

STUDIES
IN
Penmanship
BY
W. E. Dennis

Allen Tattoo Est. 2006

An edited, compiled, and condensed version of the
1914 W.E. Dennis staple: *Studies in Pen Art*.

* *Original page numbers referred to within text
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DEDICATION

WILLIAM E. DENNIS and I were pupils together in the Gaskell, Bryant & Stratton Business College of Manchester, New Hampshire. We were then in our teens, and to our youthful minds nothing else in the world was quite so important or beautiful as ornate penmanship.

No matter how hot the weather, no matter how luring the outdoor with its swimming pool, trees and flowers, young Dennis and I, from choice, would climb to the fourth floor of the business block in which Gaskell kept school, and revel in the fascinating compound curves, shades and hair-lines that made up the anatomy of birds, which had neither home nor ancestry.

My boy friend and chum, "Bill" Dennis, was grace personified in all his manipulations of the pen. I was the opposite. The strokes I made lacked symmetry and grace. When practicing in my room, seeing only my own work, and having none of my boy friend's penmanship to contrast with it, I frequently thought I was doing beautifully. All I had to do, however, to reduce my pride and satisfaction to the ashes of a dead hope, was to go to Dennis' room and contrast my work with what he had been doing at the same time.

Frequently, during that hot summer, Dennis would write a dozen cards which had been ordered; we would deliver them, and with the twenty-five cents thus obtained would buy a watermelon. Young Dennis was generous then; he is generous now. He has always been free-hearted, and his purse often has been opened too widely for his own good.

I long ago gave up the race for supremacy in this branch of penmanship and turned my attention to the plain, unshaded, coarse pen style, which I believe everyone should learn. Had my muscles been as supple, my eye as true, and my hand as steady as were those of William E. Dennis, I might at this time be dividing honors with him.

I believe that every penman who turns the following pages will be willing to join me in proclaiming William E. Dennis the most expert ornate penman of the world. Perhaps there will never be another penman with the same artistic nature and the same ability and patience that have been displayed by him. He is the king of ornate penmanship.

Because of our old friendship, I am deeply grateful for this opportunity of preserving to posterity some of the very finest of Mr. Dennis' gems of pen-art made when he had reached the height of his skill.

I dedicate the following pages to all lovers of the beautiful in penmanship.

A. M. Palmer

Preface

The object of this book is to furnish models and suggestions to those interested in penwork. All the plates (photo-engraved) are facsimiles of the original work, but the photographic process does not always produce lines so fine and delicate as those executed with pen and ink.

There is an increasing demand for skilfully executed penwork, and our aim is to put forth something practical as well as ornamental—the kind for which there is a market; and the greater part of the lettering in this book is of the sort generally used by professional engrossers.

The flourished designs are for those who especially admire that branch of work and take pleasure in doing it. While it is highly important for the student in pen-art to study that which he can turn to profit, there is no harm in a little indulgence in the fantastic kind which simply pleases the eye and gratifies the taste. Some, no doubt, will enjoy trying their skill at these fanciful designs without losing sight of the commercial side.

Many take great delight in making beautiful designs simply to exercise their artistic ability, and for this class the exercises for free-hand work have been added.

Instructors in penmanship, devoting their teaching time mainly to business writing, will find pleasant relaxation in an occasional departure into the ornamental field. The traveling teacher of penmanship always finds ornamental work an effective means of advertising his classes, since he can often attract special attention to his calling by his graceful designs with the pen or with chalk, or by exhibition of his work, neatly framed, in conspicuous places.

It is hoped that this book will appeal to teachers of practical business writing, letterers, art engrossers, and penmen doing all classes of ornate penwork.

A cursive signature in black ink, reading "W. E. Connors". The signature is written in a highly decorative, flowing style with many loops and flourishes.

357 Fulton St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Lettering

Lettering properly may be classed as a practical art. Almost everywhere in civilized countries there is a demand for some kind of lettering. One who becomes expert in this line can generally find employment.

The lettering in this book is intended mainly for penmen and art engrossers, and the aim has been to present something practical—the kind of lettering which is in daily demand. There is a great deal of lettering done by penmen which is almost useless so far as financial profit is concerned.

Most lettering by professional art engrossers has to be done very rapidly and at the same time effectively. Therefore, let him who wishes to follow this line of work keep in mind that speed is a very essential thing. But speed does not come first. Let the student aim for quality at the beginning, striving to acquire style, elegance and character, and as he advances he will find that practice enables him to work faster and with greater ease and freedom.

In this book will be found several kinds of rapid text lettering—just the kinds for commercial purposes. They are reproduced as the pen made them, without retouching, and for that reason have not the finish and perfection which would be the result of more time and labor.

The Roman alphabet, while one of the most useful, and the foundation of many kinds of lettering, was omitted for the reason that it can be found everywhere, and there is no trouble generally to procure good models of Roman alphabets. It is well that every one who wishes to become skilled in lettering should master this particular alphabet, since it is the basis of many other styles.

Of all the lettering which penmen and art engrossers are required to do, text lettering, no doubt, has the widest range. The different styles, types and variations of lettering which can be done with a broad-pointed steel or quill pen are almost infinite. The ease and rapidity with which such work can be done make it the most pleasing, satisfactory and profitable of penwork.

There are many avenues through which this work finds a demand—diploma filling, resolutions, signs, show cards, legal documents, etc.—all of which must often be done by a skilled hand.

GERMAN TEXT

This is a beautiful alphabet of graceful curves, but is not quite so legible and dignified as Old English; is rapid of execution, and is especially valuable for filling diplomas, etc. It is less mechanical than Old English, being made up almost entirely of curves. The pen manipulation is much the same, and if a person can make Old English he can soon learn to make German Text, or vice versa. It is a question which is the more difficult; there is little difference, although German Text can be done with the greater speed. Grace is its characteristic feature; to get this leading quality it is highly important to make it in as off-hand a manner as possible. As in off-hand script writing, a certain freedom in execution is necessary, and a labored effort reveals itself at once in the work.

A clear conception of the letter, as in Old English, is of great importance, for the hand will try to make what the fancy dictates. Study the letter therefore, learn it thoroughly, and train the eye to be so critical that it will at once detect any fault made by the hand. Practice, and practice only, will make one expert.

In this alphabet the aim is to produce graceful models, but no claim is laid to perfection. The student should not be satisfied with the study of just one alphabet. Study all the good forms you can obtain, ever remembering there is no more than just one particular way to make a letter, also that no alphabet can be said to be absolutely perfect and beyond criticism.

Rapid Lettering
Quill Pen

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

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

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

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



This is a very satisfactory kind of lettering, because it can be done with ease and rapidity. When decorated with neat flourishing, the effect is very pleasing.

Rapid German Text is the least mechanical of all lettering. Old English can be done with good effect in a slow labored manner. German Text, however, from the off-hand easy manner in which it should be treated, is quite the reverse, having the best appearance when done freely with no retouching. This free-hand treatment gives a snap and grace to the letters, which cannot be secured in a laborious manner, just as off-hand capitals in penmanship have life and grace, which a slow movement cannot produce.

The broad-pointed turkey-quill pen, owing to its sharpness of edge when cut just right and to its extreme width, seems to be the best of all implements for this particular letter. The quill has a certain touch and quality that no steel pen possesses; and when it is in good order, the rapidity with which this style of lettering can be done is quite surprising. It is considerably easier and more rapid to execute than Old English, as it is made up almost entirely of curves, and does not require the same precise movement as Old English.

There are good letterers who seem to make a failure of German Text by distorting the forms almost to illegibility. This is especially true of the capitals. Particular attention must be given to form, to make the letters clean cut and regular, well proportioned, and well spaced.

Rapid Broad Pen German Text

* abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz *

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

O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z &

A abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz S

Q

1234567890

Q

The German Text on page 41 can be made with a broad quill and diluted India ink; then with a narrow quill the black edges can be put on after the diluted ink is thoroughly dry. This letter, though it requires twice going over, is quite rapid and very effective for certain kinds of engrossing.

M A T E R I A L S

Soennecken pens, turkey quills and reeds are used for text lettering. The best is that which you can use best. Most engrossers use the Soennecken pen, probably because it is easier to obtain, but others think there is nothing like a turkey quill. The trouble is in preparing a quill and keeping it in order. First procure the quills (those from the wing), then clip off the feathery part, cut off the end of the barrel and soak well in water, then improvise some kind of vise in which the quill should be placed for flattening. Leave it in this condition until it is dry. With a sharp knife cut it down into the shape of a broad pen and split it like a Soennecken, taking care not to split too far, as it would spread too much. There is a knack which comes only by experimenting in making this kind of a pen, but after this knack is acquired and a quill prepared just right, it works like a charm. By using a large turkey quill, well flattened out, a pen can be made a quarter of an inch or more in width, which is much wider than any steel pens are made for such work.

India ink is generally best liked, although Chinese ink is about as good, and some prefer it. Japan ink (Walkden's or Arnold's) is also good, and some use it altogether; but the waterproof inks are generally hard to manage, especially by those inexperienced in this line of lettering.

German Round Hand

A very practical style of Rapid Lettering

FOR
Penmen & Engrossers

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

P Q R S T U V W X Y Z &

A B abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz & R

A abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz & R

12345 Double Pen Point 67890
Lettering

Rapid Old English

In the accompanying specimen of Old English more attention was given to speed than to careful finish. This alphabet was made without retouching, and a fine-pointed pen used only for the few hair-lines. It may be called off-hand lettering, since no pencil outlines were used and each part of a letter was made with a single stroke of the broad-pointed quill pen.

When done in this rapid manner, Old English cannot, of course, show the accurate finish it does when first outlined in pencil and then carefully lined with a fine-pointed pen. But the speed with which it can be done makes it far more practical than the alphabet on page 43, where a great deal of time was spent in designing and finishing.

The aim in this alphabet was to produce something just as simple and rapid as possible, omitting all unnecessary embellishment and grace lines. It is not easy to make Old English rapidly and at the same time give it a finished appearance. Use a quill pen well flattened out and cut in the right manner, or a Soennecken steel pen, if preferred. A thorough knowledge of the letter is necessary, so that no sketching in pencil is required—a firm control of the hand does the rest. Some of the capitals in Old English are especially difficult, and when done in an off-hand manner they can be modified to some extent to suit the occasion. Certain forms of capitals cannot be well made in this rapid manner; therefore it would be well for the student to make a careful comparison of these two alphabets and note wherein it is an advantage to modify certain parts of letters.

There are many who can make Old English in a slow mechanical way—that is, by first drawing the letter in pencil, outlining it and then filling it in; but whoever wishes to make it profitable will find this method a failure.

Nearly all Old English executed by professional engrossers in filling diplomas and body text in resolutions and similar work is done rapidly. It is therefore desirable for the student to give as much attention as possible to this rapid style of Old English. Study the forms and acquire the knack of using the pen skilfully and rapidly.

Rapidly Executed Old English

A D P

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz uvwxyz

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

P Q R S T U V W X Y Z &

1234567890

With a Broad Pointed Quill Pen



— STRAIGHT LINE LETTER —

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

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





A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P

Q R S T U V W X Y Z & Y

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz





a A B C D E F G
H I J K L M N O P Q R
S T U V W X Y Z
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

Hand Capitals

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

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





A very practical style of penmanship is Shaded Script. Much of the art engrosser's work includes this bold effective kind of writing. Policies, diplomas, wills, deeds, etc., are often written in this style.

The examples given herewith are to quite an extent off-hand work, such as the capitals, but for the small letters a strong, steady finger movement is required. What is known as the "muscular movement" is not suitable for the small letters in this kind of writing, although it can be applied to the capitals, or the whole-arm movement. This bold Shaded Script cannot be done with any great speed; excepting the off-hand capitals, it is executed with a rather slow deliberate movement, the pen being raised whenever convenient. It requires much practice in order to produce good, strong shades, regularity and a pleasing uniform appearance.

A flexible pen, straight holder or oblique, good black ink, such as Arnold's Japan and Fluid mixed, David's, or Walkden's Japan mixed with fluid ink, also India ink, when not too thick, are the things to work with. There are so many kinds of pens that it is not advisable to recommend any particular make. The student should determine which produces the best results. Most penmen who excel in this style of writing prefer a pen quite flexible, fine-pointed and durable.

Engravers' Script

A B C D E F G H I
J K L M N O P Q R
S T U V W X Y Z
N No P M A

OFF-HAND WORK DONE WITH THE WHOLE-ARM MOVEMENT
THE FINGER AND WRIST MOVEMENTS ARE GENERALLY EMPLOYED IN THIS STYLE OF SCRIPT

Old English

This is one of the most beautiful and useful of all alphabets, and, no doubt, one of the most difficult. There are several ways of making it. To pencil the letter carefully, outline it with ink, and then fill in, is a decidedly amateurish way for general Old English lettering. A better way, after laying out the letter carefully in pencil, is to rule in all the straight strokes with a pen as wide as the strokes of the letter, then put on the diamonds, curves, etc.—using a fine pen, of course, for the hair-lines and retouching. This, while all right for finished work, is slow. The practical way to make Old English is simply to locate the letters with a pencil, then with the broad pen or quill, corresponding in width to the letter, clip them out at one stroke, putting on the spurs usually with a narrower pen. This is a quick, effective, although difficult, way to turn off Old English. As much retouching and trimming up may be done afterwards as is desirable, but in lettering for profit it should be the aim to make the different parts of the letters with one stroke and not use valuable time in endless retouching and truing up.

In this specimen an effort was made to produce as perfect an alphabet as possible to serve as a model of good forms; but an absolutely perfect alphabet cannot be made and probably never will be, for what would seem perfect to one, according to his conception of the letter, would not be so in the eyes of another of equally good taste and skill. This being the case, then, the best way is to study all good Old English alphabets, and select the particular things you like best. In this manner one does not become a mere imitator, but develops a style and individuality of his own.

In the alphabet on the following page each letter was penciled out very carefully, and then with a broad quill pen the letters were made in ink. After that considerable time was spent in lining up and retouching where there appeared any chance for improvement. This mode of procedure, as before stated, is not a practical way to do Old English; but it may be well enough for practice, to train the eye and acquire as good a conception of the letter as possible.

Old English

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy^z

12345

A B C D E F G H I J K

abcdefghijklmnop

L M N O P Q R S T U V

qrstuvwxyz

abcdefghijklmnop

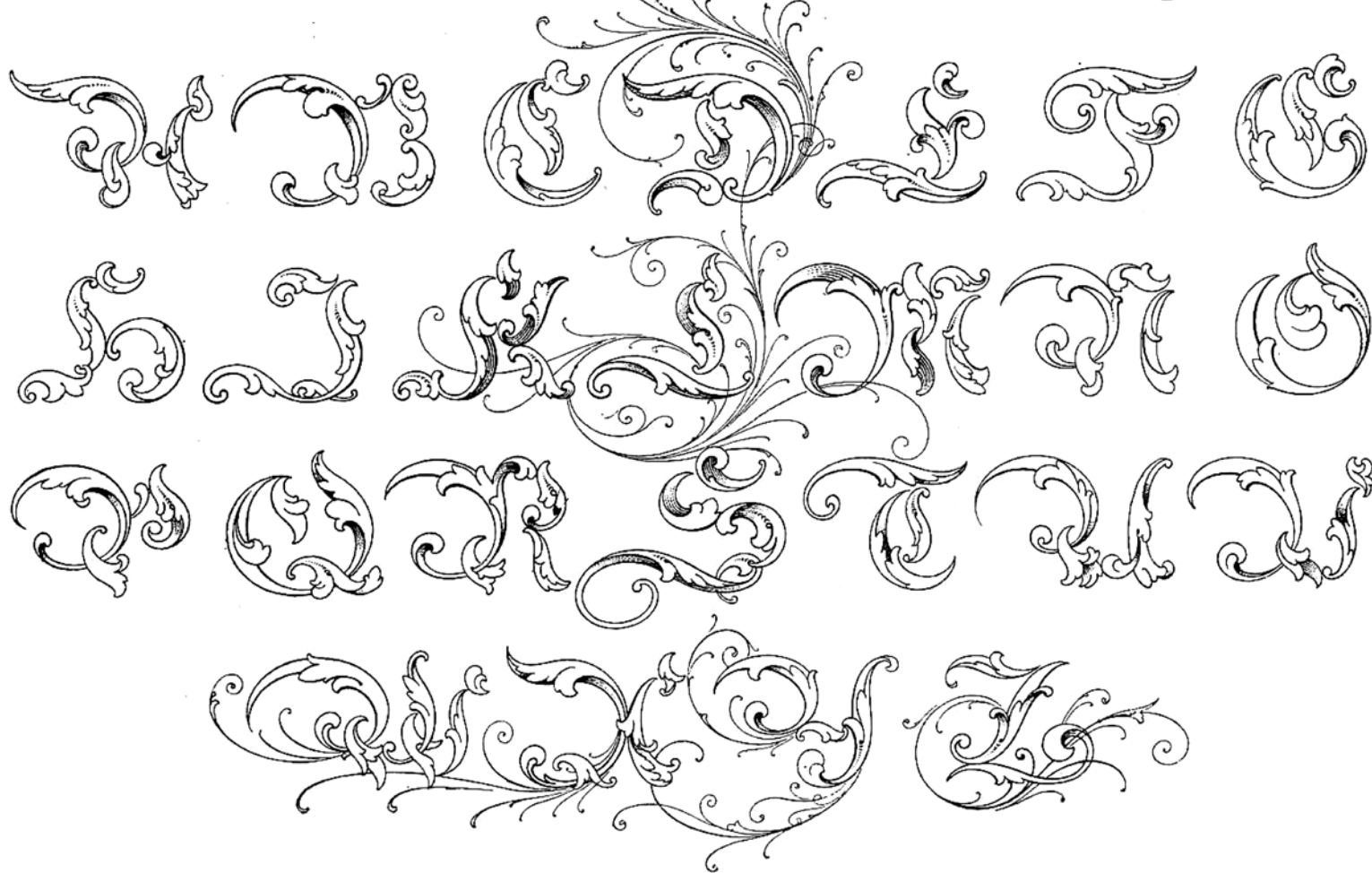
Q R S T U V

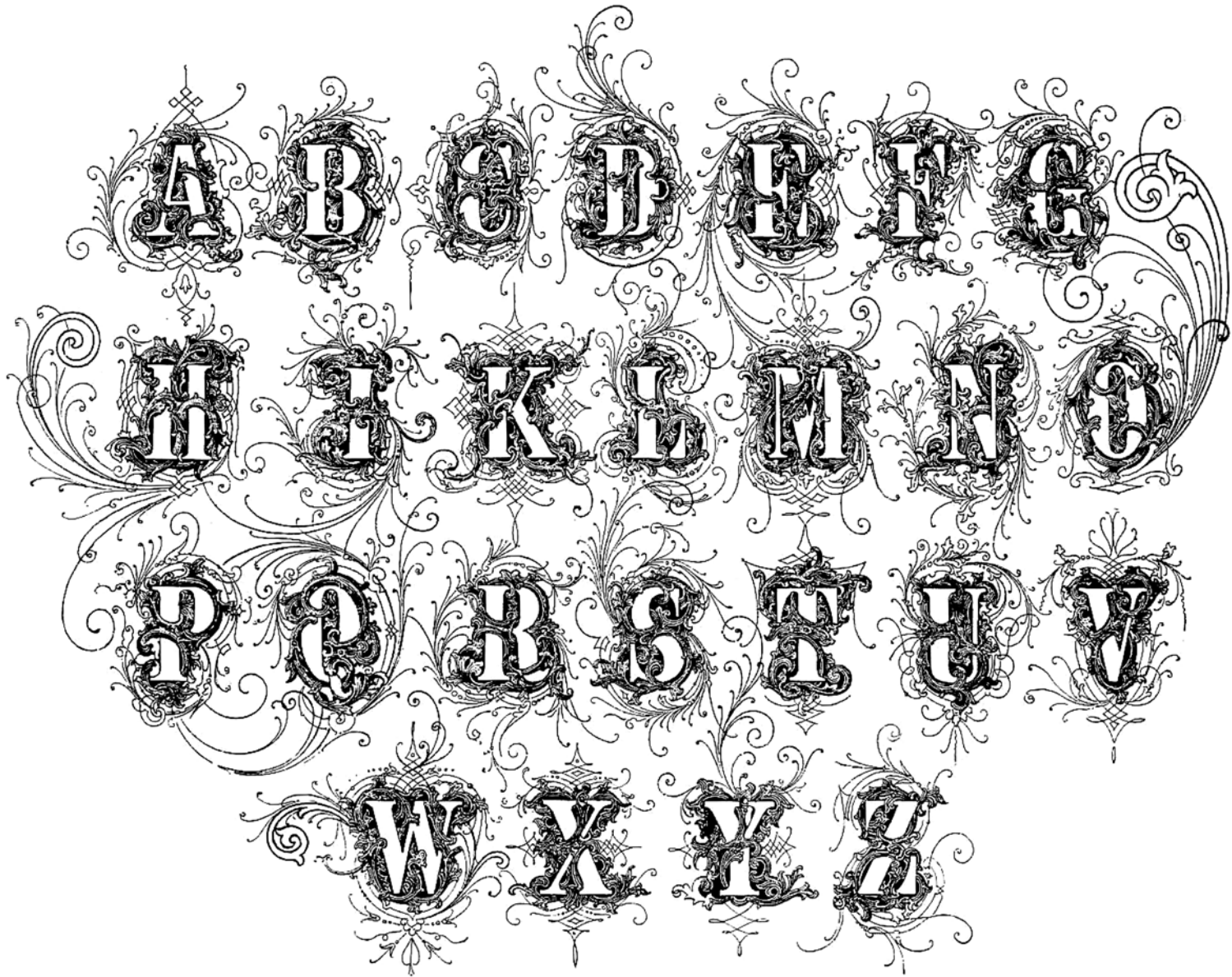
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy^z

67890



Ornamental German Text





Acanthus Ornament

The conventionalized acanthus leaf is the basis of most ornament. It is, therefore, very necessary for the engrossing artist to make a study of this beautiful leaf, and become familiar with its structure and the different ways in which it is treated. It is not intended here to go into this particular branch of ornament to any great extent, but rather to impress upon students its importance and to suggest a way of becoming familiar with it. If not convenient to attend a drawing class in historic ornament, by all means secure, if possible, a few good casts and draw from them. A cast of the full leaf (see large one on page 67 drawn from a cast) will prove an excellent model. This should be drawn and redrawn until the student can make a fair copy from memory, when other casts should be studied with the view of seeing how the leaf is changed into an infinite variety of designs and scrolls. After sufficient practice of this kind, one finds himself able to make variations and designs of his own. To copy designs made by others is not practical, and does not give that thorough knowledge obtained by going to the foundation and studying the principles of the leaf structure.

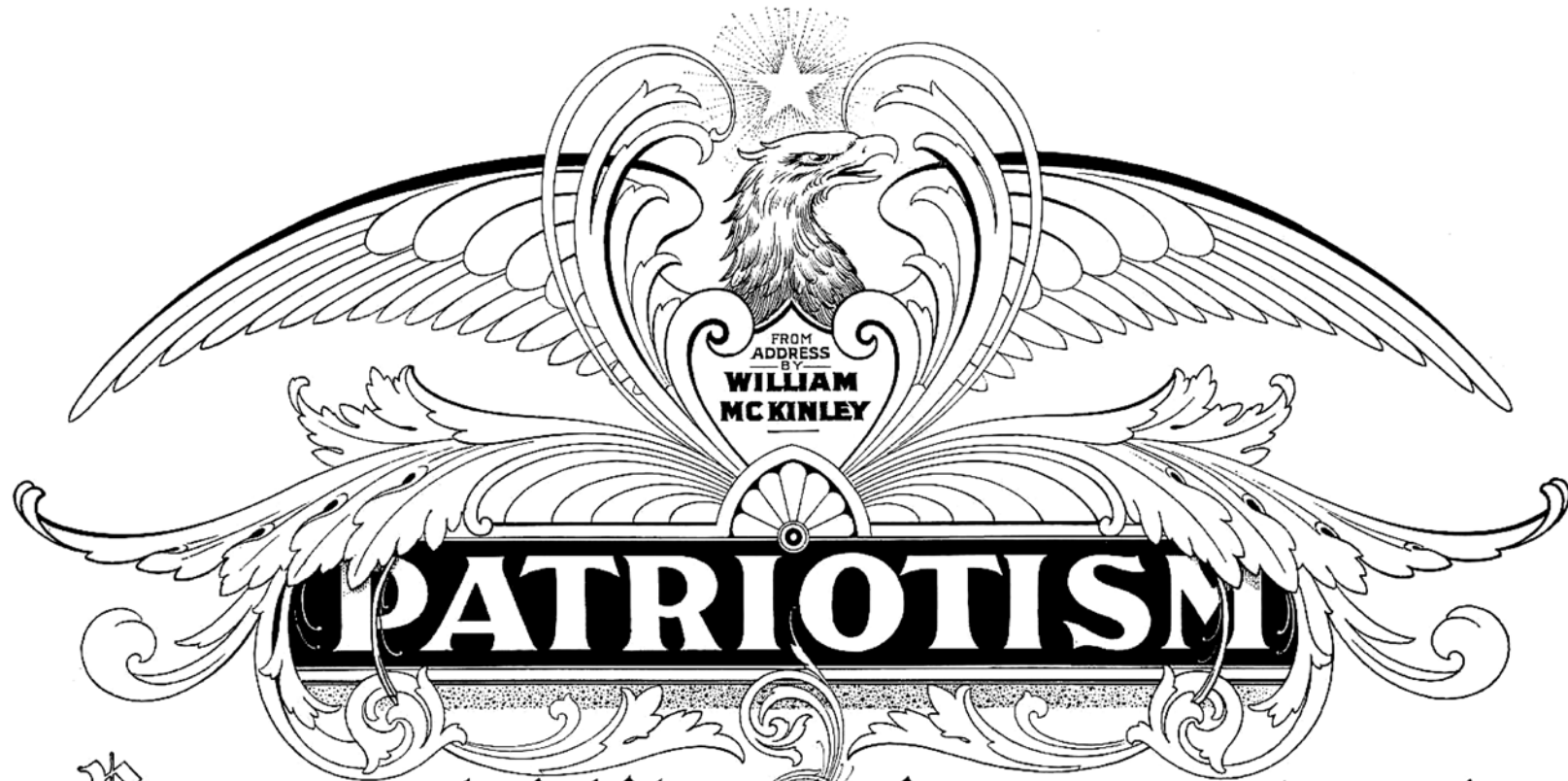
The student will be surprised to see how much this leaf is used for ornament and how we may trace its elements and observe the endless ways in which it can be handled. It is found on fine buildings, furniture, picture-frames, and in many places where ornament is used. He who has given it special attention will see things in it which were passed unnoticed before its derivation was learned.

Most of the scrollwork in this book was derived from the conventional acanthus leaf. This may easily be seen by comparing the scrolls and forms with the large leaf in the center of page 67.

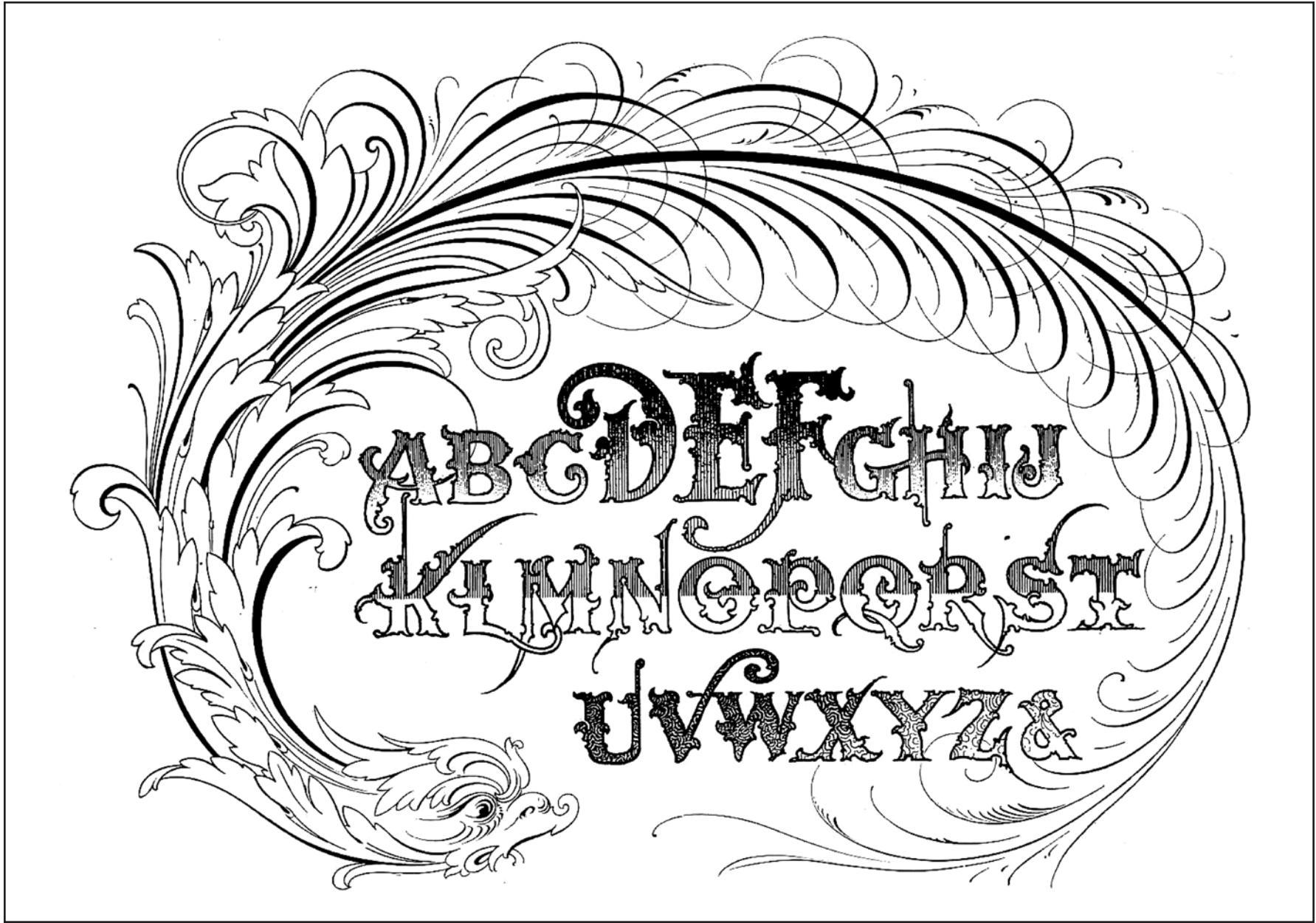


DRAWN FROM A CAST

**STUDIES IN
ACANTHUS
LEAF.**



Patriotism must be faithful as well as fervent, statesmanship must be wise as well as fearless, not the statesmanship which will command the applause of the hour, but the
★ judgment of posterity ★



Off-hand Flourishing

Nothing in the line of ornamental penwork is more fascinating than Off-hand Flourishing. The ease and rapidity of its execution, the grace and harmony of its curves, following each other in such quick succession, forming some beautiful design—a bird in the nest, a swan, an eagle, or some other graceful object—make a charming and interesting pen performance. It is doubtful if anything in penwork requires more real skill, sureness of stroke, delicacy of touch and absolute freedom of arm and hand than Off-hand Flourishing. Certainly none of the other work in this book offers the technical difficulties found in the flourished designs, the most difficult of all being the two swans facing each other on page 29. Lettering is more or less mechanical, but flourishing is quite the opposite. In this work the mind must conceive quickly the arrangement of harmonious, well-balanced curves, and the hand must reproduce them without hesitation. In addition to this, the penman should have in mind some harmonious design, pleasing in effect as a whole. As in all artistic work, design and composition are the essentials, and skilful strokes without artistic arrangement will not be attractive.

A great amount of practice is necessary to train the hand for this kind of work, as it must be done with dash and freedom to produce the right effect. An element of uncertainty in flourishing gives it somewhat of a kaleidoscopic character, it being almost impossible to make so rapidly two designs exactly alike.

There is a wonderful charm about graceful lines and harmonious curves. What harmony of sound is to the ear, grace and harmony of curves are to the eye, and it is not surprising that

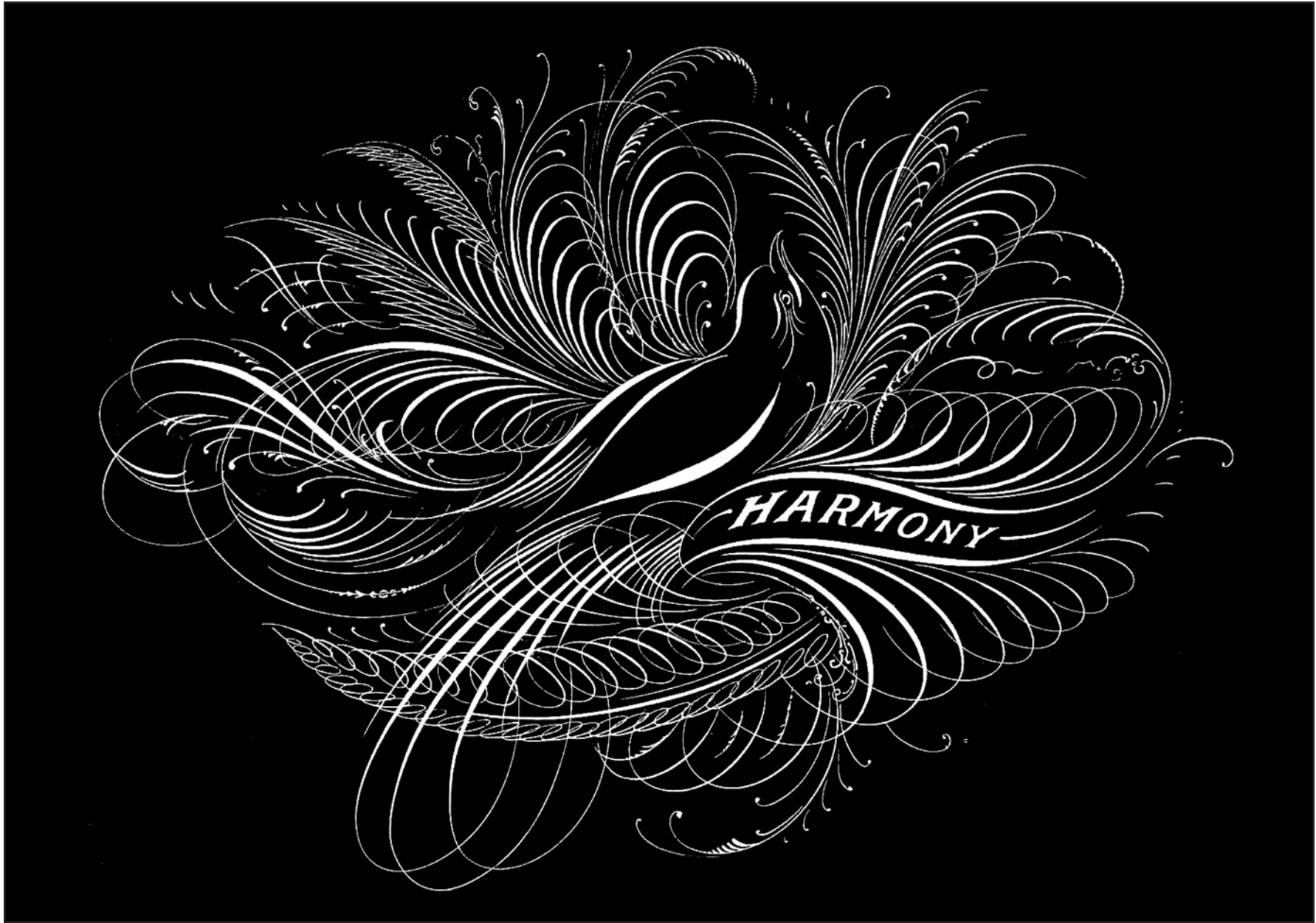
some see great beauty in a fine piece of off-hand flourishing, with design, grace, proportion and symmetry all combined.

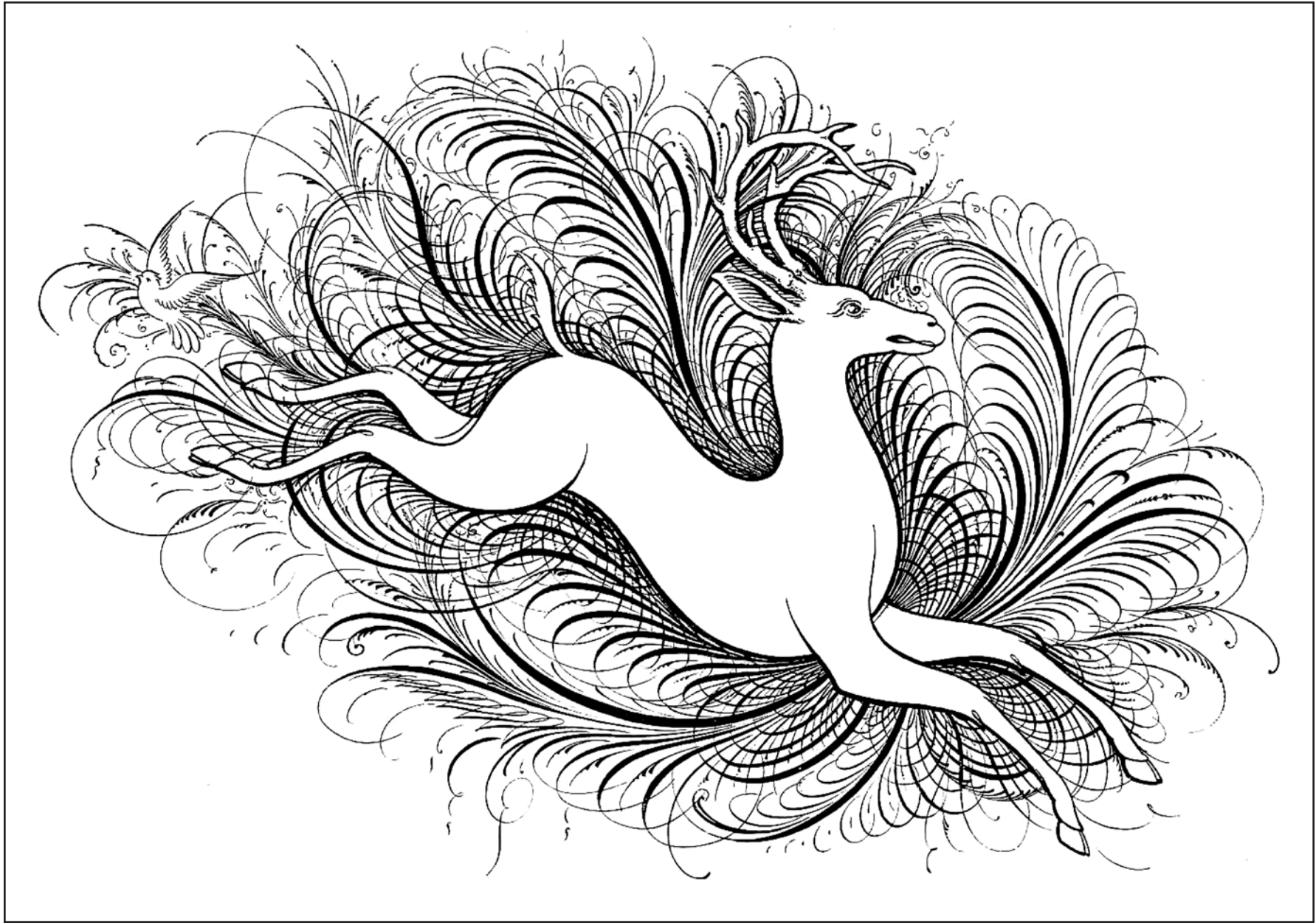
But graceful and unique as this department of penwork is, it has but little utility, except in an indirect way. It is, of course, quite indispensable to the engrossing artist; it is a fine training for the hand and gives it great facility for executing other work. Where considerable text lettering is used it will be found valuable for embellishment. Fifteen minutes devoted to tasteful and appropriate flourishing will often add fifty per cent. to the appearance and worth of a piece of engrossing.

It is suggested that penmen who wish to make their work profitable acquire at least sufficient skill in flourishing to decorate their text lettering in an effective manner, and it may be well to add that the defects in lettering, the natural result of working very rapidly, are far less noticeable when surrounded with appropriate flourishes.

Hold the pen between the first two fingers and thumb, or between the thumb and first finger, sit in an easy position and endeavor to give the arm entire freedom.

Nearly all the strokes are from left to right, although the pen may be held as in writing when it is an advantage. Too much hesitation in movement is likely to produce feeble and irregular strokes, while a bold, free and apparently careless movement of the arm produces strong, regular and graceful lines. It is easier to put on too much than not enough; every stroke either adds or detracts from a design, and it is as important to know when to stop as what to do. Never overload a design with ornament. Simplicity is usually more elegant than elaboration, therefore ornaments should be used sparingly, and always with taste and judgment.





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