

THOMAS G. BOSS FINE BOOKS

*THE FIRST  
FLOWERING*

BRUCE ROGERS  
AT THE  
RIVERSIDE PRESS  
1896-1912  
WITH A  
CHECKLIST OF THE  
RIVERSIDE PRESS  
EDITIONS  
BY JERRY KELLY

20

BOSTON

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## *THE FIRST FLOWERING:*

BRUCE ROGERS AT THE  
RIVERSIDE PRESS



THE FINE-BOOKMAKING landscape in the late 1890s to the early 1900s was a very homogeneous scene: the influence of William Morris and his Kelmscott Press was pervasive – far out of proportion to the fifty-two titles published, each in editions of only a few hundred copies. Imitators abounded, from other private presses such as the Essex House Press and Ashendene Press in England, as well as the Elston Press and Village Press in America; to trade publishers such as Dent in England, Way & Williams in Chicago, and Thomas Bird Mosher in Portland, Maine. Even typefounders issued commercial imitations of Morris's distinctive Golden, Troy, and Chaucer typefaces, under names like Jenson (American Type Founders), Venetian (British Linotype), and Satanick (again, ATF). The few practitioners who, at that time, were making a living at what would today be called graphic design, such as Will Bradley in Massachusetts and Aubrey Beardsley in England, were also heavily influenced by Morris's heavy, medieval aesthetic early in their careers.

Two American book designers would eventually move away from the Kelmscott model, with a couple of British typographers following closely on their heels. While the earliest work of both Daniel Berkeley

Updike and Bruce Rogers displays all the hallmarks of the Kelmscott style, both would expand their repertoire to incorporate influences from a wide assortment of prior typographic styles; along the way creating a new aesthetic movement called "allusive typography," by which the designer bases their design on the appropriate typographic characteristics of an earlier time – not just one preferred era, as with Morris's medieval bent.

The two men couldn't be more different: Updike was a prim and proper New Englander, while Bruce Rogers, who was born a decade earlier than Updike, was something of a free-wheeling midwesterner. Rogers was a college graduate; Updike never finished high school. Updike was a devout Episcopalian; religion apparently was not a prominent factor in Rogers's life. Rogers most admired the French typographers of the sixteenth century while Updike modeled a significant portion of his work on eighteenth-century British antecedents. Rogers was very much an artist/designer, drawing almost all the decoration he used in his books himself, constantly experimenting with hand-drawn and typeset layouts – going through numerous rounds – before settling on a final design. Updike was a professional printer, efficiently utilizing his shop to produce exquisite results, and hiring out the rendering of special ornamentation, initials, and other design elements, when he deemed them necessary, to artists such as W.A. Dwiggins, T.M. Cleland, and Rudolph Ruzicka, who all received some of their earliest commissions from Updike.

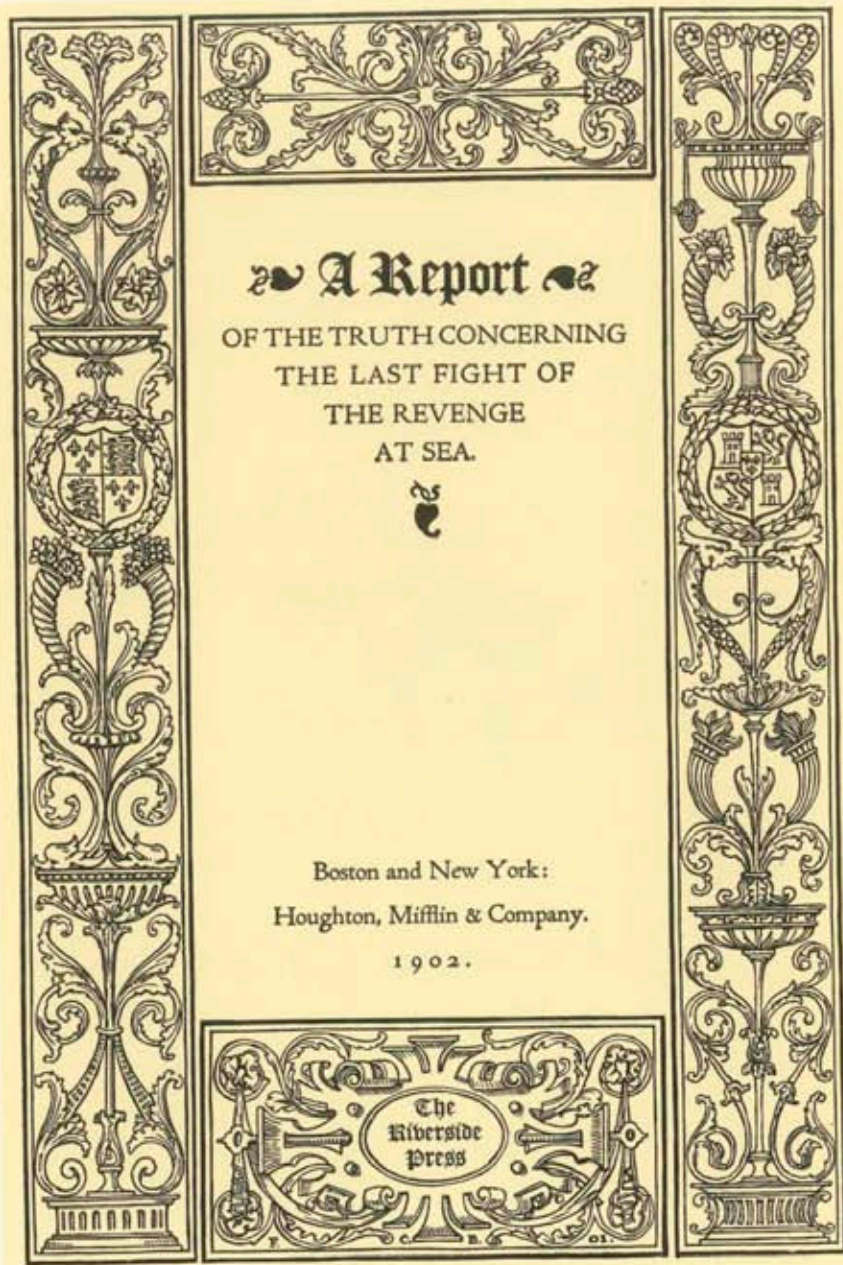
Considering this difference in temperament it is easy to understand Updike's description of Rogers to his English friend and fellow scholar Stanley Morison as

rather restless, and full of somewhat visionary plans. He is always a little bit dissatisfied with the present, and "never is, but always to be, blest," . . . [this] describes his permanent impermanence!

Updike was far too practical to be visionary, and even the oblique biblical tone of his description ("never is, but always to be, blest") is revealing. In a letter of 17 April 1913 to Rudolf Ruzicka, Updike summed up his opinion of Rogers in exasperation: "He is an impossible person!" It is no surprise that the conservative and religious Morison became a close friend of Updike, not Rogers, though he admired the work of both designers, including numerous reproductions of their books in his monumental *Four Centuries of Fine Printing*.

When Carl Purington Rollins, who knew both men well, was asked by John Dreyfus to compare them, he chose one small, seemingly unimportant distinction to exemplify the wide gulf in practice and personality between the two:

You cannot fail to realize that Rogers had many of the attributes of an artist compared to Updike. It is an amusing sidelight that Rogers approached printing through his pencil, whereas Updike once remarked to me that he couldn't even sharpen one. The result was that they worked in different ways their wonders to perform, and while they were well known to each other personally and



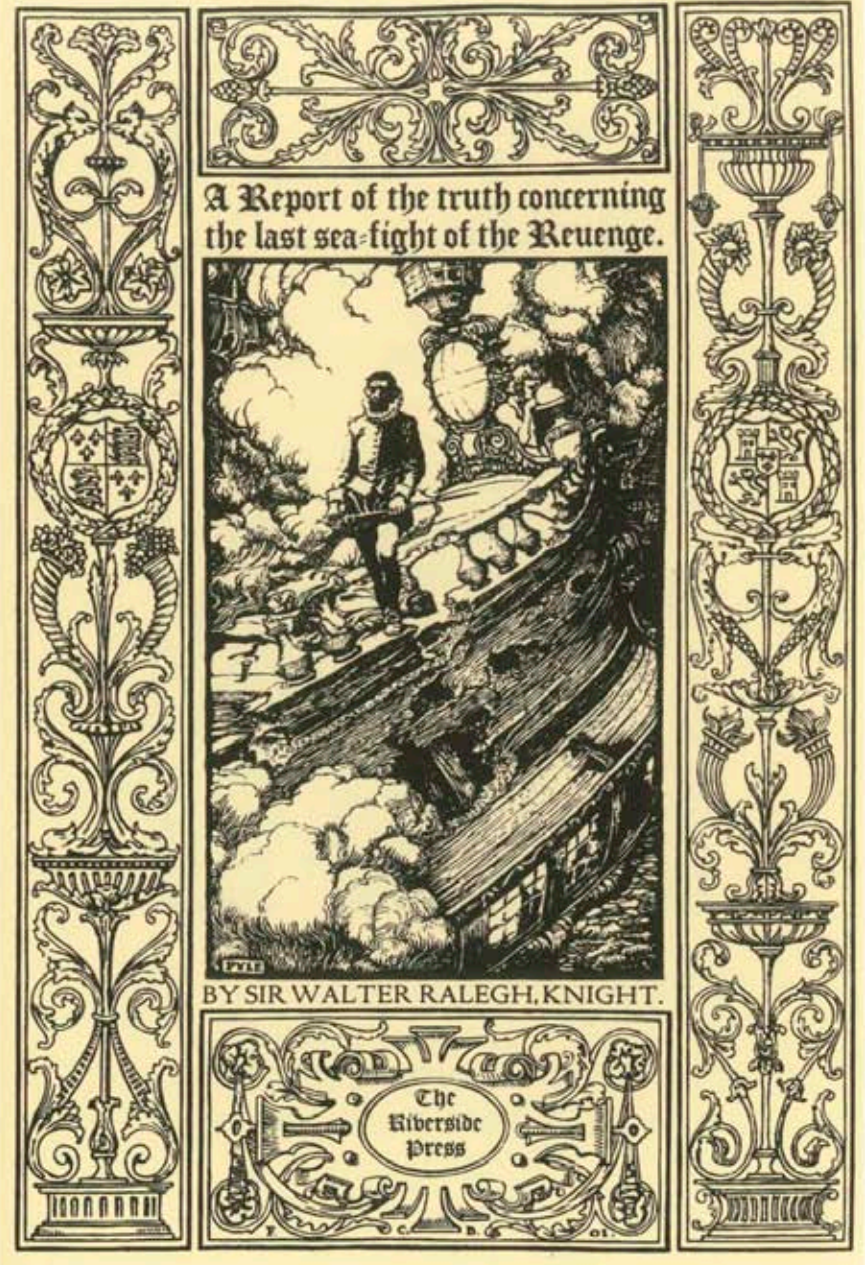
**☞ A Report ☞**  
OF THE TRUTH CONCERNING  
THE LAST FIGHT OF  
THE REVENGE  
AT SEA.



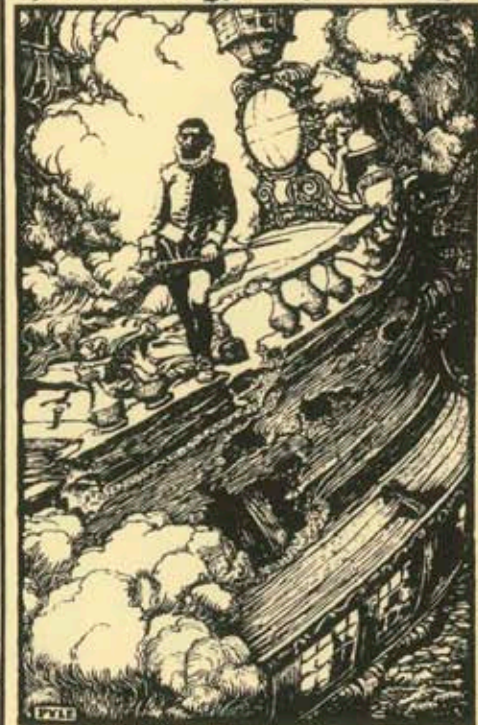
Boston and New York:  
Houghton, Mifflin & Company.  
1902.



PROSPECTUS FOR THE REVENGE, 1902



**A Report of the truth concerning  
the last sea-fight of the Revenge.**




BY SIR WALTER RALEGH, KNIGHT.



8. TITLE PAGE FOR THE REVENGE, 1903

*MUSIC*

*FRIDAY EVENING MARCH THE  
TWENTY-THIRD MDCCCXVI  
AT ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-ONE  
COMMONWEALTH AVENUE*



EPHEMERA PRINTED BY ROGERS AT RIVERSIDE




**THE RIVERSIDE  
PRESS EDITIONS  
AUTUMN : MCMIX**



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY  

 BOSTON AND NEW YORK
 

1909

CATALOGUE FOR THE RIVERSIDE PRESS EDITIONS

*Five hundred copies printed from  
a special digital version of the Brimmer typeface  
on Mohawk Superfine paper, of which 323  
are for Thomas G. Boss Fine Books,*

*Boston. Design by  
Jerry Kelly.*



TOUT BIEN OU RIEN