

Finishing Touches
to Printers' Handiwork

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FINISHING TOUCHES
TO THE PRINTER'S
HANDIWORK



MCMX
Published by
THE CARLTON STUDIO
195 in the Strand
LONDON
W.C.

An Unsatisfactory Title Page

FINISHING TOUCHES
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WC

NOTE. This page, though of the same excellent general construction as the Title Page, is spoiled by the *spotting* of the red and the wrong scale of the ornament and the bad arrangement of the margins. The printers of the best school never *spotted*, but always *massed* their reds. Clearly, also, the red letters are weaker, not stronger, than the black in the above.

The ornament, good in itself, is completely out of scale, being too heavy for the type. This is a very common fault.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

OUR work as Designers for the Printer naturally puts us in touch with the problems and difficulties which face the latter in his endeavour after distinguished and beautiful work.

We can claim a not inconsiderable experience on the technical side of the printer's art, but we should be doing our own task imperfectly if we did not set ourselves seriously to study the underlying artistic principles and the authentic traditions of this most noble and necessary of crafts.

For, of course, there are broadly two functions of printing: the one of delivering a message to an extended audience through the medium of type, ink, and paper; the other of so arranging, and if need be embellishing the message that it be presented at once in the clearest and the most attractive manner.

The aim of this little book is to gather together in a convenient form, to explain and illustrate with readily intelligible diagrams, a few simple points of the practice of the most distinguished printers, points which tradition has sanctioned and approved, and which experience shows to be the source of good or indifferent work, according as they are remembered or forgotten.

January, 1910.

The Carlton Studio

OF FINISHING TOUCHES

IT may be taken for granted that no considerable process of manufacture is so complex as printing, none so liable to fatal error at every difficult stage from case-room to warehouse: apart from work rendered actually valueless by serious mistake and thrown upon the manufacturer's hands, a very great amount—it would not be tactful to venture an estimate—is marred for the discerning eye by blemishes which with care & without extra cost could easily be avoided. It is of such readily avoidable faults, or, put positively, of such “finishing touches,” that the present writer proposes to speak.

There is an old philosophical maxim *Malum ex quocunque defectu*, which may be very freely translated as “It takes very little to spoil a good job,” and one has noted an extraordinarily high proportion of finely printed matter sent, say, to the guillotine, & there ruthlessly murdered, so far as artistic finish is concerned. So many of the executioners in charge of that dread weapon do not allow for the inherent deficiencies of the machine or the eccentricities of the material which has to go under the knife. They have no conscience in the vital matter of margins. The books were to be of a certain size. Well, they are of that size. Who is rash enough to protest because the head margin has a beggarly quarter of an inch too much and

TO THE PRINTER'S WORK

the foot a quarter of an inch too little? These considerations surely are trifles. Possibly; but it is the consideration of such trifles as these that goes to make good work.

The Printer considered in his capacity of Designer has a problem that can be stated simply. Let us assume him to be printing in one colour, black.

As a Designer his problem is so to arrange certain masses, lines and spots of black on the white of his paper that the relation between the blacks and whites may be pleasing and harmonious. It is obvious therefore that *margins are just as much a part of his design* as the type matter, and to the forgetting of this may be traced many damning faults of style, and many tragedies of good work ruined at the last moment. It is because right placing on the page is in practice a matter of right trimming that you need to watch your guillotine so closely.

Another aspect of the matter is worth stating. The compositor working as he does with the solid metal type is too apt to space his work by measurement of the *body* of the letter rather than of the face or printing surface.

Examples K, L are common instances of this error; D shows a refinement of right balance. The principle of gauging by the printing surface *not by the body of the type* dictates the placing of the

OF FINISHING TOUCHES &

masses in C, Fb, G and H. Example Fa seems to break our main rule of margins as stated on page 7 and certainly does so if one considers the dimensions of the block (indicated by red dotted lines) as the guide, and not rather the “weight” of the design, which weight should be regarded as roughly equivalent to the surface indicated by the dotted lines.

Instances might of course be multiplied. Those illustrated in the following pages may be taken as representative. No appreciable cost is involved in the avoidance of these faults, merely knowledge and care; care perhaps especially in the case of that remorseless engine the guillotine. Blunt knives, worn cutting sticks, defective clamping (often purposely loose on too fresh sheets for fear of offset), attempting too much work at a time—these are some of the daily ways of murdering jobs at the last stage of their long & hazardous journey.



POINTS OF TRADITION

FIRST, as to the right design of the pages of a book. In planning a lay-out for the page of a book or simple pamphlet consider the two-page opening as the unit. The problem then is to place two black panels on a white ground in such a way as to get the best decorative effect.

Authentic traditional practice consistently makes the head margin the smallest of all and the foot margins very considerably larger—double or more than double the head.

The fore-edge margins are each equal to the two back margins taken together & each more than the head, and appreciably less than the tail. *Exact* proportions are sometimes given, but the writer is averse from standardizing what is, within limits, a matter for individual judgement, and may depend upon the character, weight or legibility of the type. Nor can the best work ever be done by absolute rule of thumb.

The formula as we have given it is of course much older than the invention of printing. It regulated the splendid pages of the medieval scribes and illuminators, and when the great printers of the latter half of the XVth Century, Guthenbug, Schoeffer, Sweynheim & Pannartz, Jenson, Jacobus Rubeus and Aldus Manutius, took up their task they did so with the spirit and in the tradition of

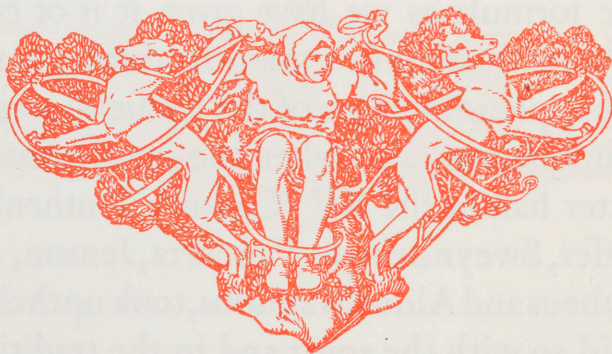
OF FINISHING TOUCHES &

an admirable school of craftsmanship. Their work set a standard which has never been surpassed and seldom equalled.

Speaking generally, the ampler the margins the greater the gain in legibility and workman-like quality. Of course this maxim is sometimes carried to the point of affectation and goes sour.

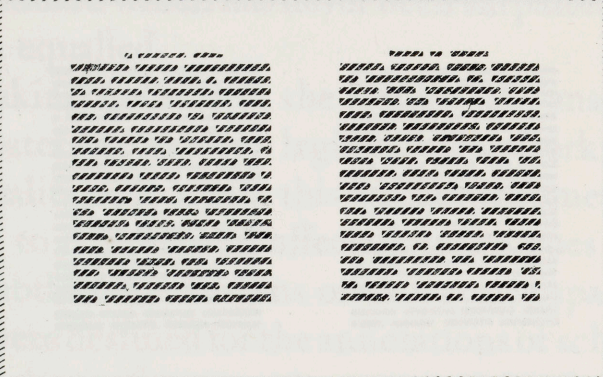
Doubtless the margins of those early spacious folios were destined for the annotations of scholars and the larger foot margins to accommodate the reader's thumbs; but, as so often happens, what is best in use makes also for beauty, and these fine examples have set an unsurpassable standard. All the improvement that has taken place since William Morris discovered that we had forgotten how to print nobly has been on the lines of the pioneer printers.

The following examples illustrate each a noteworthy principle of right style and have a brief but sufficient explanation attached.

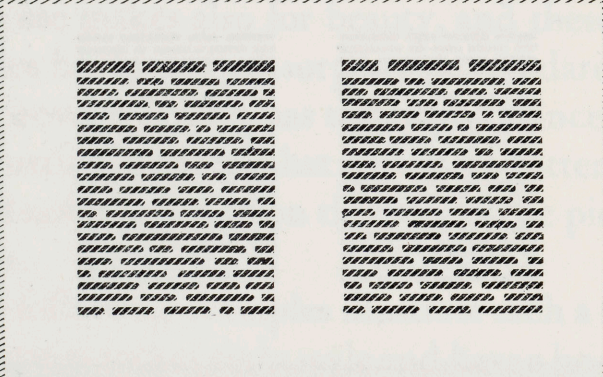


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C



D



C. This example shows how a light headline may be practically ignored in calculating the margins, the measurement being made from the edge of the paper to the top of the square panel of type.

D. In this case, with a heavy headline stretching across the page, the headline is in itself considered part of the panel.

THE PLACING OF DESIGNS



COVER TRIMS
This diagram shows the authentic trimming for a normal cover design; the foot margin being appreciably larger than the others. The other three are practically equal.

E



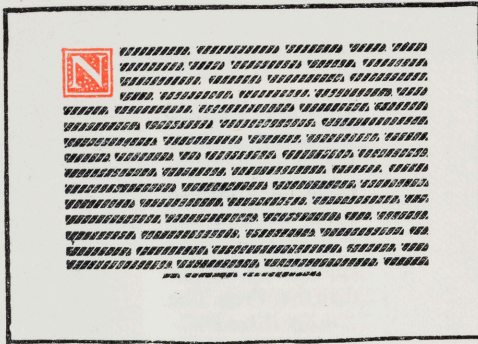
FA



FB

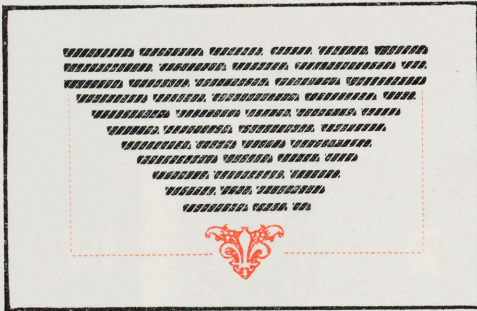
Fa is placed right because of the light character of the lower part of the design, though in Fb the normal rule for margins is more closely followed. Note, however, that this throwing up of the design is a fault on the right side. Fb still looks well. It is practically impossible to spoil work hopelessly by placing high.

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This is to illustrate the ignoring of a light footline, as in example “C,” the width of the foot-margin being calculated from the edge of the solid panel.

G



This illustrates an example of right placing by weight—not by the limits of the printing surface. The triangle may be considered as *roughly* equal to the parallelogram indicated by the dotted red line.

H



This illustrates an instance of the effective use of an equal trim. The white is here rather a border than a margin.

J

NOTE. The most frequent of the fatal faults in trimming is to make the Head Margin larger than the Foot Margin. The whole effect of such a mistake is to make the matter appear to be as it were slipping out of the page.

& THE USE OF INITIALS

DESIGN IS THE
THE COLOURS
ENHANCE ALL
COLOURS IT IS TO SE
OF THOUGHTS; IN A

Here is an initial rightly placed. There is no beard to the letter and hence no unsightly gap between the initial and the fourth line.

P

WE MUST TAKE
RIGHT AT WH
OF PAINS; AND
WE SHALL FIND WE
RIGHT WITH FREED

Because of the slanting of the "W," it will be found that placing it a little outside the line of the panel makes it look more right than ranging the extreme left perpendicular line with the panel. It will be seen that the initial "O" on page 3 is treated in the same manner. One would treat similarly C, G, J, Q, T V & Y.

Q

TASTE IS NOT O
INDEX OF MO
FIRST, AND LA
CLOSEST TRIAL QUE
LIVING CREATURE I

The initial here avoids the blemish of those on the next page in that it is linked up with its proper word, not obviously below it.

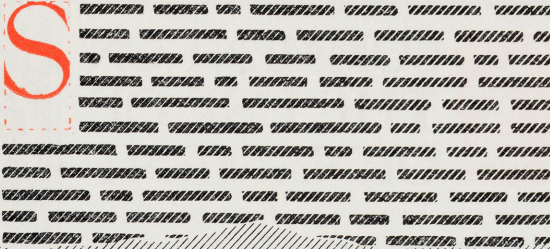
R

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EXPRESSIONS
MAN, HIS SOU
OF HIS INTEL
WHOLE POWER OF H
TION, EVERY IDEA I

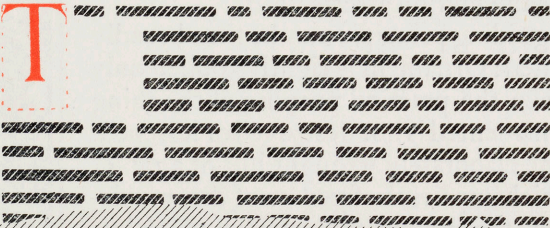
This is also a good example of the right designing of an initial letter. Of course as it stands it would be too heavy for a small page. On page 16 the initial is in key with the page.

S

& THE USE OF INITIALS

S 

K

T 

L

There is a very considerable amount of irrational tradition in connection with the use of initials. Of the above examples "K" is the commoner, but both are taken from standard contemporary work.

The practice of leaving an awkward space below the initial (as in "K") has grown up entirely from the use of caps. in the ordinary fount instead of special "title" letters. These ordinary caps., being of a range much larger than the text, have a considerable beard (indicated by the dotted line in red) which necessitates leaving an awkward space. This custom, due in the first instance to a mechanical defect, has stereotyped itself in many houses into a tradition. "L," of course, is a more exaggerated but still common instance of the same bad order of spacing.

OF FINISHING TOUCHES



COMMENT ON THE USE OF ORNAMENT

So soon as he emerges from primitive barbarism man shows a desire to ornament his weapons, his working implements, his articles of use. The instinct develops with the growth of civilization till finally a tendency to over elaborate ornamentation asserts itself.

A guiding principle may be thus broadly stated: Ornament is rightly applied only when the practical purpose of the thing ornamented is not destroyed or lessened. The elaborately wrought hilt of a rapier which impairs the freedom of the swordsman, the carving of a chair leg which imperils the substantial sitter—these are cases in point. In a book, that is bad ornament which destroys legibility.

It is safe to err on the side
of simplicity and
severity.

AND IN PARTICULAR

OF PAPER. It will not be unfair to the author, the decorator, the printer and the binder of this attractive little book to say that the first pleasurable satisfaction in handling it and turning over its leaves is largely due to the fine quality of the paper—its beautiful texture and substantial crispness, its strength, its clear white due, not to chemical bleaching, entirely to the purity of the rag used.

The printing, fine as it is, on poor paper would have looked poor. Lovers of books and connoisseurs of fine printing recognize the Arnold Unbleached handmades with affectionate appreciation. For all work of an important and permanent character; for records and for ledgers; for editions-de-luxe this range of papers is unsurpassed.

It should particularly be noted by printers that for short runs of jobbing work of a high class character the extra expense of using the very best Arnold is so trifling compared with the gain in the elegance and distinction of the finished work that a point should be made of doing so.

ARNOLD & FOSTER LTD
THE EYNSFORD PAPER MILLS, KENT



OF FINISHING TOUCHES

A FEW words on the relation of fine printing to advertising may not be out of place.

Of course it has to be remembered that the advertiser is necessarily compelled to think of something beyond mere beauty and legibility. He must be to some extent vociferous. At the same time he may remember with comfort that there is probably no more effective challenge to attention than a simple, dignified, distinguished setting with the white spaces cleverly used for segregation and emphasis.

It is comforting to be able to note the substantial improvement that has been visible in England for the last five or six years. It may hurt our national pride to have to confess this as largely due to American influence; but it is fair to counterclaim that the original inspiration came from the Morris revival.

It is possible here to do little more than to register emphatic protest against one or two of the more flagrant abuses. In the name of Caxton let the "artistic letter" be anathema always. "Artistic" in this connection signifies curves, twiddles, bulges, nicks, splashes, spots, and other senseless details which militate against legibility—the first requisite surely of a well-planned announcement.

OF FINISHING TOUCHES


F. WYLLIE AND CO.



ELECTROTYPERS
& STEREOTYPERS



48 & 95 FETTER LANE, FLEET ST, E.C.

A NEW BUSINESS WITH
NEW IDEAS ONLY 
THE BEST OF A GREAT
EXPERIENCE IS RETAIN-
ED · ALL USELESS IDEAS
HAVE BEEN PUT ON ONE
SIDE · WE ARE RELIABLE
FOR PROMPT DELIVERY
AND QUALITY · PLEASE
LET US HEAR FROM YOU



OF FINISHING TOUCHES

It must of course be admitted that the constant use of a beautiful standard fount like the Caslon letter used for the text of this book would involve a uniformity which would be fatal to advertising emphasis. Variety is necessary, and the search for variety is apt to lead to eccentricity, but simplicity and dignity do represent the desirable standard and the choice of eccentric variants should be as restrained as possible.

Letters like the Venetian Old Face (by Shanks), the Jenson (by Caslon), the Georgian Old Face, the Baskerville Old Face, the Lining Old Face (by Stephenson), and the ever-popular Cheltenham (by the American Type Founders and Caslon) are all letters which may be commended.

The Cheltenham stands out not so much for the beauty of the letter, which indeed to the present writer seems at its best only in the range termed "Cheltenham Wide," but for the fine variations of width and depth of colour which it allows to the compositor.

This development—being more or less happily followed by other type designers—has helped to kill that most infamous of solecisms the grouping of various types of altogether different design and character which used to be the ideal of the jobbing

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BASKERTYPE

the new printing surface which helps printers to get "out of the rut" and to place the stamp of originality upon their production.

BASKERTYPE is a smooth durable fine textured and slightly elastic material, about one-eighth of an inch thick, with a special backing of laminated wood bringing it up to type height.

Easy to cut. Easy to print. No Chemicals.

BASKERTYPE will stand from twenty to thirty thousand impressions.

COMPLETE outfit costs £3 10s., which includes 300 square inches of BASKERTYPE.

For white-letter slips, small posters, and window-bills, "BASKERTYPE" is indispensable.

For further particulars and an artistic explanatory brochure, write the sole agents for Great Britain.

CLARK & CO.

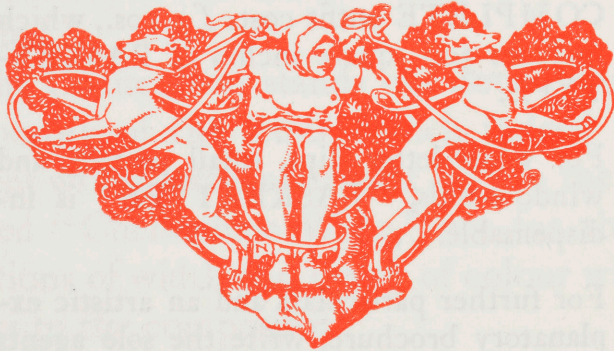
69 & 70 ALDERSGATE STREET
LONDON · E·C

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printer of the Victorian era. It will result finally in a considerable extension of the palette, so to speak, of the compositor.

For heavy display it is of course necessary to use such letters as the Windsor and Haddon, not beautiful in themselves, but convenient for purposes of emphasis.

Black letter has been used with considerable effect by the jobbing printers in America, and provided a good type of letter is chosen, results certainly justify this mingling of Gothic and Roman. A fine Gothic letter is the Cloister Black (by the American Type Founders); the Tudor (by Miller & Richards) is also good.



OF FINISHING TOUCHES

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OF FINISHING TOUCHES

IT is not as if the printer and the artist who works for him did not need to understand and sympathize with each other's work. This little book incidentally shows the Carlton Studio attitude towards printing and the printer and publisher. The artists of the Studio are trained to possess, besides a good knowledge of the technical difficulties and possibilities of the printer, and of the best traditions of sound typography, a sense that their own decorative work must always be duly subordinate to the general design of the book to be decorated: that typesetting and decoration are but two related parts of one whole.

The Carlton Studio most of all appreciate the commission to plan completely the typesetting & decoration of a book or series of books, and confidently offer their services in these directions to printers & publishers. Please communicate with

THE CARLTON STUDIO

195 STRAND, LONDON, W.C.

