

PRINTERS ORNAMENTS

SIMON LOXLEY

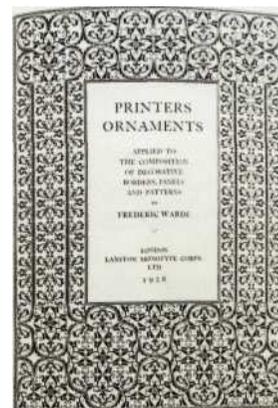
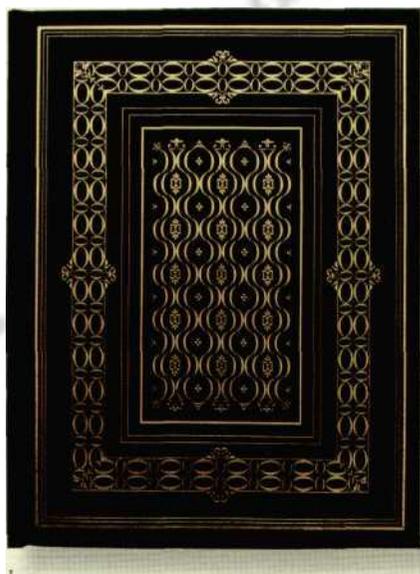
1. Cover & title page of deluxe edition. The book's title differs each time it appears; the spine reads 'Monotype' Printing Ornaments, the half title Printing Ornaments on the 'Monotype', and the front of the standard edition reads simply 'Monotype' Ornaments.

THE AMERICAN BOOK AND TYPE DESIGNER FREDERIC WARDE is chiefly remembered nowadays for two things: his role in the creation of the typeface Arrighi and for being the husband of Beatrice Warde, Monotype's charismatic and long-serving publicity manager. Beyond that, little remains except memories of an acrimonious falling-out with that company's typographical advisor and Warde's sometime colleague, Stanley Morison, coupled with a reputation for being difficult, if not downright impossible, to work with. There were no fondly recalled anecdotes of Warde related by his fellow professionals. Dying aged 45 in 1939, the last decade of his life, if considered at all, was seen as one of failure, frustration and unfulfilled potential. These perceptions are only partially true — Warde's output of book designs was considerable, continuing and developing, along with his reputation, until his death.

Arguably his masterpiece was *Printers Ornaments: Applied to the Composition of Decorative Borders, Panels and Patterns*, published in 1928 by the British arm of what was still on both sides of the Atlantic called Lanston Monotype. The book formed part of a lengthy relationship with the company, which began in earnest in 1921 when Warde joined the New York printing house of William Edwin Rudge and was sent to the Monotype school in Philadelphia with a view to learning the intricacies of the keyboards and casters, so that the machines could meet the stringent typographical requirements of Rudge's head designer, Bruce Rogers.

Warde would later supply his own typeface for Monotype, when Arrighi was adapted to be an accompanying italic to Rogers' Centaur. This, and the opportunity to design *Printers Ornaments*, was made possible by a three-year period in which Warde lived in London and Paris, and during which time the book was designed.

It had been an eventful road. Warde himself is partly responsible for the lack of knowledge about his life, deliberately laying false trails about his past. His friend and unofficial executor Alfred Howell attempted to organise a memorial book in the 1940s but eventually abandoned the task, stymied by conflicting stories about Warde's past, related in good faith by his friends. Warde's early years remain largely obscure. An only child, he was born in Wells, Minnesota in 1894 and it seems likely that, upon his father's death in 1903, he and his mother moved to the Boston area to live with or near his grandmother. Warde would later claim that his father had been a professor at Edinburgh University, and that he himself had attended Harrow School — or alternately, had been brought up in Italy under the care of the American writer F. Marion Crawford.



Warde's grandmother lived in some style, and may arguably have imbued in her grandson an embarrassment at his father's working status. He had been a harness-maker and then a traveling salesman. On the positive side, she may also have been responsible for instilling an interest in the graphic arts. One of Warde's early idols, the designer and illustrator Rudolph Ruzicka, recalled meeting him in 1911 or 1912 working for an advertising agency. It is a solitary, intriguing clue to Warde's activities at this early period of his life. He appears, Zelig-like, in a photograph of a New York surgical class in 1915, of which he was never a member, merely an interested hanger-on. But their company may have proved inspirational. His 1917 draft registration card lists him as a medical student. He joined the air service, training as a pilot, but World War I ended before he could go into action.

In the final days of the war, now in a training camp on Long Island, Warde met Beatrice for the first time at her New York home, and may have made his way into publishing with Macmillan through contacts of her mother, the author and journalist May Lamberton Becker. He worked at a New York advertising agency, Van Patten, and joined the graphic arts dining club, the Stowaways, which numbered among its members both Frederic Goudy, America's most celebrated type designer of the period, and Bruce Rogers, regarded as one of the finest book designers of the first half of the twentieth century. In 1921 Warde became Roger's assistant at William Edwin Rudge, a company forging an impressive reputation as a printer and later publisher of fine books. This was good progress for someone who had emerged from the military two years before with no fixed career direction. Clearly, Warde's abilities to impress could be considerable.

He had been at Rudge little more than a year when, with seemingly no book designs to his credit, he applied for a post at Princeton University Press, backed by recommendations from Henry Lewis Bullen, the librarian at American Type Founders, and undoubtedly from Rogers too. Although Warde's job title at Princeton seems to have been Director of Printing, his work station on his arrival at the Press was decidedly unexecutive, and suggests that Princeton were cautious about their untried appointment. Warde's resulting outburst marked the beginning of a contentious relationship with his new employers.

However, it was to be an association that was to be advantageous for both sides. Making no friends, Warde's ruthless search for perfection raised the profile and the standard of Princeton's output, and his reputation rose with it.

For someone who took such pains to cover the tracks of his life, a considerable amount of correspondence to and from Warde has survived, the most famous arguably the October 1923 letter sent to Stanley Morison. Confident of the sympathies of his reader, Warde mocked a recent celebration dinner in honour of Frederic Goudy, which Morison recounted gleefully to Daniel Berkeley Updike, of Boston's Merrymount Press:

'... you would not have been quite at home at the recent celebration, jubilee, medal-pinning orgy, etc, with which the more audible bandar-log of this country indicated that they were proud of Mr Goudy. It was very loud and very long and it may be that they chanted:

*"Goudyamus igitur: and **rend** the air with cheers;
Juvenes dum sumus: for discretion comes with years.*

Yet this advertisement of wit to a total stranger was backed by some well-placed observations on the qualitative difference between the American and British Monotype companies, with Warde expressing his frustration that the commercial agreements between the two arms of the company meant he could not obtain superior British matrices for his machines at Princeton. Morison could not have failed to have been impressed by the detailed knowledge and sharp typographical eye Warde displayed. He had brought himself to the notice of the man who was quickly emerging as the most influential figure in British typography.

i. Beatrice Becker (later Beatrice Warde) and Frederic, probably taken in July 1922 at the home of Rudolph Ruzicka. The little girl may be Ruzicka's daughter Tatiana. (Picture credit: The Grolier Club)

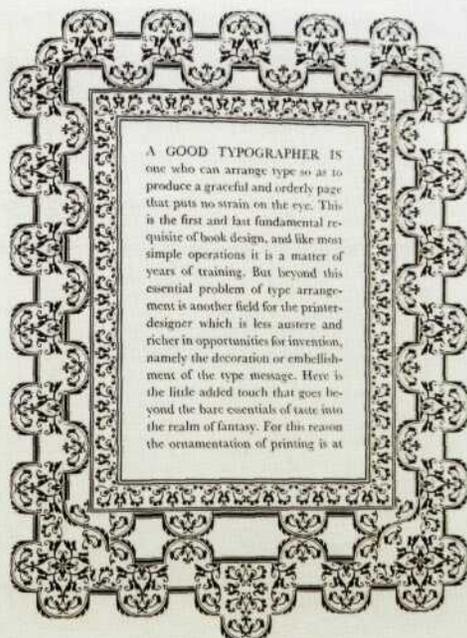


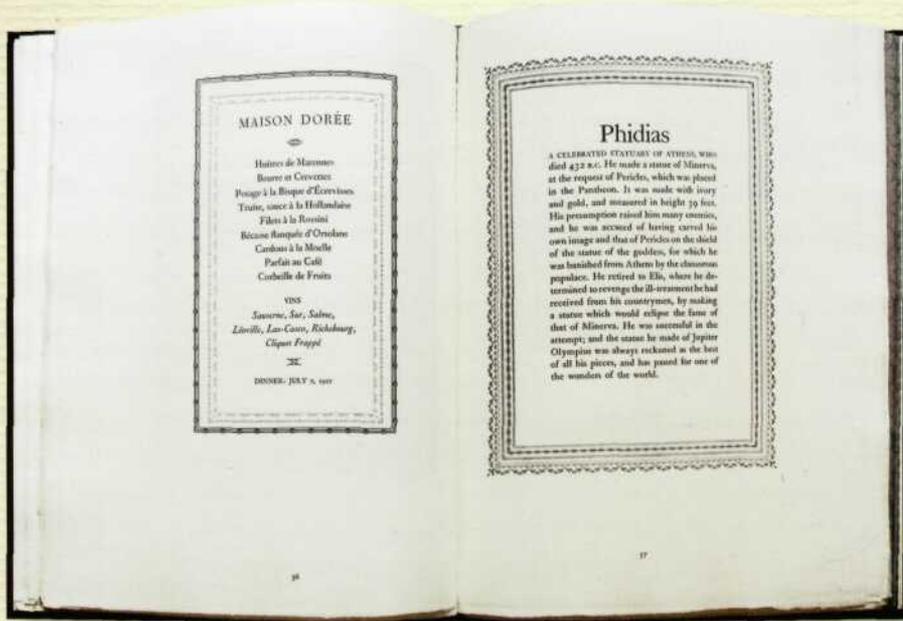
Morison paid his first visit to the United States in the summer of 1924. His opinion of much of America's typographical scene was low, and he deliberately avoided what he saw as its more tedious luminaries. However, he availed himself of the hospitality of the Wardes, invited by Beatrice, who put her professional services and their home at his disposal. By the time he returned, Morison had proposed to the couple that they abandon their homeland and secure employment for an uncertain future in England. Despite his already high academic reputation, and the quality of the typeface revivals he was putting into production at Monotype, Morison had not impressed everyone in America, notoriously lying on the floor in his evening clothes at a party in the home of financier and bibliophile Frank Altschul, and arguing ferociously with the Morgan Library's formidable librarian, Belle Greene. Updike advised caution but Frederic asserted that he would remain independent of Morison's domination. The couple arrived in England in January 1925 to begin their new life.

With two such forceful personalities as Warde and Morison working together, an eventual clash was inevitable, but the partnership was fruitful. Together they designed, edited and printed *The Tapestry*, a collection of poems by the poet laureate Robert Bridges, which saw the first appearance of the Arrighi typeface, based on the type of the Italian Renaissance scribe and printer Ludovico degli Arrighi. The final weeks of production were frantic as the pair attempted to beat the publication of an Oxford University Press edition of Bridges' poetry, and during this time Warde mentioned the project that would become *Printers Ornaments* in a letter to Updike. Telling of recent acquisitions of Fournier and Delacolonge specimens, he wrote: 'I wish I were not so busy so that I could enjoy looking at these specimen books more than I do. I am working on a new book of type ornaments for the Monotype Company which takes my spare moments.'

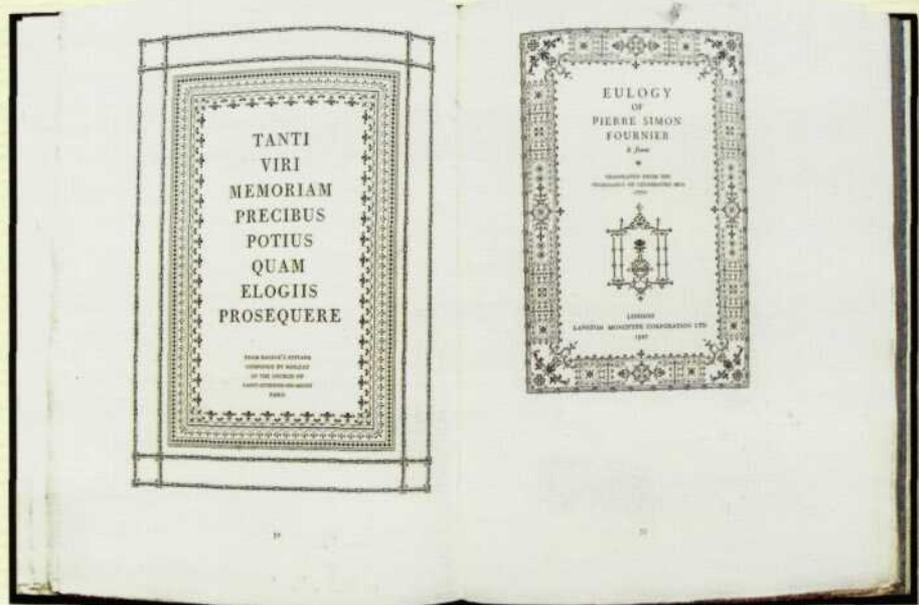
The next two years were to be tumultuous and unsettling. Warde had been highly impressed by the work of Hans Mardersteig's Officina Bodoni, based at Montagnola, Switzerland, and wanted future productions to be printed there. He also set up his own publishing imprint, The Pleiad, with the aim of producing up to four titles a year, which, in the words of the prospectus: 'will appeal to the book collector. The texts have been chosen with the double motive of literary interest and typographic opportunity'.

3. In the short introduction of *Printers Ornaments*, Warde defined a good typographer. Page size is about 8½ inches × 11¼ inches (215 mm × 285 mm).





4-5. Spreads from the first section of *Printers Ornaments* are printed in black with one isolated instance of colour, featured borders and decorations combined with type to produce numerous formal but appealing arrangements.



However Warde's frequent sojourns on the Continent left his wife increasingly isolated; always attracted intellectually by Morison, a strong bond began to form, while her patience with Frederic began to wear thin. Morison's marriage had been dead in all but name for some time, and it seems likely that Beatrice's famed powers of attraction worked on him, as they did upon so many others, from their first meeting. Stir together a volatile mixture of intellectual rivalry, money disputes and the loss of his wife's affections to another, and the fragile creative triangle of Morison and the Wardes unsurprisingly exploded. Frederic abandoned London and Beatrice in November 1926, bound for Paris.

Warde spent 1927 working on the Pleiad list, for the inspirational but notorious John Holroyd-Reece's Pegasus Press, and on projects for Princeton and other American academic institutions. He loved many aspects of Continental life, particularly the food and wine — this during a period when America was labouring under Prohibition and British food was, in his opinion, largely inedible. But the four Pleiad titles took three years to produce. This economic factor and inevitable periods of loneliness and alienation made Warde turn his eyes back to America, where he returned in the autumn of 1927.

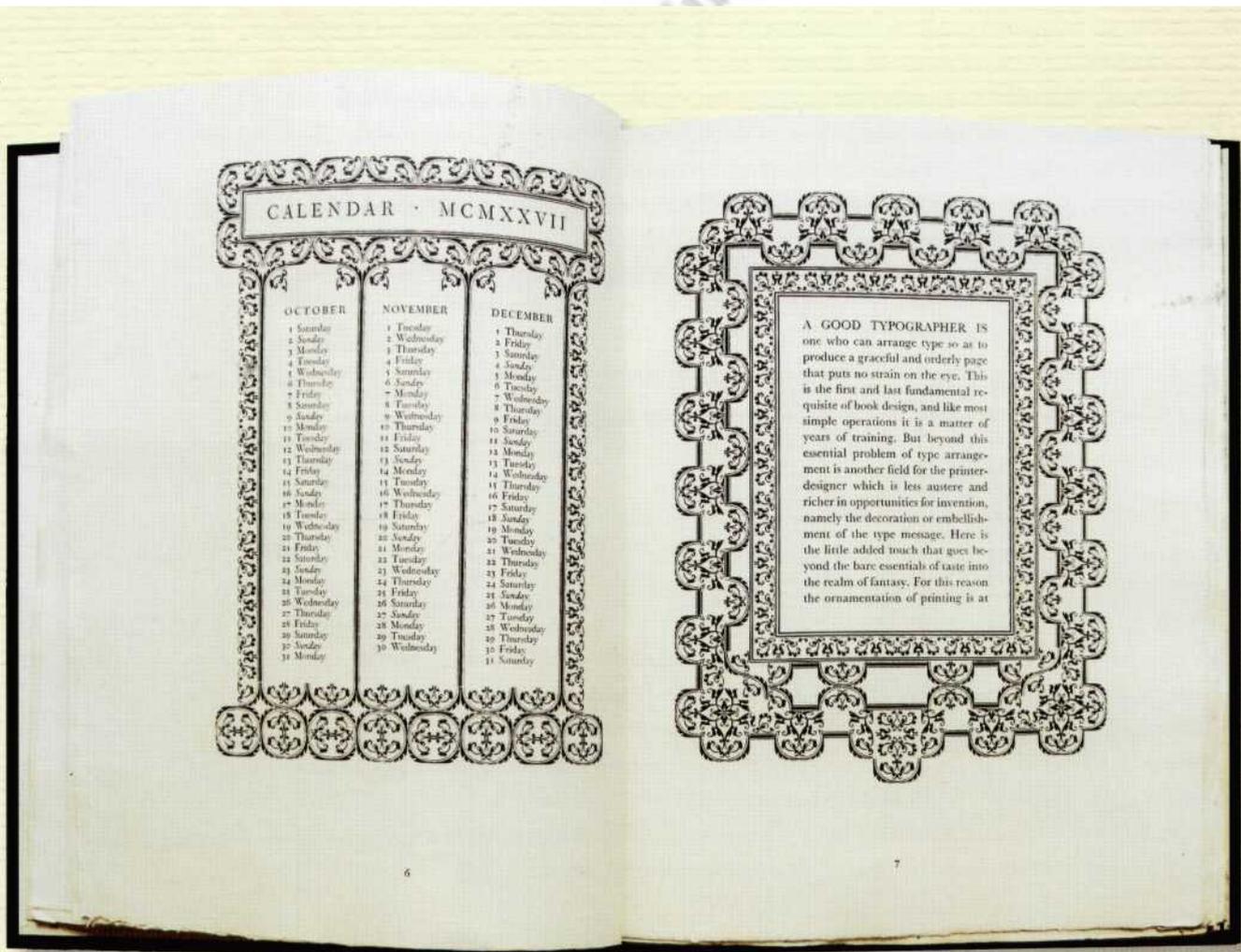
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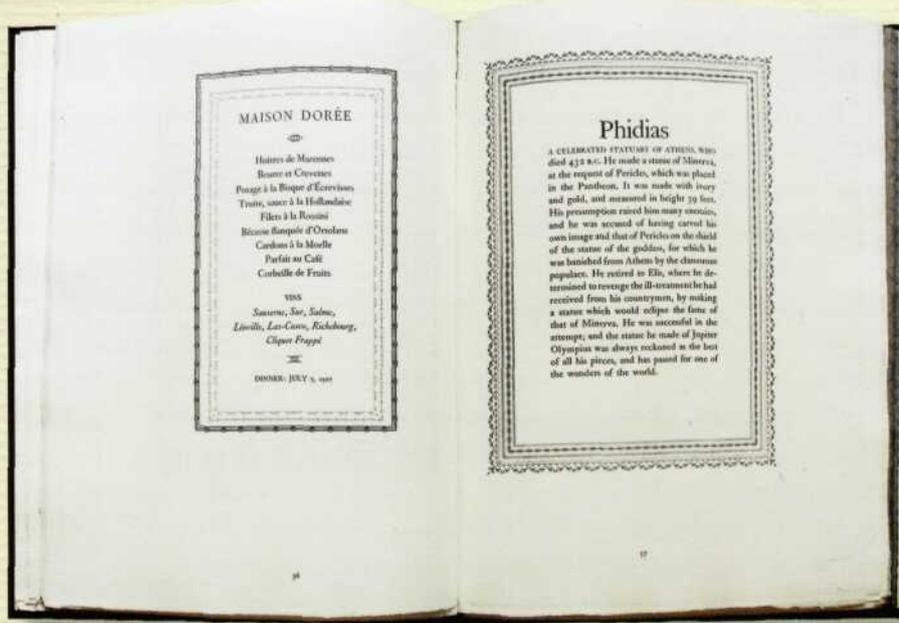
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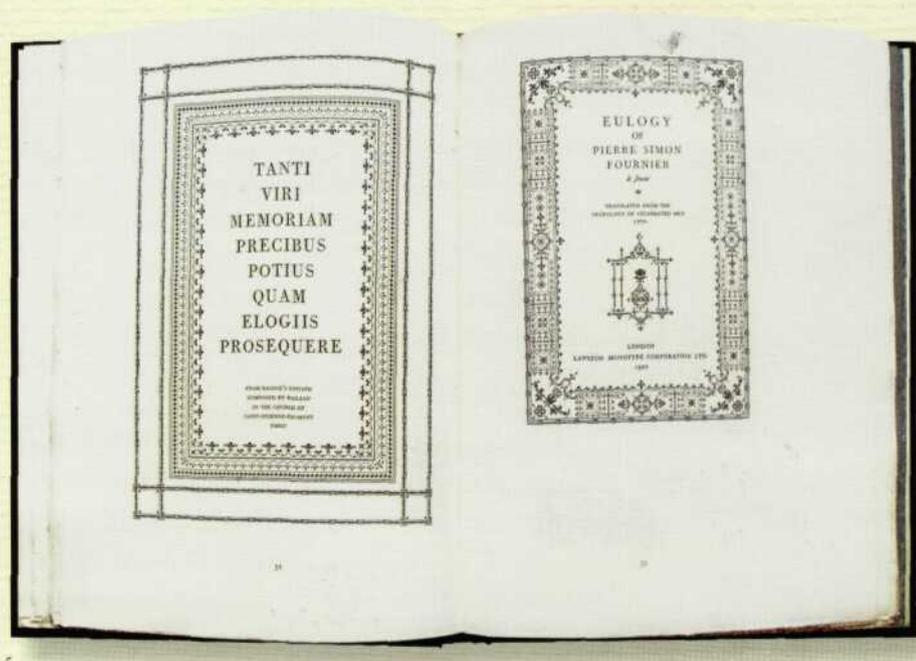
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6 — 7- Wattle's design for the March — April 1925 issue of *The Monotype Recorder*, reused in a modified form for the endpapers (opposite) of *Printers Ornaments*, reference number zoj.

Monotype. Two Hundred of these were a deluxe edition with the front section printed on handmade paper, a black and gold cover. The standard edition carried a simpler design on a red binding. The book's purpose was to serve as a beautiful sales tool for the company, an index giving the Monotype references for all the elements used.

In his short introduction, Warde defined a good typographer as 'one who can arrange type so as to produce a graceful and orderly page that puts no strain on the eye'. Beyond this lay 'the decoration or embellishment of the type message. Here is the little added touch that goes beyond the bare essentials of taste into the realm of fantasy.' On the art of using ornaments, he concluded:

The fascination of experimenting with combining, reversing, spacing-out and alternating the simplest unit is indescribable. This book is presented to designers of printing as the merest suggestion of what these possibilities can offer, rather than as any manual of principles of ornamentation. There are no principles; there are only the units themselves, small and willing, amazingly able to take on new appearances upside-down or back-to-back yet always retaining that subtle relation to the printed surface that makes them so valuable.

The book is a wonderful and complex production, Warde serving up a veritable feast for the eyes. The first section, printed in black with one isolated instance of colour, featured borders and decorations combined with type to produce numerous formal but appealing arrangements. Not all the examples were custom-made for the book. The design on the endpapers was an adaptation of a colour layout that Warde had originally created for the cover of the March — April 1925 issue of *The Monotype Recorder*, and there was a reproduction of the opening page and two others from the March — April/May — June 1926 double issue of *The Monotype Recorder*, which had contained, under her pseudonym Paul Beaujon, Beatrice's article 'On XVIIIth century French typography and Fournier le Jeune', for which Frederic had designed the layouts.

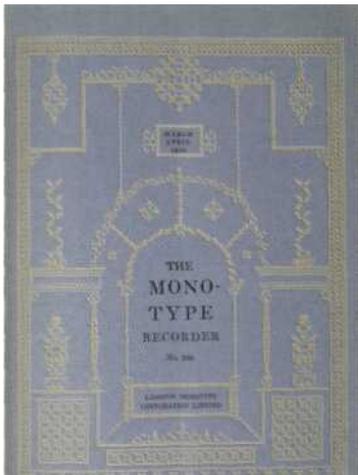
It was however, in the second section that Warde truly gave his invention and skill in composition full play. On 19 pages, each of a coloured stock, Warde created a repeat pattern from type ornaments, a new one for each page. The patterns bleed off on all sides, and the best are worthy of becoming textile designs. Although in themselves they are as restrained and formal as the ornaments that compose them, Warde freed them from their essential nature by printing them in a second and sometimes a third colour, and the combinations produced are beautiful and occasionally startling. It is an arresting and sumptuous piece of work; within his self-constraining aesthetic boundaries, this is Warde at his wildest.

Yet his production notes for the book show that he approached the task in his usual methodical manner. He had driven several of Princeton's pressmen to the verge of a nervous breakdown by his demands and attention to detail — one letterhead was reset eleven times until Warde was satisfied. This intense desire to get the exact result he wanted was shown once again in his 'Notes on the Coloured Papers and the Inks for the Monotype Border Book', written for the guidance of Monotype's printers:

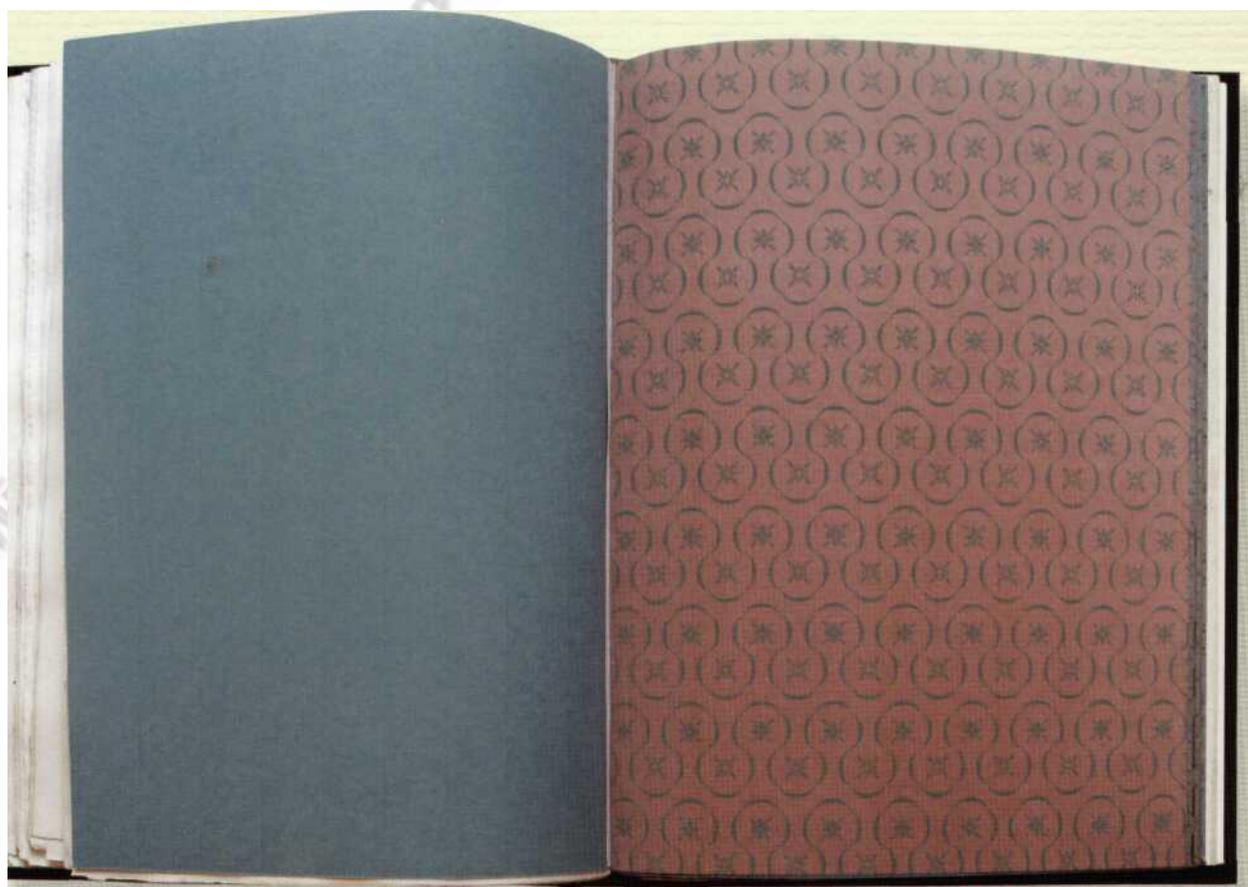
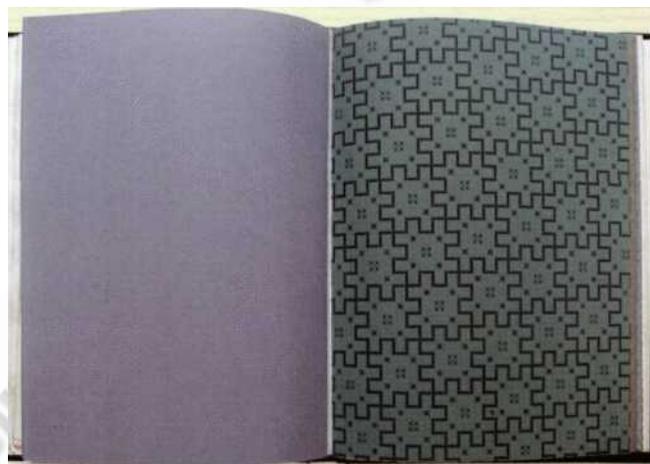
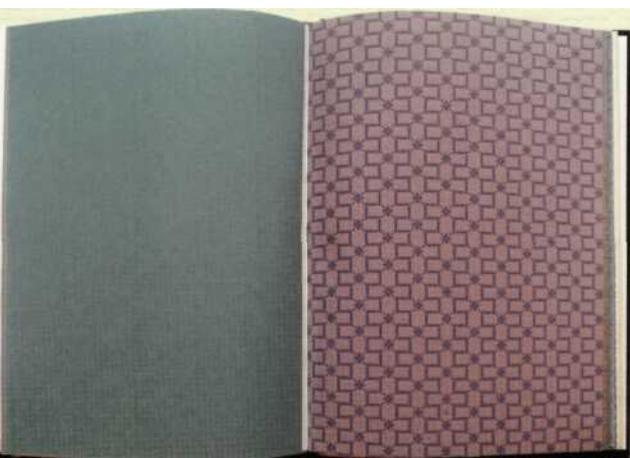
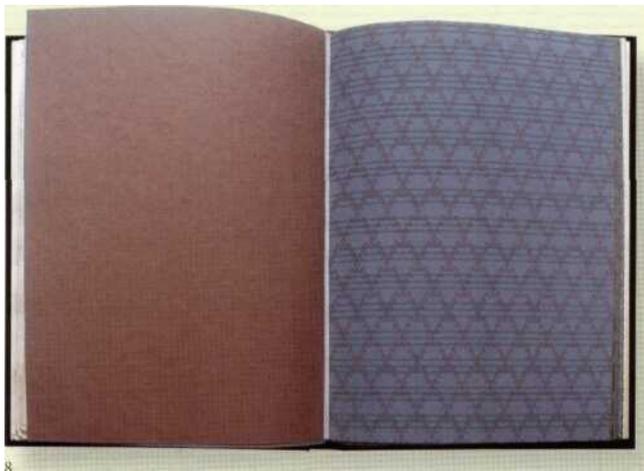
The coloured papers which have been indicated for use for the End-papers are scientifically true in colour values, colour hues and colour chromatics... It is difficult to impress the necessity of having the utmost accuracy in making these colour combinations... The coloured inks for the End-papers must be absolutely true and pure in colour, must be exactly the right shade and all inks used must be absolutely opaque... all the inks must be absolutely matt and dull. There must not be any shine to any of the inks, not even when one ink is superimposed or printed over another ink. A shiny ink will reflect light or glisten and ruin the effect of the Endpapers, making them look cheap and uninteresting. This is to be avoided.

He listed instructions for the inks for each page. A typical direction read: 'End-paper E: Middle Zinc Green no 0232, slightly reduced with white will produce the desired green and Permanent Violet Lake no 0208 although it may be necessary to reduce it slightly with white, will produce the desired purple or violet ink'.

Somewhat typically, by the time *Printers Ornaments* appeared, Warde had abandoned his interest in type ornaments. Cautious relations on a professional level had resumed with Beatrice during 1927. She was writing what would become the article 'On Decorative Printing in America' which appeared the following year in the sixth issue of the Morison-edited journal *The Fleuron*. Warde contributed a tipped-in layout featuring what Beatrice described



8—11. Spreads from the second section of *Printers Ornaments*, each printed on a coloured stock printed in a second and sometimes a third colour.

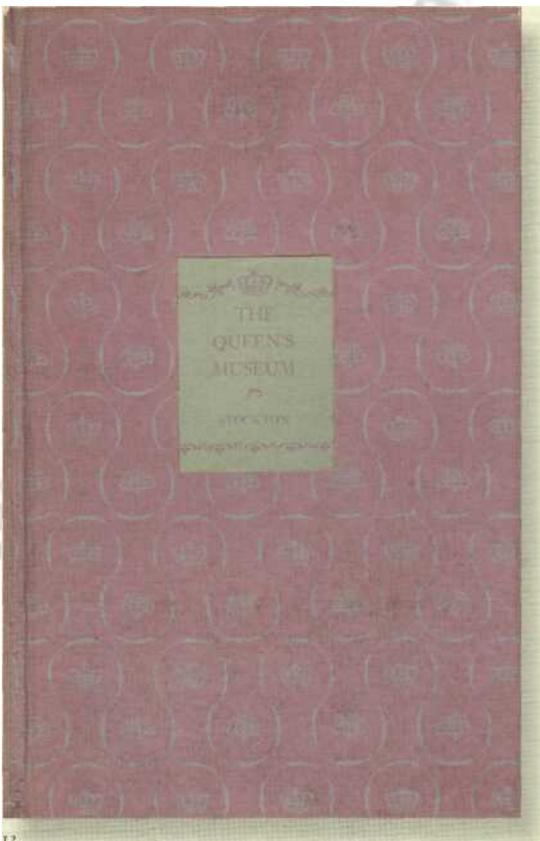


as 'borders of a curious trailing casualness, delicate structures that recall the wayward fancies of Androuet du Cerceau.' However a letter from September 1927 found her regretting what she described as Warde's 'apostasy from ornament' and praising his abilities extravagantly: 'Just because everyone else makes hay out of type ornaments, why should you, the only genuinely gifted master, withdraw from the field? It seems a pity.'

This 'apostasy' had already made itself known in a December 1925 letter to Henry Watson Kent of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, in which Warde related an anecdote of a small girl being taken dutifully around an art gallery, who announced Art just makes me sick!' Warde confessed that type ornaments now brought on a similar nausea in him. Reinforcing this stance, he wrote in June 1927 to his friend, the designer William Kittredge: At present my interests are almost entirely in what I call 'problem' printing where typography has been subordinated and made to serve its purpose in the most logical and efficient manner. No pastries, jacks-in-the-box, no whimsical tricks, no paperflowers, no grave-yard decorations: I am sick of them. I want to see examples of typography in which the types have been used almost as effectively for their purpose as are the little wheels in a Swiss watch.'

Of greater significance than his use of ornaments as an indication of how Warde's work would develop, was the revelation in *Printers Ornaments* of his superb and individual colour sense, which hitherto had had little opportunity to express itself. George Macy of The Limited Editions Club, for whom he worked during the decade before his death, was reserved in his posthumous judgement of Warde as both a man and a designer, commenting on 'his temperamental inability to dare new beauties'. In *Printers Ornaments*, as in his best books, Warde did dare, and the result was ravishing. As William Burch, Monotype's managing director, wrote to Warde on the book's publication: 'It is one of the most beautiful specimens of this kind which have ever reached me, and you may well be proud of this publication, prepared with so much love and care.'

Simon Loxley is the author of Type: The Secret History of Letters (2004) and editor of the St Bride Library journal, Ultrabold. His biography Printer's Devil: the life and work of Fredric Warde will be published in 2008 by David Godine.



12. Warde revived the spirit of *Printers Ornaments* for the binding of this edition of Frank Stockton's *The Queen's Museum* (New York,