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# Art Typo- graphica



FREDERIC W. GOUDY, Editor

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INTERIOR OF OLD DUTCH PRINTING OFFICE  
FROM A BOOK PRINTED AT HAARLEM IN 1628 CLAIMING FOR COSTER  
THE INVENTION OF PRINTING IN 1440.



# Ars Typographica

Volume I

Summer 1918

Number 2

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## WILLIAM BULMER and the Shakspeare Press

ON September 9, 1830, died William Bulmer, printer, whose name is associated with all that is correct and beautiful in typography. By him the art was matured, and brought to its present high state of perfection. This celebrated typographer was a native of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where he was apprenticed to Mr. Thompson, in the Burnt House-entry, St. Nicholas's Churchyard, from whom he received the first rudiments of his art. During his



apprenticeship he formed a friendship with Thomas Bewick, the celebrated engraver on wood, which lasted with great cordiality throughout life. It was their practice, whilst youths, to visit together every morning, a farm-house at Elswick, a small village about two miles from Newcastle, and indulge in Goody Coxen's hot rye-cake & buttermilk; she used to prepare these dainties for such of the Newcastle youths who were inclined to enjoy an early morning walk before the business of the day commenced.

During the period of the joint apprenticeships of these young aspirants for fame, Bulmer invariably took off the first impressions of Bewick's blocks, at his master's printing-office, at Newcastle, where Bulmer printed the engraving of the Huntsman and Old Hound, which obtained for Bewick the premium from the society of arts, in London. Mr. Bulmer afterwards suggested to his friend Bewick an improvement, of which he availed himself, of lowering the surfaces of the blocks where the distance or lighter parts of the engraving were to be shown to perfection. When Mr. Bulmer first went to London, his services were engaged by Mr. John Bell, who was then publishing his beautiful miniature editions of the poets, Shakspeare, &c.

About 1787, an accidental circumstance introduced Mr. Bulmer to the late George Nicol, Esq., bookseller to King George III, who was then considering the best method of carrying into effect the



projected magnificent national edition of Shakspeare, which he had suggested to Messrs. Boydell, ornamented with designs by the first artists of this country.

Mr. Nicol had previously engaged the skilful talents of Mr. William Martin\* of Birmingham in cutting sets of types, after approved models, in imitation of the sharp and fine letter used by the French and Italian printers, which Mr. Nicol for a length of time caused to be carried on in his own house. Premises were then engaged in Cleveland-row, St. James's, and the "Shakspeare Press" was established under the firm of "W. Bulmer and Co." This establishment soon evinced how judicious a choice Mr. Nicol had made in Mr. Bulmer to raise the reputation of his favourite project.

"This magnificent edition† [says Dr. Dibdin] which is worthy of the unrivalled compositions of our great dramatic bard, will remain as long as those compositions shall be admired, an honourable testimony of

\* William Martin was brother of Robert Martin, the apprentice of Baskerville. He afterwards set up a foundry in Duke-street, St. James's. His Roman and Italic types were decided imitations of Baskerville's;

† Mr. Nicol's connexion with the Messrs. Boydell was productive of one of the largest literary speculations ever embarked in in this country. The well-known Boydell edition of our immortal bard originated with Mr. Nicol, in a conversation that took place in the year 1797, as appears by a paper, written and printed by Mr. Nicol, giving an account of what he had done for the im-

but his Greeks and Orientals formed the most valuable part of his collection. His foundry, in 1817, was united to the Caslon. He died in the year 1815, and was buried in St. James's Church, Westminster.

provement of printing in this country. The fate of that national undertaking, the "Shakspeare Gallery," in Pall Mall, was unfortunate; it cost the proprietors above £100,000. It was adjoining to Mr. Nicol's house, and intended for the exhibition of the original paintings. The great object of the undertaking was to establish an English school of historical painting.



the taste and skill of the individuals who planned and conducted it to its completion.

"The text was revised by G. Steevens and Isaac Reed. Mr. Bulmer possessed the proof sheets of the whole work, on which are many curious remarks



AN ILLUSTRATION FROM THE CHASE  
ENGRAVED BY THOMAS BEWICK

by Steevens, not always of the most courteous description; also some original sonnets, a scene for a burlesque tragedy, some graphic sketches, &c. The establishment of the Shakspeare Press was unquestionably an honour both to the founders in particular, and to the public at large. Our greatest poet, our greatest painter, and two of our most respectable publishers and printers, were all embarked in one common white-hot crucible; from which issued so pure and brilliant a flame or fusion that it gladdened all eyes and hearts, and threw a new and revivifying lustre on the three-fold arts of painting, engraving, and printing. The nation appeared to be not less



struck than astonished; and our venerable monarch George III felt anxious not only to give such a magnificent establishment every degree of royal support but, infected with the matrix and puncheon mania, he had even contemplated the creation of a royal printing-office within the walls of his own palace!"

One of his majesty's principal hopes and wishes was, for his own country to rival the celebrity of Parma in the production of Bodoni; and Dr. Dibdin pleasantly alludes to what he calls the Bodoni Hum,—of "his majesty being completely and joyfully taken in, by bestowing upon the efforts of Mr. Bulmer's press, that eulogy which he had supposed was due exclusively to Bodoni's."

The first number of the Shakspeare appeared in January, 1794; and at once established Mr. Bulmer's fame as the first practical printer of the day. Dr. Dibdin has given a curious and copious list of the "books printed at the Shakspeare Press," with judicious remarks, to which we must refer our readers, noticing only such as are the most eminent in execution. Next to the Shakspeare, perhaps the edition of the Poetical Works of John Milton, in 3 vols. folio, 1793–1797, is the finest production of Mr. Bulmer's press. Dr. Dibdin seems to prefer this work even to the Shakspeare itself.

In 1795, Mr. Bulmer printed a beautiful edition in 4to. of the Poems of Goldsmith and Parnell, one copy on white satin, and three on vellum. The vol-



ume is dedicated to the founders of the Shakspeare printing-office, Messrs. Boydell and Nicol.

"The present volume," says Mr. Bulmer, in his advertisement, "in addition to the Shakspeare, the Milton, and many other valuable works of elegance, which have already been given to the world through the medium of the Shakspeare Press, is particularly meant to combine the various beauties of printing, type-founding, engraving, and paper making; as well as with a view to ascertain the near approach to perfection which those arts have attained in this country, as to invite a fair competition with the best typographical productions of other nations. How far the different artists who have contributed their exertions to this great object, have succeeded in the attempt, the public will now be fully able to judge. Much pains have been bestowed on the present publication to render it a complete specimen of the arts of type and block-printing.

"The ornaments are all engraved on blocks of wood, by my earliest acquaintances, Messrs. Bewicks, of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and London, after designs from the most interesting passages of the poems they embellish. They have been executed with great care, and I may venture to say, without being supposed to be influenced by ancient friendship, that they form the most extraordinary effort of the art of engraving upon wood, that ever was produced in any age, or any country. Indeed, it seems almost





THE Edition of Mr. SOMERVILE'S Poem of the CHASE, printed by Mr. BULMER at the *Shakspeare Press* in the year 1796, is universally acknowledged to be among the finest Specimens of British Typography; and the Subscribers to it are now presented with a second and similar volume, including the lesser Poems of the same popular writer on Field and Rural Sports, so as to produce, when united,





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impossible that such delicate effects could be obtained from blocks of wood.\* Of the paper it is only necessary to say, that it comes from the manufactory of Mr. Whatman."

Besides the wood-cuts, the work was embellished with eight very superior vignettes. The biographical sketches of Goldsmith and Parnell, prefixed to the work, were by Isaac Reed. This volume was highly appreciated by the public; two editions of it, in 4to. were sold, and they produced a profit to the ingenious printer, after payment of all expenses, of £1,500.

Stimulated by the great success of the work, Mr. Bulmer, in 1796, was induced to prepare an embellished quarto edition of Somerville's Chase. Three copies were printed on vellum. It is thus dedicated—

"To the Patrons of fine Printing: When the exertions of an individual to improve his profession are crowned with success, it is certainly the highest gratification his feelings can experience. The very distinguished approbation that attended the publication of Goldsmith's Traveller, Deserted Village, and Parnell's Hermit, which was last year offered to the public, as a specimen of the improved state of typography in this country, demands my warmest acknowledgments; and is no less satisfactory to the different artists who contributed their efforts

\* It is said that George III entertained so great a doubt on the subject, that he ordered his bookseller, Mr. Nicol, to procure the blocks from Mr. Bulmer for his inspection, that he might convince himself of the fact.



THE  
CHASE.

A  
POEM.

BY  
WILLIAM SOMERVILE,  
ESQ.



LONDON:

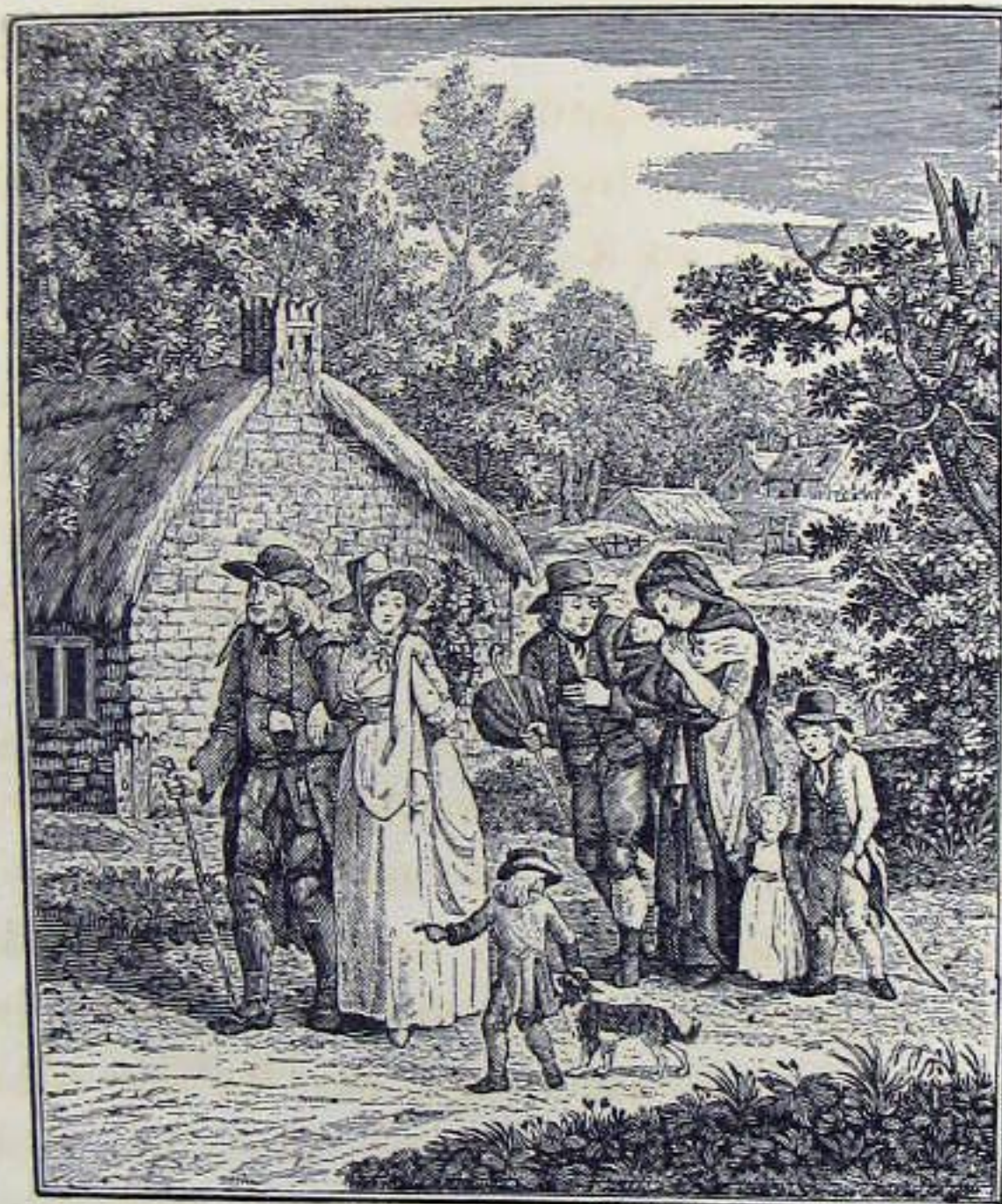
PRINTED BY W. BULMER AND CO.

Shakspeare Printing Office,  
CLEVELAND-ROW.

1796.



towards the completion of the work. The Chase, by Somervile, is now given as a companion to Goldsmith; and it is almost superfluous to observe, that



THE DEPARTURE  
ILLUSTRATION FOR THE DESERTED VILLAGE  
ENGRAVED BY BEWICK

the subjects which ornament the present volume, being entirely composed of landscape scenery, and animals, are adapted, above all others, to display the beauties of wood-engraving."



Of all the works executed at the Shakspeare Press, the Bibliographical Decameron, three vols. 8vo. by T. F. Dibdin, is acknowledged to be the most eminently successful in the development of the skill and beauty attached to the art of printing. Never was such a variety of ornament—in the way of wood-cuts and red and black ink—exhibited. The quantity of matter, by way of note, is perhaps nowhere exceeded, in a performance which unites splendour of execution with curiosity of detail. The paper is also of the finest quality. We have not space to enumerate the private reprints of Mr. Bulmer for the Roxburghe club, the history of which will be found in Dibdin's Bibliographical Decameron, vol. iii. pp. 69-74.

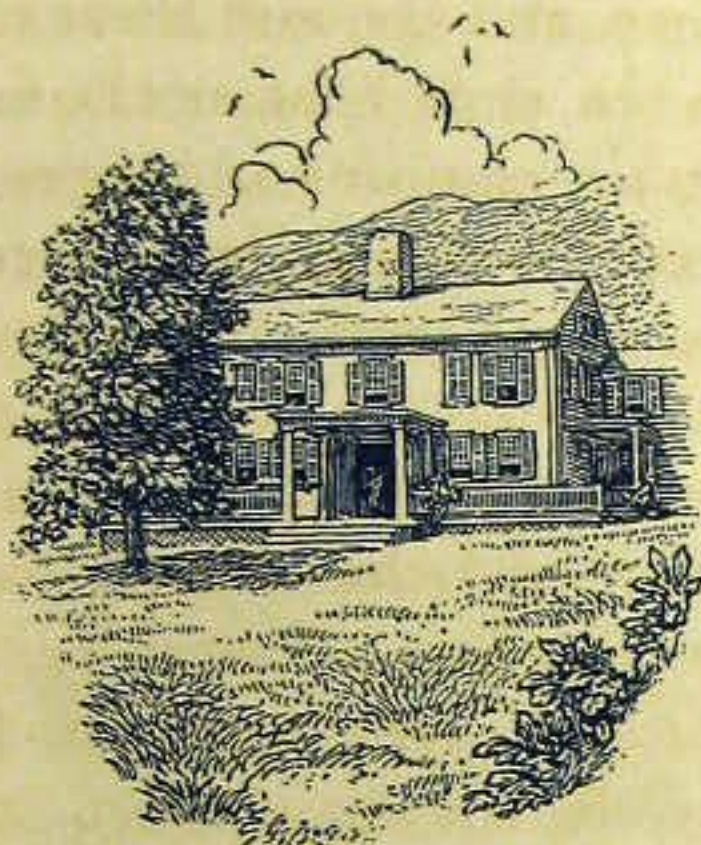
“One of the chief difficulties Mr. Bulmer had to contend with, was the providing of good black printing ink. That formerly used by printers was execrable. Baskerville had made his own ink, as well as type, about 1760, which enabled him to produce such fine work; and Mr. Robert Martin, his apprentice, was still living when Mr. Bulmer began business. He first supplied Mr. Bulmer with fine lampblack, for his experiments in fine printing; but the difficulty in obtaining an adequate supply, induced Mr. Bulmer to erect an apparatus for the purpose of making his own ink, and he succeeded to the extent of his wishes in producing a very superior black. In the Shakspeare, which was



nine years in hand, the same harmony of tint and richness of colour prevail, as if the ink had been all made at one time, and the last sheet inked by the same hand in the same hour as the first; this single work probably contains more pages than Bodoni ever printed. Much must have been owing to the aid of good and congenial quality in the paper, and insured in effect by the experience and skill which Mr. Bulmer was so competent to impart to his workmen; and that a great deal must have depended on, and been effected by, the two last-named requisites, is very apparent, from his being able to produce the same effect in ink of another colour, namely, red."

After continuing in business with the highest credit for about thirty years, Mr. Bulmer retired in 1819, with a well-earned fortune, to a genteel residence at Clapham Rise, and was succeeded at the Shakspeare Press by his partner, Mr. William Nicol, the only son of his friend. Mr. Nicol, in his Octoglot folio edition of Virgil, edited by W. Sotheby, Esq., has proved himself a most diligent and able successor. But whilst we have justly placed Mr. Bulmer in the first rank of his profession, let us not forget that he had equal claims to distinction among those whose memory is revered for their many private and domestic virtues. We may then truly say, that his art was deprived of its brightest ornament, and his friends had to lament the loss





*Halfway up the mountain slope stands  
the old house. Beyond the lake valley,  
where bright waters gleam here and there  
through distant tree-tops, the mountains  
stretch away, line above line of timbered*



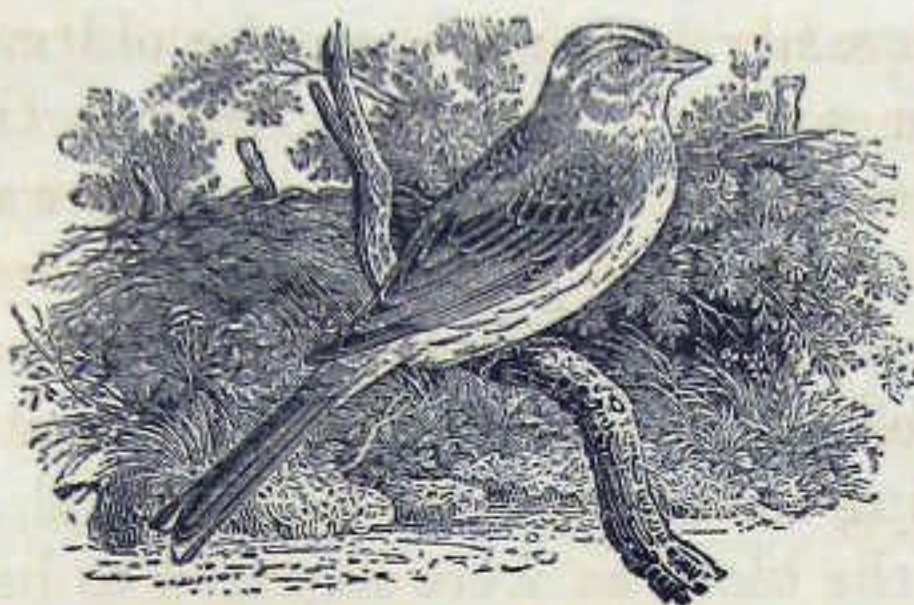
of one not easily surpassed in every moral excellence. Mr. Bulmer died at Clapham Rise, on the 9th of September, in his 74th year, and his remains were interred on the 16th, at St. Clement Danes, Strand, [in which parish his brother had long resided,] attended to the grave by a numerous and respectable company of mourning friends.




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IF the presentation of this account of Wm. Bulmer requires any justification, let it be that his work "particularly meant to combine the various beauties of printing, type founding, engraving and paper making; as well as with a view to ascertain the near approach to perfection which those arts have attained in this country" [England]. The work of a printer with such an aim at a time when book-making generally was at a low degree of excellence, seems to deserve a greater measure of recognition than has hitherto been given. [Editor]





THE YELLOWHAMMER

## THOMAS BEWICK and his Pupils\*

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EARLY wood-engravings were cut with a knife, held like a pen and drawn towards the craftsman, on "planks" of the soft wood of the pear or apple tree, or some similar tree. It is believed that Bewick was the first who used the wood of the box tree, which is very hard, and who made his drawings on the butt-ends of the blocks, and cut his lines with the graver pushed from him. He brought into practice what is known as the "white line" in wood-engraving; that is, he produced his effects more by means of many white lines wide apart to give an appearance of lightness, and by giving closer lines to produce a grey effect, as in our cut of "The

\*An extract from *A History of Wood Engraving* by J. Cundall.



Yellowhammer." He gave up the old method of obtaining "colour," as it is termed, by means of cross-hatching, and used a much simpler and more expeditious way of giving depth of shadow by leaving solid masses of the block, which of course printed black—and he constantly adopted the plan of lowering the wood in the background, and such parts of the block as were required to be printed lightly.

The first book of real importance that was illustrated by Thomas Bewick was the *Select Fables* published by Saint of Newcastle in 1784; this is now very rare; there is, however, a copy in the British Museum [press-mark 12305 g 16] which can at all times be consulted. Most of the designs are derived from Croxall's *Fables*, and many of these were copied from the copper-plates by Francis Barlow in his edition of *Aesop*, published "at his house, The Golden Eagle, in New Street, near Shoo Lane, in 1665." Though Bewick improved the drawings, there was little originality in them, but the engravings were far in advance of any other work of the kind done at that period. The success of this book induced him to carry out an idea he had long entertained of producing a series of illustrations for a *General History of Quadrupeds*, on which he was engaged for six years, making the drawings and engraving them mostly in the evening. He tells us he had much difficulty in finding



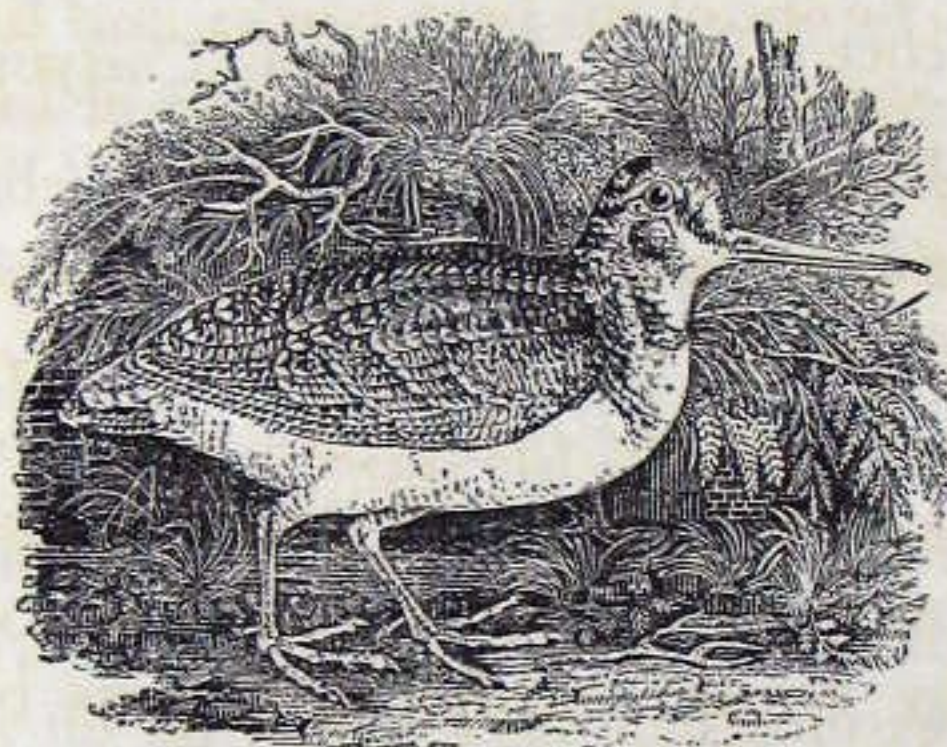
models, and was delighted when a travelling menagerie visited Newcastle and enabled him to depict many wild animals from nature. It was while he was employed on this work that he received a commission to make an engraving of a "Chillingham Bull," one of those famous wild cattle to which Sir Walter Scott refers in his ballad, "Cadyow Castle":

"Mightiest of all the beasts of chase  
That roam in woody Caledon."

He made the drawing on a block  $7\frac{3}{4}$  inches by  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches, and used his highest powers in rendering it as true to nature as he could; it is said that he always considered it to be his best work. After a few impressions had been taken off on paper and parchment, the block, which had been carelessly left by the printers in the direct rays of the sun, was split by the heat; and, though it was in after years clamped in gun-metal, no impressions could be taken which did not show a trace of the accident. Happily, one of the original impressions on parchment may be seen in the Townsend Collection in the South Kensington Museum. Meanwhile the Quadrupeds were going on bravely. Ralph Beilby compiled the necessary text, which Bewick revised where he could, and in 1790 the book was published. It sold so well that a second edition was issued in 1791, and a third in 1792. Since then it has been frequently reprinted.



Besides the engravings of quadrupeds, the best that had appeared up to that time, the numerous tail-pieces which Bewick drew from nature charmed the public immensely. We give an example, one of them in which a small boy, said to be a young



THE WOODCOCK  
ENGRAVED BY THOMAS BEWICK

brother of the artist, is pulling a colt's tail, while the mother is rushing to his rescue. This little cut gives an admirable idea of their style. Many of them are humorous, many very pathetic, many grimly sarcastic, and all perfectly original.

As soon as the success of the Quadrupeds was assured, Bewick commenced without delay his still more celebrated book, the History of British Birds. In making the drawings for this work he was much more at home, for he knew every feathered creature that flew within twenty miles of Ovingham, and it was all "labour of love." He worked with all his



soul first at the Land Birds and afterwards at the Water Birds, and it is on these two books that Bewick's fame both as a draughtsman and an engraver principally rests. We give a copy of the "Yellowhammer," which the artist himself considered to be one of his best works, and the "Woodcock," in which all the excellences of his peculiar style may readily be traced.

The first volume, the Land Birds, appeared in 1797, and was received with rapture by all lovers of nature. Again, the tail-pieces, pictures in miniature, were applauded to the skies, and the gratified author was beset on all sides with congratulations. Mr. Beilby wrote the descriptions as before, and performed his work very creditably.

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There is at Mentz, on the front of the house wherein Guttemberg lived, the inscription following, put up in the year 1507:

Joanni Guttembergensi  
Moguntino,  
Qui primus omnium literas aere  
Imprimendas invenit,  
Hac arte de orbe toto bene merenti;  
Yvo vintegensis  
Hoc saxum pro monumento posuit.



Epitoma Joānis  
de mōte regio In  
almageſtū ptolo  
~\*~ mel ~\*~



# THE COMPOSITION OF A DECORATIVE TITLE-PAGE

By Edward F. Strange

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THE making of a good title-page is one of the tasks whereof the apparent easiness is almost the chief of the difficulties. It is an affair of so deceptive a simplicity, that, too often, it has been left—even by those who were at some pains to put together a beautiful book—to make itself in the hands of the printer. And too often, again, it has been considered to be a fair field for the display of the little fancies and ingenuities of a writer; who, whatever his intellectual qualities may otherwise be, is not necessarily a good designer; or for those of a maker of patterns or pictures who has never realised the dignity and decorative value of fine lettering. We have seen, during the last score of years, an appreciable improvement in this, as in other branches of the craft of book-making. But there is room for so much more progress; and so many evident misunderstandings are abroad of the qualities and even of the purpose of a worthy title-page, that it seems worth while to try and formulate these with some precision.

First, as to the purpose of a title-page. This is, one would say, sufficiently obvious; and yet the neglect



of the simple fact, that its mission is merely to display the title of the volume, and the names of the author and publisher, is the cause of many of the troubles that arise. It is not the function of a title-page to index the contents of the book; or to proclaim the achievements, the style, titles, and dignities of the author. The reader wants none of these things there, however grateful he may be for the information in other places. The little verse, text or sentiment, which some authors love to use as a hint of the frame of mind that they would like to impose on the reader, is better kept away from this page; as also is the dedication. The issue must not be confused; and our page should contain no words beyond those of the title, and the advertisement of printer or publisher. The title itself, then, must be our first consideration. If—as sometimes happens—it be so long as to demand more than one line of type or other lettering, the designer will find his first problem in the spacing of it. As a rule there should be no necessity for the use of letters of more than one size. We have proposed to ourselves the consideration of title-pages which are essentially decorative; and it may, consequently, be proper here to remark that few things are better capable of good decorative use than good lettering properly applied, which generally means—put into its right place and allowed to fulfil its right mission. Now the essence of these requirements is obtained by a simplicity





FRONTISPIECE FOR WORKS OF ERASMUS · DESIGNED BY HANS HOLBEIN



which allows the form of the letters to speak for themselves. And the modern printer's bad habit of setting up each line of his title-page in a separate fount of type, may testify to the variety of the stock at his command, and to his knowledge of the resources of the establishment, but is absolutely destructive of any possibilities of work which is beautiful in the artistic sense. If a second fount of type is really needed—by reason of some portions of the title being of subsidiary importance only, it will generally be found advisable to use a lower-case of that in which the principal words appear. This same lower-case should suffice for the imprint, publisher's advertisement, or whatever takes its place.

Mere words in plain letters, then—here we have all the elements of good decoration—save one. The third is simply, Paper. That it should be of good quality, no book-lover needs teaching—and the point need not be laboured. But the use of it is quite another matter. It has been one of the curiosities of my campaign of advocacy of the use and beauties of good lettering, to note how many people are keenly anxious to design letters, who have never troubled to give a thought to designing with them. In this process, the paper plays a great part—not that which is covered, but that which is left to contrast with the mass or masses of lettering. For the latter must show evidence of deliberate combination. It must have a sense of form; both as a whole and as to



the relationship between its parts. And on the feeling of due proportion—which is one of the intrinsic qualities of all good design—evinced between the separate sections, so to speak, of black and white, will depend the artistic success and unity of the whole. . . . In this brief essay I have not tried to formulate rules. Indeed, any attempt at adherence to such would only lead to disaster. The conditions vary in every single instance, and only a developed habit of self-criticism will help the designer to the expression of whatever may be the best employment of his natural gifts.

In the way of advice to the student, nothing better can be given than that he should study—not copy—the old examples; try to train himself toward an instinctive habit founded on the principles which underlie them—principles which involve only good taste, craftsmanship sincere and unaffected, simplicity, and thorough concentration on the purpose of his labours.

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Mr. Bruce Rogers, now in charge of the fine book making at the University Press, Cambridge, [England], writes that the beautiful Doves type which Cobden-Sanderson “devoted to the bed of the River Thames,” has been re-cut for Emery Walker by Prince, the punch cutter who cut Morris’ Golden and Chaucer types for his Kelmscott Press.



# FAMOUS WOODCUTS of the XVth & XVIth Centuries

By Charles Ricketts



HEADBAND ENGRAVED BY ALDEGREVER [1539]

FROM the earlier years of the fifteenth century to fifteen hundred and thirty, or thereabouts, the development of the woodcut and the forming of the printed book, occupies an epoch so important in actual output, that, impatient of the underlying causes, often far removed, the existence of these two sister arts has seemed at once both the cause and wonderful result of the Renaissance.

The Woodcut, in its purposes of detached prints, playing cards, perhaps also in rude dyers' blocks for linen stuffs, is held to have initiated those first steps towards the invention of printing. Slow at first to emerge from such humble use, wood-engraving, however, survives in artistic vigour some thirty years after the art of printing had lapsed from all real artistic effort. With the *Canticum Canticorum*, of uncertain origin, we find the woodcut touching an



average of invention and grace that should place it out of all competition with the rude and often ugly block-books following upon it or contemporary.

With the triumphs of the great printers the fate of block-illustration wavers and hesitates, for wood-



MARK OF FROBEN, PRINTER AT BASLE, 16TH CENTURY  
DESIGNED BY HOLBEIN

ERASMUS said of FROBEN in 1517, "It is enough to know that a book was printed on the presses of Froben to be sure that it will be diligently sought for by the learned."

cuts are to this day difficult to print with movable type; it is for this reason that some of them were executed, or perhaps merely cast, in metal. From a press in Verona, the *De Re Militari* [supposed to



have been engraved on metal] has been deservedly attributed to a master designer, to Matteo da Pasti; failing this attribution, the names of Alberti, of Pisanello, might be used to account for an element of dignity and pattern in these designs. Despite so excellent a beginning, for the *De Re Militari* is practically the first series entirely Italian in feeling, *The Dream of Poliphilus* has alone excited speculation as to the master or masters to whom its design should be attributed. The graceful Florentine illustrations to the tract and mystery books, and the *Quatriregio* show the efforts of a group of craftsmen, perhaps three craftsmen, with a talent in the rendering of dainty women and dandy pages, but little craftsmen of uncertain bent and parentage, at a time when Italy had become awakened to the genius of a Botticelli, a Mantegna, and a Signorelli; let us note, however, in these charming designs, a workmanlike use of solid black spaces, ingeniously fretted into texture and colour, a peculiarity which distinguishes Florentine work from that of Venice.

With the mighty art of Albrecht Durer, even in the early *Apocalypse*, we note besides his immense resource of invention, that overpowering presence of an influence out of which whole schools are made, and that evidence of a method, a manner, each successive artist will probe, modify, or remodel for himself out of the necessities of his peculiar temperament, and with that wholeheartedness and care





A FRENCH IMITATION OF AN ITALIAN WOODCUT FOR *The Dream of Poliphilus*  
PROBABLY PRINTED BY KERVER [1546]

“since a master is hard to equal,” that makes the larger half of all real originality.

Among the followers of Durer, Albrecht Altdorfer, an original engraver, brought to bear upon the crisp rebounding workmanship of his contemporaries, a sense of grace and of romance quite new until then—the waving of trees, the wheeling of skies—and a rare charm in the use of light and shade. Though Holbein, later, with his *Dance of Death*, will touch levels the art of Durer even did not touch, it is difficult to account for the overshadowing of Altdorfer, not by his greater contemporary,



Durer, but by the ingenious and industrious Burgkmair and Beham.

In Holbein's *Dance of Death*, a touch of Italian fluency and grace seems to pay back with interest the Italian debt to the Netherlands and Germany, that we find at the heart of Venetian painting. With Holbein, we may close that great tradition of woodcut illustration in Germany, that tradition he found so incisive in method, so opulent in range and which he left in his works, so free from sensationalism, so self-contained, for this once. With subsequent workers, the initial impulse no longer springs from truly great persons, and the methods employed in illustration, if still forcible and free, are less tenacious of fact, and of exquisite impression.



THE ABBOT • DESIGNED BY HOLBEIN  
 ENGRAVED BY MARY BYFIELD [1833] FOR DOUCE'S *Holbein's Dance of Death*  
 IMPRESSION FROM ELECTRO OF ORIGINAL WOOD BLOCK



# OPPORTUNITY FOR THE ARTS OF DESIGN

By Arthur Wesley Dow



AMERICA should be one of the foremost in the cultivation of the fine arts. Here is a mighty force that we have not yet "harnessed." We have subdued for our use almost every other kind of force, mechanical, intellectual, educational; the power of art is still only partially recognized even by those who should be leaders in promoting the finer interests of life. Ours is perhaps the only country in which the fine arts, especially the arts of design, are so neglected. The war has now brought us to a turning point. We foresee an increasing need for such forms of art as are used every day. War service has brought them in to stay. We call them arts and crafts, handicraft, industrial arts, household arts, commercial art, graphic arts, textile design, etc. They are all boughs from the same tree.

In a recent conference for discussion of the re-education of disabled soldiers, much was said of in-



dustrial occupations, typewriting, automobile mechanics, shoe repairing, gardening, and a long list of others, but the arts of design were scarcely mentioned. Printing came to the front as it would be useful, but art in printing was given the go-by.

This is the modern busy American's attitude. He takes it for granted that the disabled soldier wants only a "job." A poll of the soldiers themselves tells a different story. Many among them would gladly practice some form of design, handicraft, printing or graphic art if there were opportunity and encouragement for production.

Who will offer to these men the opportunity and encouragement? Is not the American Institute of Graphic Arts in a position to help them in just this way? The Institute is in touch with the business man, the educator and the designer. It has control of the most powerful of all agencies, the printed sheet. It can aid in causing a greater demand for wholesome design in those graphic arts which are most widely used. It can advise as to the kind of training needed for producing efficient craftsmen. By its competitions the Institute has discovered abundant talent among the art workers of America. It has also discovered that much effort is wasted through poor art training and ignorance of processes.

If the teaching in our art school is not "practical" as regards the graphic arts, the American Institute is capable of setting it right. It can advise with the



new Federal Board as to instruction in the graphic arts and the arts of design in the vocational schools.

Here is opportunity, but not for the Institute alone. It will need the support of all who are awake to our national deficiency in art appreciation—all who want to see good design on the book page, in the newspaper, the advertisement and the poster. *Ars Typographica* comes to the American craftsman as an example and a model. It should influence every printer in the land. The teaching of art is largely a teaching by example. Volumes of talk about good printing would have no effect unless illustrated at every point by the best examples. The public can be educated by exhibitions of fine work in the arts of design, interpreted by lectures and demonstrations. When craftsmen and public are agreed there will be no lack of opportunity for American creative genius.

## BOOKS

BOOKS are a part of man's prerogative,  
 In formal ink they thoughts and voices hold,  
 That we to them our solitude may give,  
 And make time present travel that of old.  
 Our life, Fame pierceth at the end,  
 And books if farther backward, do extend.



# THE AMERICAN'S CREED



I BELIEVE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AS A GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE; WHOSE JUST POWERS ARE DERIVED FROM THE CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED; A DEMOCRACY IN A REPUBLIC; A SOVEREIGN NATION OF MANY SOVEREIGN STATES; A PERFECT UNION, ONE AND INSEPARABLE; ESTABLISHED UPON THOSE PRINCIPLES OF FREEDOM, EQUALITY, JUSTICE, AND HUMANITY FOR WHICH AMERICAN PATRIOTS SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES AND FORTUNES



I THEREFORE BELIEVE IT IS MY DUTY TO MY COUNTRY TO LOVE IT; TO SUPPORT ITS CONSTITUTION; TO OBEY ITS LAWS; TO RESPECT ITS FLAG; AND TO DEFEND IT AGAINST ALL ENEMIES



# WHAT PRINTING IS

By Frederic W. Goudy



“TO STAMP paper upon inked types seems the simplest of mechanical operations. Done in a primitive way it is simple. With his toy printing press the twelve-year old amateur can produce a print which he and admiring friends say is good enough for anybody. They are sure there is no mystery and little science in press-work. It is as easy as Hamlet’s lesson in flute-playing: ‘Tis as easy as lying; govern these ventages with your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music.’”

Every one knows what printing is; simply inking types that have been carefully arranged, properly impressing them on paper and the thing is done. Simple enough in all conscience. But knowing what printing is does not necessarily qualify one to print. The beginner will find it difficult to get the re-



quired result even when he does these things. Although the essence of design consists in contrast, series and symmetry, none of these, nor all will produce ornament. It is their application; but their application along certain principles that produces designs. It is knowing how and why; and people who have that power of knowing "how and why" work entirely unconscious of the essential laws under which they labor. Just so, good printing can no more be taught by precept than can design—it is entirely the result of taste, sense and judgment.

The modern printer is intelligent and ingenious, but generally speaking, without ability to design, and good printing does require design. He must have the materials and a habit of observation and experience. Inform his mind, furnish him with good examples and you may leave the result to him—if he has taste and sense the result will be good.

It is in the early printed books that the printer may find the sort of help he needs; there all the elements of types, ink, paper and impression are present in pristine state, where the arrangement of the types is simple and direct, uninfluenced by the demands of commercialism. Denied the adventitious aids of the foundry and supply men, those early printers found themselves face to face with fundamental necessities, and depending upon themselves only, created arrangements consistent with common sense. Their work shows simplicity, reserve, elegance, dignity,



which are manifestations of a workman intent on expression and not on mere execution. Imitative art requires little more than skilled industry; design requires invention and a constructive sense controlled by a feeling for beauty.

The printer who is to produce the best work is the one who sees that his work includes a degree of beauty not merely attributable to a narrow observance of all the requirements of utility but who sees that beauty in a useful thing supplies a very real demand of the mind or eye. A piece of printing must have use; its construction, its parts, its decorative features must be so adjusted to one another that in no sense is any one of these elements overlooked or over-emphasized. To give unity to a piece of printed matter the construction and arrangement must be kept going as a whole, all the time, so that the attention does not dwell too long on any one part, and this, too, is the very beginning of design, as it amounts to grasping the whole situation—not an easy thing to do.

In the choice of types, those should be sought that are sturdy, legible and easily discerned, but sturdiness need not necessarily mean types over-bold or rough. Utility and not artistic caprice; legibility, not the illustration of the designer's skill should be looked for, remembering that their principal purpose is to convey to the reader the thought of the writer or advertiser. They must not interpose for their own



sake nor demand attention to themselves at the expense of clearness of the message they carry.

To make any thing serviceable the producer, in his endeavor to satisfy human needs, must enter sympathetically into the details and incidents of the life of the user—his necessities and obvious habits; to print well requires much the same attitude on the part of the printer if his work is to possess permanence and beauty.

---

GOOD TASTE, skill and severe training are as requisite and necessary in the proper production of books as in any other of the fine arts. The well recognized "lines of beauty" are as essential and well defined in the one case as in the other.

Books are both our luxuries and our daily bread. They have become to our lives and happiness prime necessities. They are our trusted favorites, our guardians, our confidential advisers, and the safe consumers of our leisure. They cheer us in poverty and comfort us in the misery of affluence. They absorb the effervescence of impetuous youth, and while away the tedium of age. You may not teach ignorance to a youth who carries a favorite book in his pocket, and to a man who masters his appetites a good book is a talisman which insures him against the dangers of over-speed, idleness and shallowness.

—Henry Stevens





## THE EDITOR'S WORKSHOP

“PRIMARILY and essentially a book is something to be read, not to be treated as an objet d'art, to be taken down occasionally and shown to a friend.”

As we enjoy to the utmost a painting or other form of art without thinking at all of the story the artist had in mind, may we not, too, now and then, have beautiful printing upon which we can exercise our esthetic sense, where the typography itself is the charm and possesses likewise a value of its own apart from its purpose as the carrier of a message; and what better medium than a worthy book upon which to lavish every charm that paper and print can give?

---

THE EDITOR of *Ars Typographica* labors under a considerable disadvantage as he is in no sense a literary person with any gift of expression. He is a craftsman and designer more interested in his work as a designer of types and their use than in mere writing. What writing he does is solely with a view to setting down in definite form the conclusions of



a craftsman in the hope of helping some printer who has an imperfect understanding of the principles underlying design and typography.

He does not feel that he is on equal ground with the captious critic whose business is writing, nor will he make any attempt to controvert criticism. The editor does not doubt that this magazine might be better if edited by another hand, but having conceived the idea of presenting his thoughts on printing and types in this form he prefers to do so in his own way, hoping to find his account with those readers who will look for the wheat in the chaff and bear with his idiosyncrasies. As far as possible he wishes to please his readers, but on the other hand the publisher's announcement clearly outlined what he proposed to furnish. Up to the present, "artists, engravers, authors and enthusiastic collectors have monopolized the literature of book making." Will you not allow the craftsman his turn and read between the lines if perchance literary expression fails him here and there?

---

**BAD PRINTING** in the past was largely due to bad types; today both to bad types and the bad use of good types. Reform in printing must deal with both and may properly begin with some new and more pleasing style of letter. Without disparaging the taste of those who see no further advancement in the art of letter design than Caslon's famous fonts,



we maintain that there are other faces of merit, as indeed there must be, to please prevailing capricious tastes.\* It is not however necessary for foundries to produce a bewildering variety to meet these tastes. Some types are quaint and readable and yet do not meet with general favor. Why? Usually because of some mannerism, eccentricity, or because unfamiliar.

Simplicity is the last thing learned, but simplicity is the result of simple thinking—not a conscious attempt to be simple. Simplicity combined with character and the dignity which comes of these elements is demanded. We should remember that all writing and in turn all lettering are only a sort of shorthand; that the symbols, whose sole business is to represent sounds, should be reduced to the simplest forms. At first pictorial, letters are now mere abstract forms, entirely unlike the things that first suggested them. The written forms were shaped with a view to easy writing, and developed gradually. This was really a process of degradation which finally evolved an alphabet of arbitrary signs, whose forms are now fixed—fixed solidly because of types, which, not resting under the same considerations as the written forms, assumed certain definite shapes so familiar to every one, that any radical changes in them would be resented and thus defeat the very end in view.

\*Caslon's letter presents the perfection of unassuming craftsmanship but lacks entirely any artistic pretensions; it is straightforward and legible but there is in it too, a quality of quaintness, even beauty, that

secures for it general favor. Some people not so liberal minded give to it a slavish admiration that makes of it a fetish, and blinds them to other meritorious designs based on more modern requirements.



THIS ISSUE of *Ars Typographica* is printed from a new type now shown for the first time. This type, designed by the editor, is an endeavor to give, if possible, a new expression and a quality of interest and legibility to the "ugly modern face which we owe to the Italian, Bodoni." How well the designer has succeeded is left to the reader's judgment. He must be credited with a sincere attempt to solve a problem that the type founders chose to leave largely to the private printers to work out.

The private printer strives for types of individuality. The designer, who declines to be bound by commercial considerations, aims primarily to please himself. If he has taste and practical experience, and possesses a knowledge of technical requirements, his types will be characteristic and individual.

Bodoni introduced into his types a new and personal element. Although his types at first showed but slight differences from those of Fournier on which they were based, Bodoni introduced later refinements and improvements which resulted finally in a complete innovation in type forms and compelled a radical change generally in the typographic arrangements of his time.

Bodoni reduced the serifs of his types to single sharp lines about the weight of the hairlines which were of extreme attenuation; he reduced his curves to a minimum and with fat body strokes gave his print a sharpness and brilliancy that is dazzling.



Mr. Goudy has taken for his model a letter used by the French engravers of the 18th century for the captions to their productions. He has kept the general form of his model, but unlike Bodoni and his school, has dared to increase the weight of the hair-lines, to bracket the serifs slightly, and to carry the curves more generously toward the stems. In this way he has added to the strength of the letters constructively and has avoided an appearance of a "mere jumble of heavy lines fretted here and there with greyness," requiring constant readjustment of eye focus that is the essential fault of Bodoni's types. The body type [18 point] has been named "Goudy Modern" and the headings are set in a companion face called "Goudy Open."

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THERE are many things we would like to say about our publication, and we would like, too, to print what some of our well wishers have written about Number One. But there isn't space, and these letters of commendation are probably more interesting to us than to you. The first number was well received. We think this one is better and we purpose to continue on the same plane.

We hope that you will speak of *Ars Typographica* to your friends who may be interested. There are a few copies left of Number One, so that the four numbers comprising Volume one may be had. The other two will appear within the next six months.



# THE ALPHABET

FIFTEEN interpretative designs in twenty-seven full-page plates which have been drawn and arranged with explanatory text and illustrations by

FREDERIC W. GOUDY

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# Ars Typographica

Volume I

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THE advertisement opposite attracted our attention when it appeared in the magazines and we are pleased to give it a showing here as an admirable example, in type and color, of good advertising





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You ought not plan a home without considering the Estey Residence Organ. Music is as delightful an adjunct to a well-appointed home as books, pictures, furniture or flowers. These things require a setting, a special place for enjoying them. The library and the conservatory must be planned for. Why not equally the music room. The one supreme furniture of the music room is a pipe organ.

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## THE ESTEY RESIDENCE ORGAN

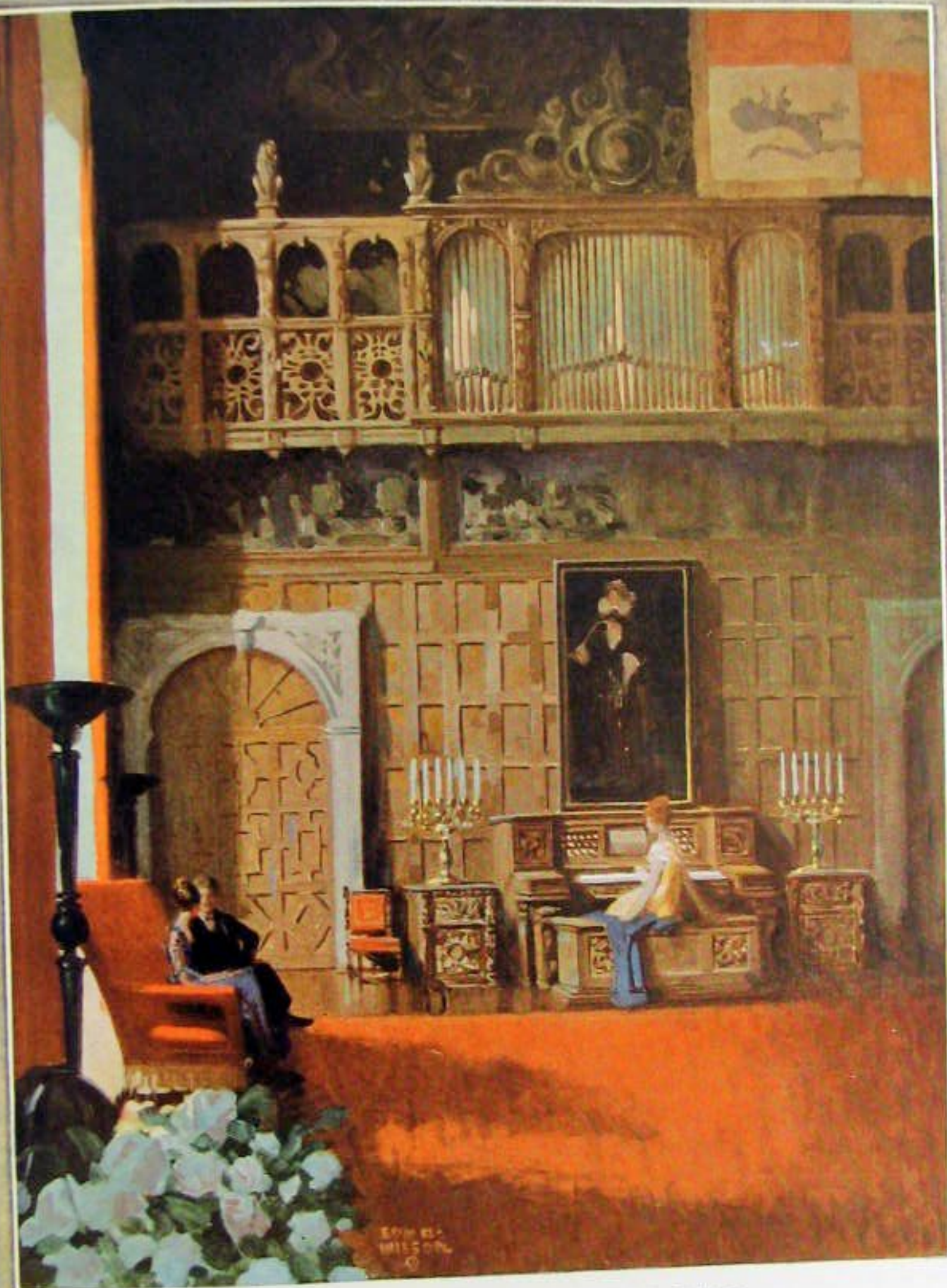
furniture rich with the carving of a by-gone age, like some masterpiece of pottery or painting glowing with the color of a vanished art.

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In a country like this, with its rapidly increasing wealth, with its new homes of an almost palatial character being built daily, the necessary cost of a pipe organ is negligible, while the pleasure it gives cannot be measured by money. Features are being introduced into these homes that cost as much as a pipe organ and whose only purpose is to heighten the pleasurable richness of living in these homes.







THE ESTEY RESIDENCE ORGAN  
is becoming more and more a part of the furnishing of a  
well-appointed house.





## THE ESTEY RESIDENCE ORGAN

The Estey Residence Organ is becoming more and more a part of the furnishing of a well-appointed house. In the hands of a skilful architect and designer it becomes a noteworthy feature of the music room or great hall.

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