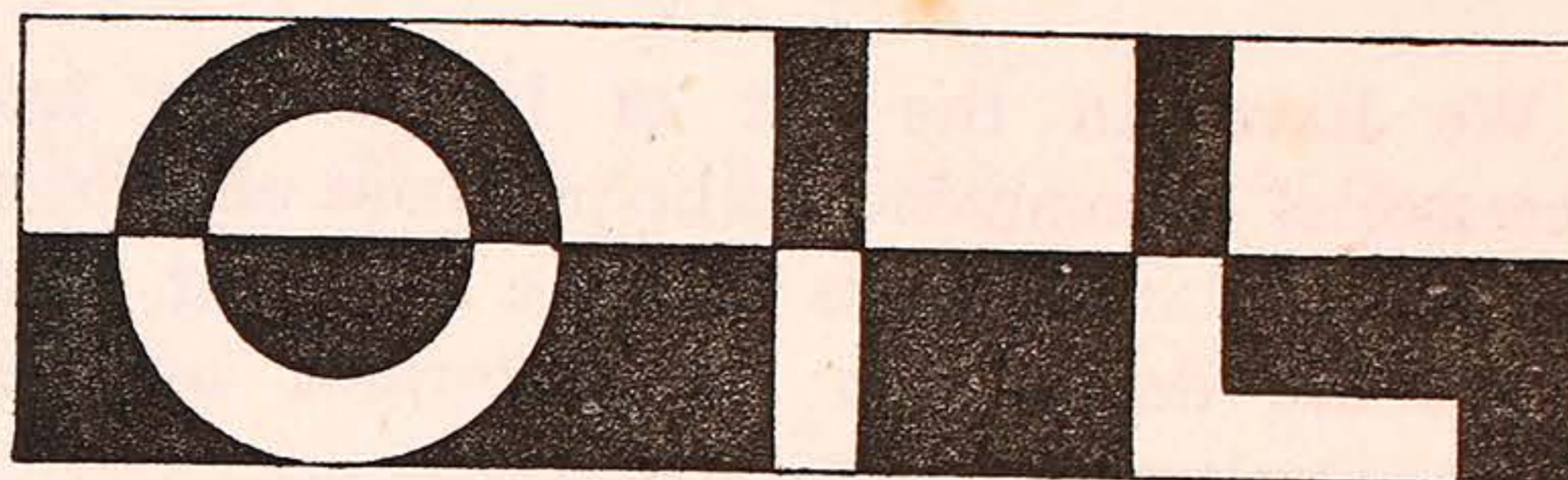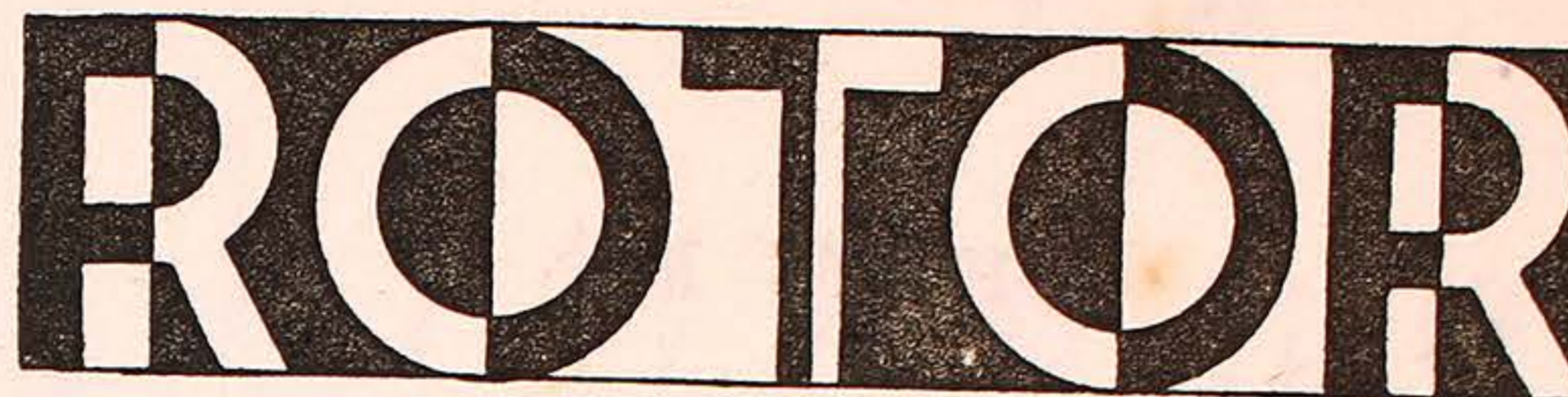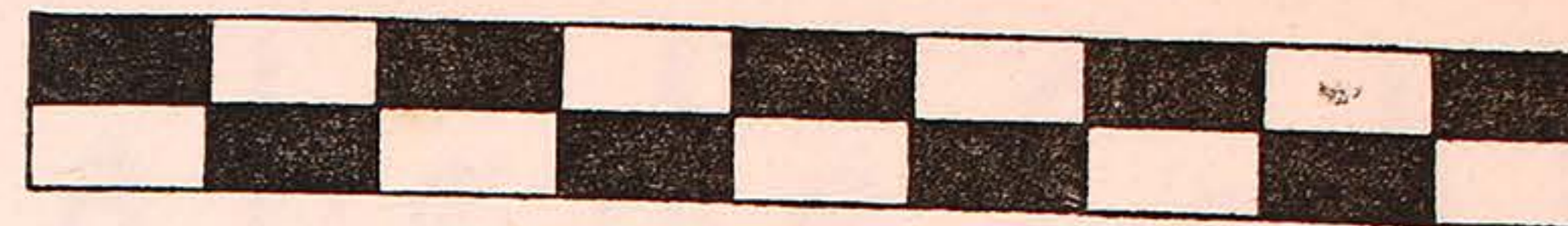
44

PLATE XVIII

45

PLATE XIX

FREEHAND SCRIPT-PEN LETTERING

We have, in the list of instruments and accessories, recommended the purchase of a set of script pens, and so this and the following three plates are devoted to letters formed by this handy implement.

The alphabet opposite is in straightforward script, and variations of many of the individual letters are illustrated below.

A more modern alphabet is illustrated in the following plate.

Larger and thicker letters in this style should be formed with the poster pen, which is really a large script pen.

abcdefghi
jklmnopq
rstuvwxy
variations
acegmnop
rsuivwxz
italic

PLATE XIX

46

47

PLATE XX

FREEHAND SCRIPT-PEN LETTERING

As may be clearly seen, this style of script is more straightforward and modern than that illustrated in Plate XIX. It is also much easier in construction, and is entirely free from curves.

The capital letters shown below are also free from curves, but here, however, diagonal strokes are substituted.

Script lettering will be found very useful where speed is of primary importance. Two pencil guide lines should be faintly ruled, and the letters faintly indicated between them. The lettering may then be quickly inked in by single strokes of the pen.

Fine lines are produced by moving the pen sideways.

48

a b c d e f g h
i j k l m n o p q
r s t u v x y z

A B C D E F
G H I J K L M
N O P Q R S
T U V X Y Z

PLATE XX

49

PLATE XXI

SCRIPT-PEN SHADOW LETTERING

When a shadow treatment is required at short notice, the script-pen is invaluable, as it produces the shadow, in full thickness, with one stroke.

The letters should first be drawn freehand to the required size and thickness in pencil, and the shadow added directly by means of the pen. When the ink is perfectly dry the superfluous pencil lines are erased.

The word SHADOW illustrates a rectangular style of capitals executed with a script pen, whilst the word DISPLAY shows italic lower case letters.

50

ABCDEF
GHIJKL
MNOPQ
RSTUV
WXYZ
SHADOW
display

PLATE XXI

51

PLATE XXII

ULTRA-MODERN SCRIPT-PEN LETTERING

The examples in this plate are essentially ultra-modern in character, and are produced with the script-pen in conjunction with the ruler and compass.

The first example is simple and elegant ; much of its beauty being due to the graceful curves in the S and B, and to the long, slender, vertical lines of the " p " " l " and " g."

The individuality of the capitals in EFFECT and PLAN is clearly marked.

The straight lines are produced by guiding the script-pen along the edge of a ruler. The curves are produced by a pen compass.

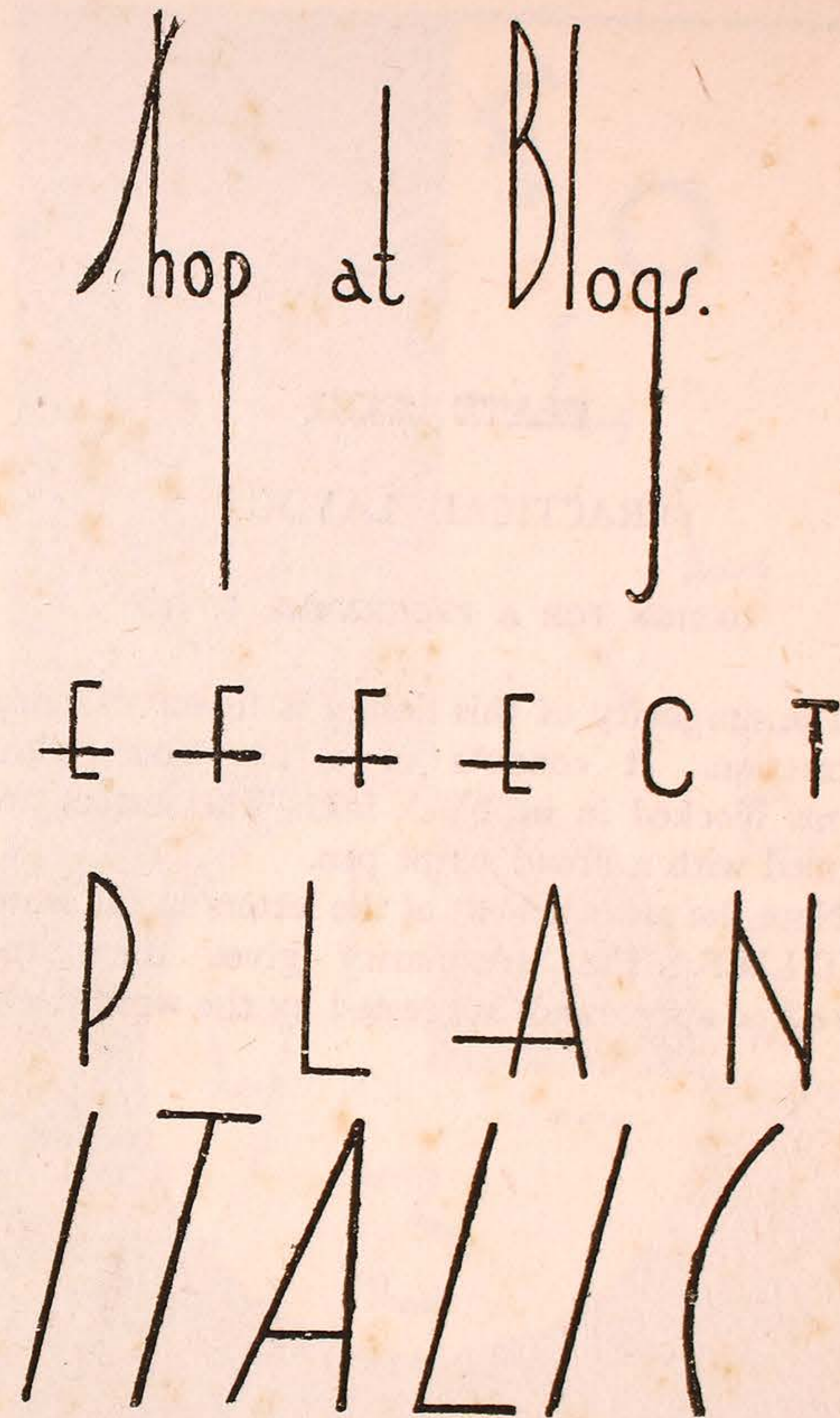The line at the foot of this plate illustrates a similar style in italic capitals

52

Shop at Blogs.

EFFECT

PLAN

ITALIC

PLATE XXII

53

PLATE XXIII

PRACTICAL LAYOUT

DESIGN FOR A PROGRAMME COVER

The simplicity of this design is its outstanding attraction. It consists of a few geometrical forms blocked in in black ink. The letters are formed with a broad script pen.

Note the arrangement of the letters in the word FOLLIES. The irregularity gives them the care-free appearance suggested by the word itself.
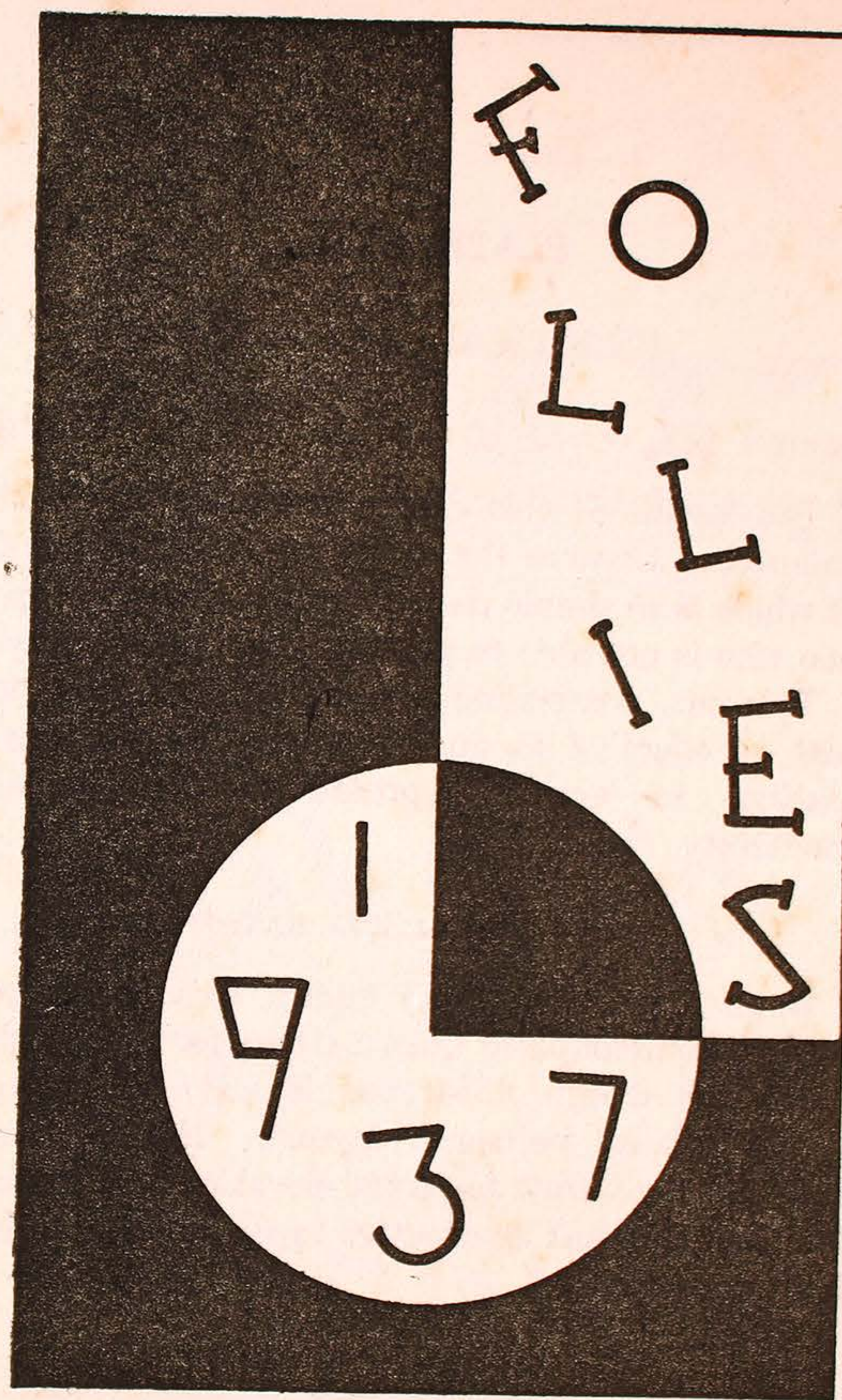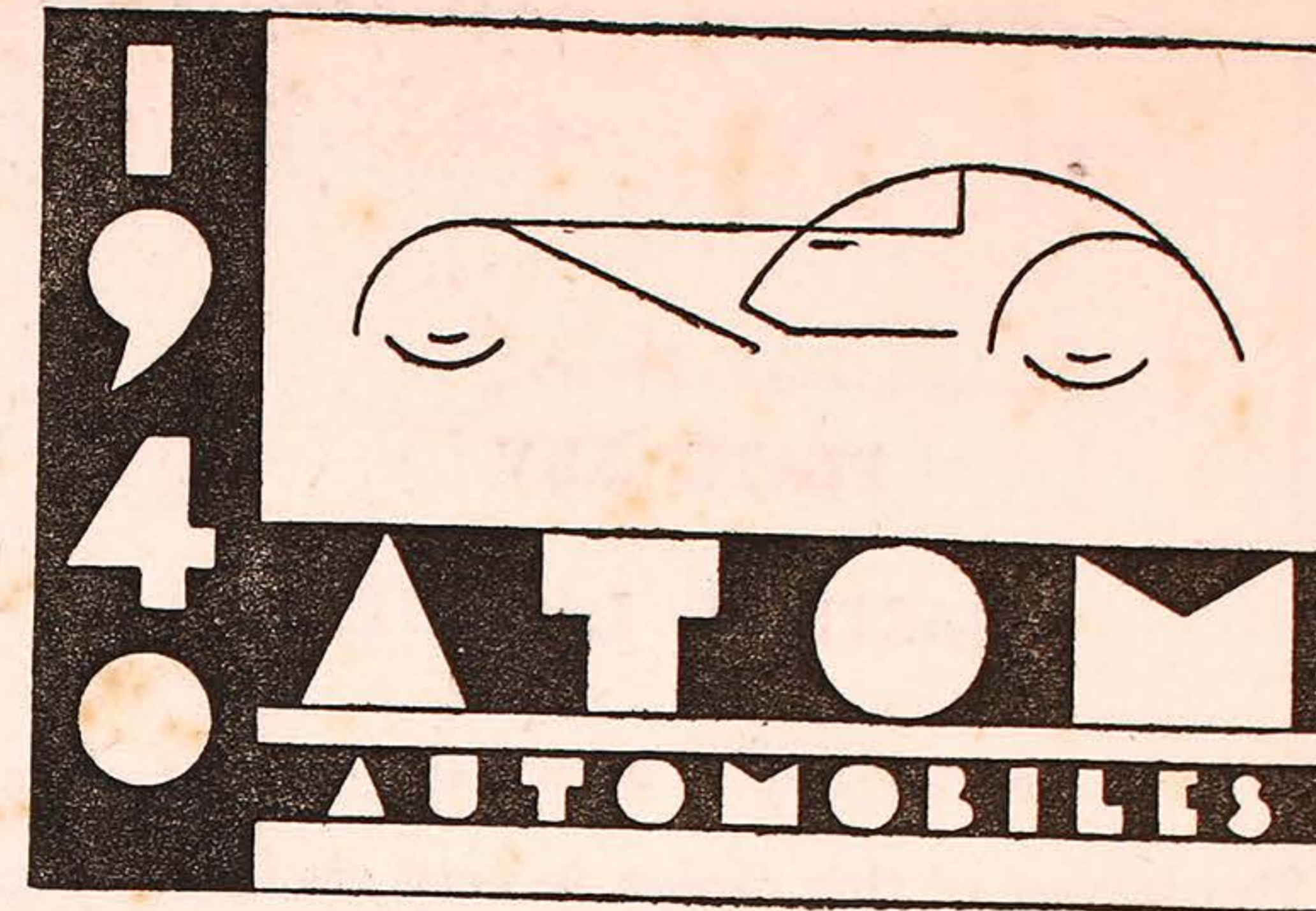

PLATE XXIII

PLATE XXIV

PRACTICAL LAYOUTS

DESIGN FOR COVER OF AUTOMOBILE CATALOGUE

The layout of this design is simple and well balanced. Observe the motor car, the treatment of which is so simple that it can be carried out by one who is not able to portray a car realistically.

This car, comprising a few lines and arcs, is just as effective as an elaborately drawn illustration. In fact, it expresses the keynote of modernity.

PRICE TICKET FOR RADIO

A price ticket for a 17 guinea radio must be far less commonplace than a ticket for a 3s. 11d. hat. The design illustrated is an example of symmetrically balanced layout. Notice how simple it is to draw the front elevation of a radio, and how it is just as effective as an illustration in full perspective.

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PLATE XXIV

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PLATE XXV

PRACTICAL LAYOUTS

DESIGN FOR A MENU COVER

The layout of this design is very similar to the layout of the motor catalogue cover illustrated in the previous plate, except that this is for a vertical shape.

The decorative treatment of the M in MENU is pleasing and original.

DESIGN FOR A WINE LIST COVER

As with the car in the previous plate, so with the wine bottle in this design—the suggestion of the article is effective and modern in treatment.

The whole of this design was carried out with a broad script pen, and took very little time.
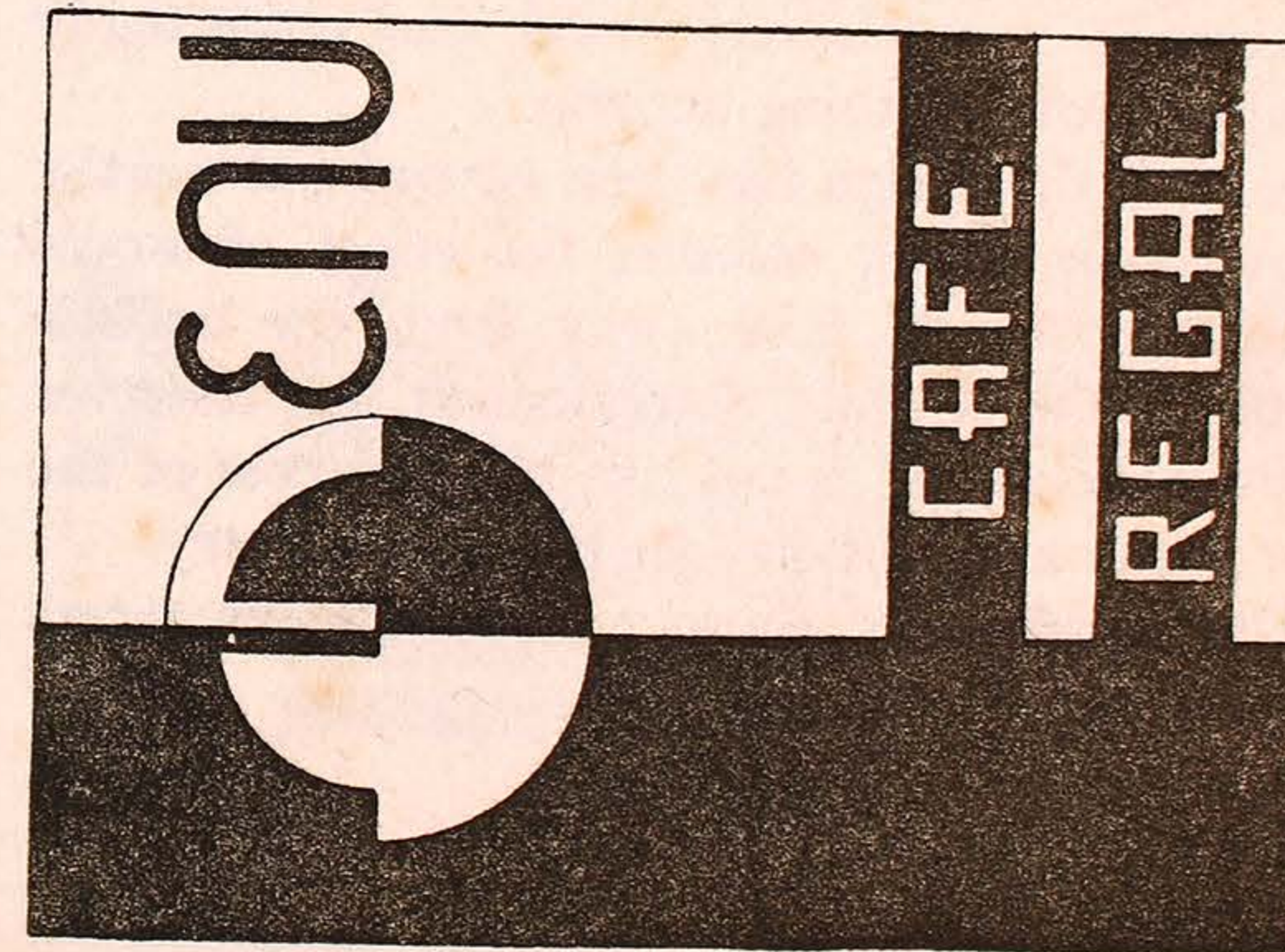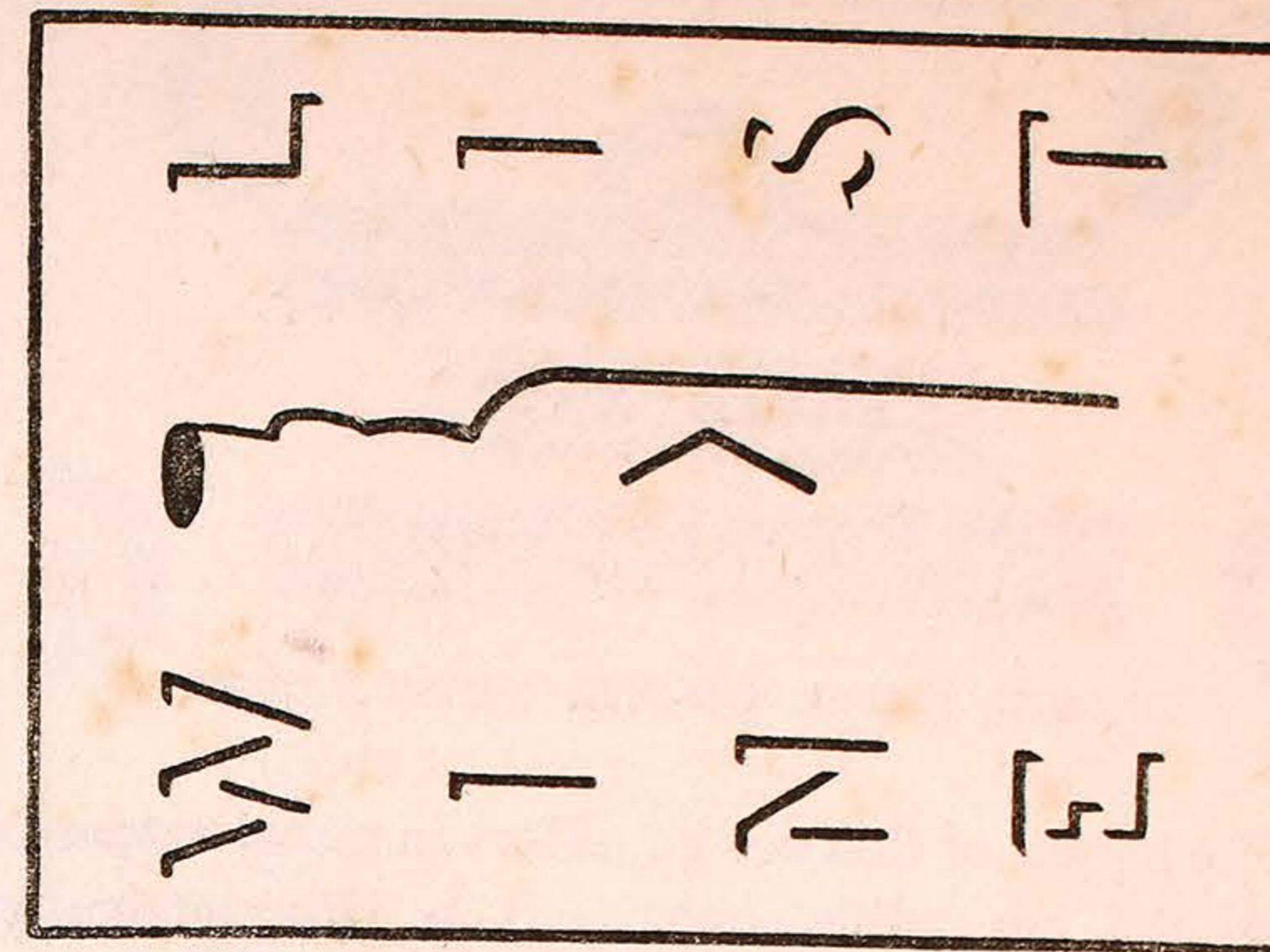
PLATE XXV

PLATE XXVI

PRACTICAL LAYOUT

DESIGN FOR A COCKTAIL-LIST COVER

The layout of this design differs in many respects from the preceding ones. It is symmetrically balanced, but more complicated, and *less legible*.

This last point may worry you, but there is a reason for it. The people who drink cocktails are usually in a leisurely mood, and quite ready to appreciate anything artistic.

Now, if the design has been carried out neatly, in several pleasing colours, the effect of words standing out will take away from the artistic nature of the design. So remember, the observer of the cocktail list is not like the observer of the beer poster at a station; he is not in a hurry.

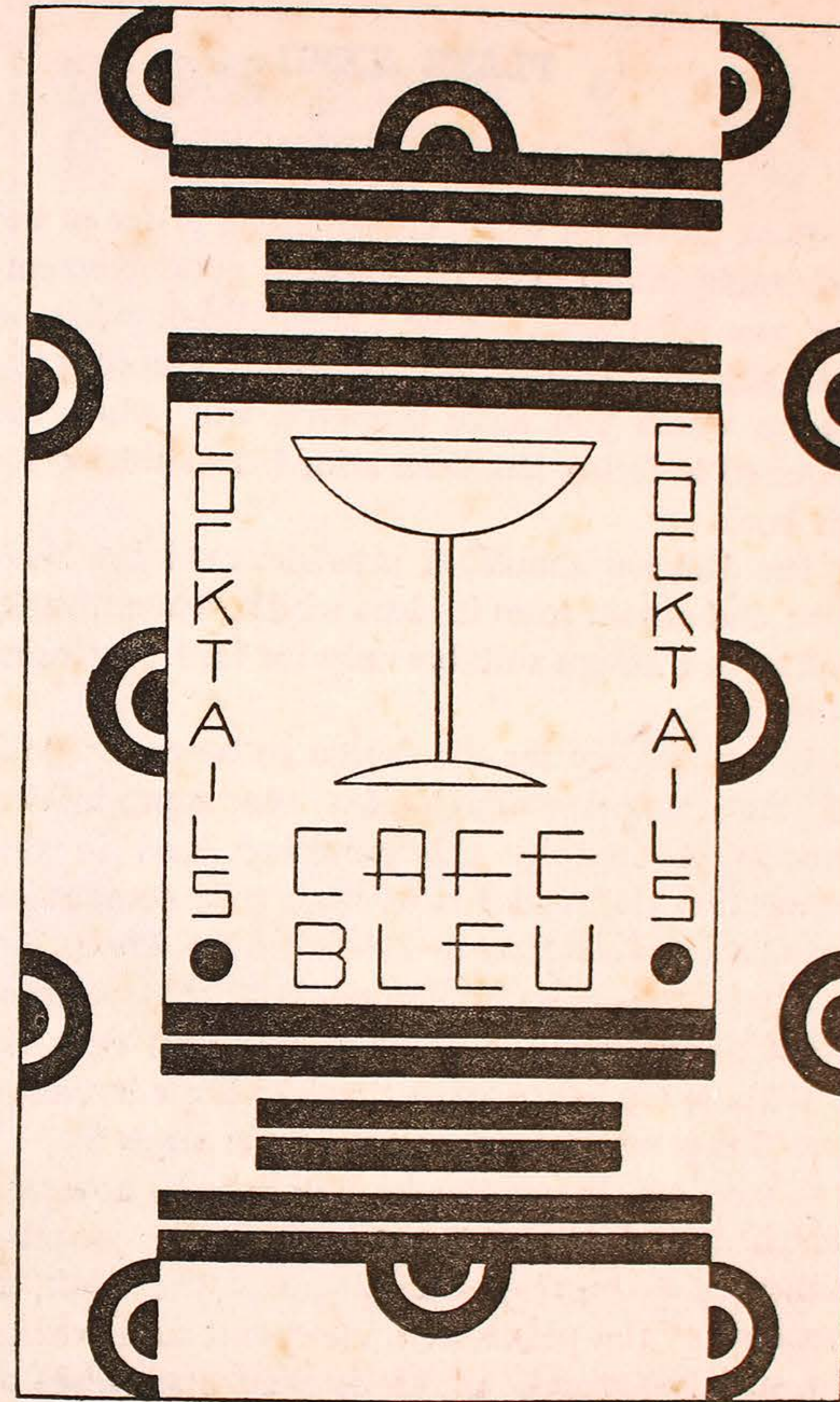This, incidentally, shows how psychology enters into successful designing.

PLATE XXVI

Such an example is given in this plate. The design illustrated would be attractive and effective if printed in either one or two flat colours on a suitably tinted paper ; whilst, from the publisher's point of view, it would be economical, as it could be reproduced by the line process instead of half-tone.

The white space at the foot of the design indicates the placing of the publisher's imprint.

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