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The essays in this book represent personal viewpoints and insights on a wide range of book-related subjects. Some of the revelations are intriguing, and some are bizarre, but they should appeal particularly to those interested in the history of books and the lives of the Victorian literati. The revelations include the ceremonial disposal of private press typefaces in the murky waters of the Thames, or the bizarre court case preventing publication of Lord Chesterfield's letters, for being defamatory to the Royal family. The title adapts that of Lord David Cecil's lecture on "Reading as One of the Fine Arts", where he confessed pleasure in what is "ornamental, expensive and useless" which Colin Franklin controversially claims as a definition of many antiquarian books.