

Bookbindings, old and new : notes of a book-lover, with an account of the Grolier Club, New York / by Brander Matthews.

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BOOKBINDINGS OLD & NEW

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THE EX-LIBRIS SERIES. EDITED BY GLEESON WHITE.

BOOKBINDINGS, OLD AND NEW.



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LIBRO LLAMADO RELOX DE PRINCIPES.
SIXTEENTH CENTURY BINDING WITH THE
ARMS OF FRANCIS I.

Bookbindings, Old and New

Notes of a Book-lover, with an Account of the Grolier Club, New York, by Brander Matthews



London : George Bell & Sons, York Street,
Covent Garden, & New York. Mccccxvi

Restoration



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THESE STRAY NOTES OF A WANDERING BOOK-LOVER
ARE INSCRIBED TO
THAT COMPACT BODY OF AMERICAN BIBLIOPHILES
THE GROLIER CLUB

Restoration

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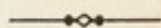
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BOOKBINDINGS OF THE PAST

BOOKBINDINGS OF THE PAST



AS I begin to set down here these rambling impressions and stray suggestions about the great bookbinders of the past, I am reminded of a pleasant saying recorded in Burton's "Book-Hunter," that storehouse of merry jests against those who love books not wisely but too well. Burton tells us that in the hearing of a certain dealer in old tomes and rare volumes a remark was ventured that such an one was "said to know something about books," which brought forth the fatal answer: "He know about books? Nothing—nothing at all, I assure you; unless, perhaps, about their insides."

The pertinence of this retort to myself, just now, I cannot but confess at once. What I know best about books is their insides. And yet, perhaps, it is not an unpardonable sin for an

author to concern himself also with the outside of books — if so be he love them, if he care for tall copies, if he be capable of cherishing the good edition, the one with the misprint. This is why I am emboldened to risk myself in a voyage of retrospection in search of the masters and the masterpieces of the bibliopegic art.

I.

GROLIER AND THE RENASCENCE.

IN a letter written to a friend in April, 1518, Erasmus highly praised the civility, the modesty, the integrity, and the munificence of his correspondent, and added, "You owe nothing to books, but in the future books will give you an eternal glory."

The man to whom this was written was a Viscount of Aguisy, for a while treasurer of the army of Italy, then French ambassador to Rome, and afterward treasurer of France under Francis I., Henry II., Francis II., and Charles IX. "Born in 1479, dying in 1565, he lived eighty-six years," — so M. Le Roux de Lincy, his biographer, tells us, — "during which he showed himself always a zealous protector of the learned, a lover of the good and beautiful books issued by the Giunti and the Aldi, or by the other publishers of the time, and also an ardent collector of

coins and of antiquities." Yet the prediction of Erasmus has so far come true that the name of the ambassador and treasurer of France would be forgotten were it not that the fame of the book-lover has lingered, and spread, until now, more than three centuries after the death of Jean Grolier of Lyons, there is a flourishing club called by his name here in New York, the chief city of a continent undiscovered when he was born.

Grolier had the good fortune to live through the glorious years of the Renaissance, when all the arts were reviving at once and flourishing together; and he had the good judgment to aid in the development of the art of book-binding to which he attached his name inseparably. The art was not new when he began to collect the best works of the best printers, but it was about to have a new birth; and when it was born again, he helped to guide its steps.

Perhaps the first bookbinder was the humble workman who collected the baked clay tiles on which the Assyrians wrote their laws; and he was a bookbinder also who prepared a



HELLIODORI PHOENICIS
AETHIOPICA
HISTORIA

IO. GROLLERII
ET AMICO
RVM

protecting cylinder to guard the scrolls of papyrus on which Vergil, and Horace, and Martial had written their verses.

Before the invention of printing, the choicer manuscripts, books of hours, and missals, were made even more valuable by sides of carved ivory, or of delicately wrought silver often studded with gems. Even after printing was invented, the binder was called upon only to stitch the leaves of the book, all further decoration being the privilege of the silversmith. Benvenuto Cellini was paid six thousand crowns for the golden cover, carved and enriched with precious stones, which he made for a book that Cardinal de' Medici wished to give Charles V. In France the silversmiths claimed the monopoly of binding, and also of dealing in the finer stuffs — not merely in cloth-of-gold, but even in velvet.

Certain of the books bound in the monasteries were incased in boards — veritable boards, of actual wood — so thick that now and again they were hollowed out to hold a crucifix or a pair of spectacles, although sometimes it was

only to make room for an almanac. It is no wonder that when a tome thus ponderously begirt fell upon Petrarch it so bruised his leg that for a while there was danger of amputation. Even when these real boards were thin, they were thick enough to conceal a worm, that worst of all the enemies of books; and thus real boards, like the German *condottieri* in many an Italian city, destroyed what they were meant to protect. In time the genuine board was given up for a pasteboard, which was then made by pasting together sheets of paper; and myriads of pages of books no longer in fashion were thus destroyed to stiffen the covers of newer volumes. In our day many interesting fragments of forgotten authors, and not a few curious and instructive engravings, have been rescued from oblivion, when the decay of old book-covers has led to the picking apart of the pasteboards beneath the crumbling leather.

With the invention of printing, and the immediate multiplication of books, there came an urgent demand for workmen capable of



BESSARIONIS CARD.
NICERI
IN CALUMNIATOREM
PLATONIS
ETC.

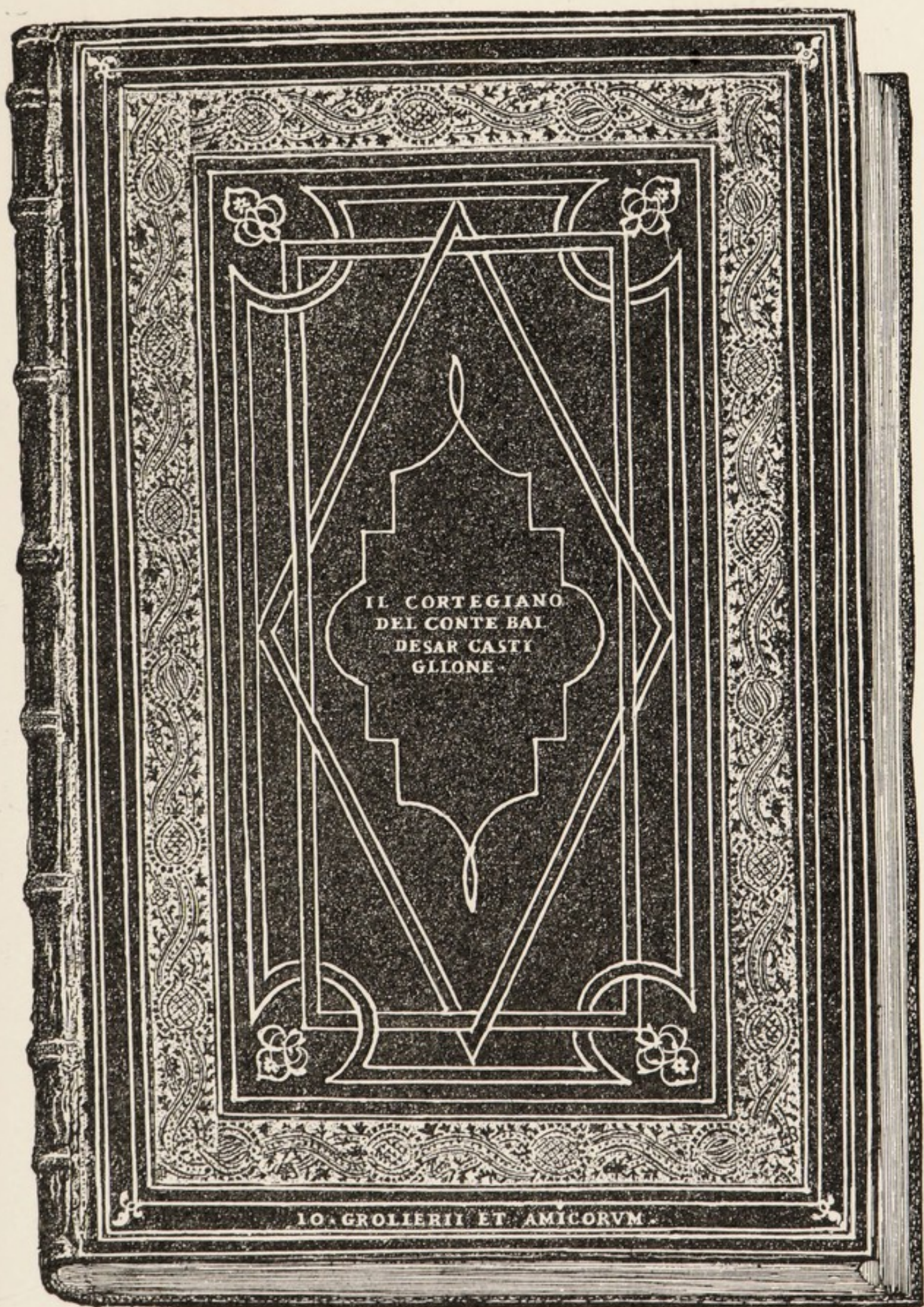
TO GROLIERII
ET AMICORVM.

covering a volume in seemly fashion. In many a monastery the binderies must have been increased hastily to meet the demand; and we can trace the handiwork of these monastic craftsmen by the designs they imprinted on the covers of the books they bound—designs made up mainly of motives from the manuscript missals, from the typographic ornaments of the early printers, and from the transcripts of those carvings in wood and stone with which the churches of that time were abundantly enriched.

But the workshops in the monasteries did not suffice, and leather-workers of all sorts—saddlers, harness-makers, and those who put together the elaborate boots and shoes of the times—were impressed into the service, taking over to the new trade of bookbinding, not only their skill in dealing with leather, but also the tools and the designs with which they had been wont to decorate the boots, the saddles, the harness, and the caskets of fair ladies and lords of high degree. For the most part these were humble artisans, lacking even in the rudi-

ments of learning. The authorities in France preferred the workman to be ignorant who was called in to bind the records of the State and the royal books of account. The late Édouard Fournier, in his essay on the "Art de la Reliure en France," cites the contract of one Guillaume Ogier in Italy, 1492, as a binder of the registers of the treasury, in which the artisan "declared and made oath that he knew not how to read nor to write."

Perhaps one reason for the superiority of the early Italian bindings over the French of the same period was that the workmen employed in Italy were more intelligent and better educated. In a book printed by Aldus in 1513, the notice to the binder is in Greek! Ambroise Firmin-Didot explained the anomaly of this apparently extraordinary culture on the part of the handicraftsmen of that era by suggesting that the workmen employed by Aldus — who was binder as well as printer — were many of them Greeks who had been driven to Venice after the taking of Constantinople by the Turks. Every reader of "Romola" will



IL CORTEGIANO
DEL CONTE BAL
DESAR CASTI
GLIONE

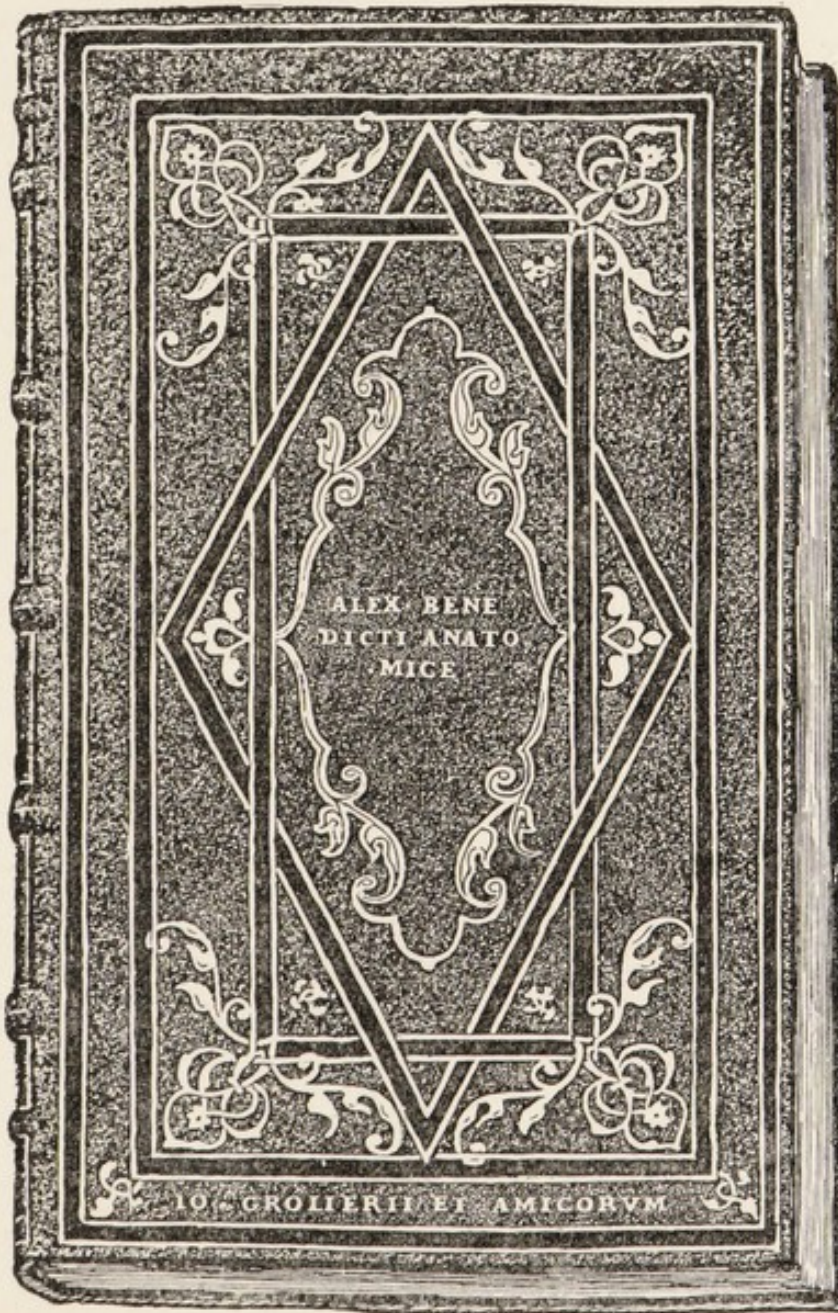
IO. GROLIERII ET AMICORVM

remember the influence exercised on the Italian renaissance by the personal presence of the Greeks; and in no art was this influence more immediate, more permanent, or more beneficial, than in the art of bookbinding.

We know that Grolier was in Italy in 1512, and that he was still at Milan in 1525. He was a friend and a patron of Aldus. "No book left the Aldine press," M. Le Roux de Lincy declares, "without several copies, some on vellum," some on white or coloured paper, being specially printed for the library of the French collector. Voltaire says that "a reader acts toward books as a citizen toward men; he does not live with all his contemporaries, he chooses a few friends." Grolier chose for his friends the best books and the most beautiful; he was fond of a good author no less than of a wide margin. As Dr. Holmes tells us, a library "is a looking-glass in which the owner's mind is reflected"; and it is a noble portrait of the man which we get when we look at the books of Jean Grolier. He was a lover of the New Learning. His praises are repeated

in many a dedication from the scholars and the publisher-printers of the period. Many a book was brought out wholly, or partly, at his expense. The managers of the Aldine press often borrowed money from him, and never applied in vain. He quarrelled once with Benvenuto Cellini, but he was a close friend of Geoffroy Tory. He was a scholar, as is attested by the elegant Latinity of his extant correspondence. He was an artist of not a little skill with the pencil, as a sketch in his copy of the "Maxims" of Erasmus proves.

Fournier thought that perhaps Grolier himself designed the graceful arabesques and interwoven bands which characterize the covers of his books. "Compared with the other bindings of the same time, and of the same country, those of Grolier are distinguished by an unequalled and unfailing taste." They are closely akin to the bindings executed for Aldus in Venice, and to the bindings then made by the Italian workmen elsewhere in Italy, in France, and even in England: but they are somehow superior; they have a note of their



"BENEDETTI'S ANATOMY," 1537. OCTAVO, $4 \times 6\frac{3}{4}$ INCHES; BROWN CALF.
(FROM SAUVAGE COLLECTION. OWNED BY MR. SAMUEL P. AVERY.)

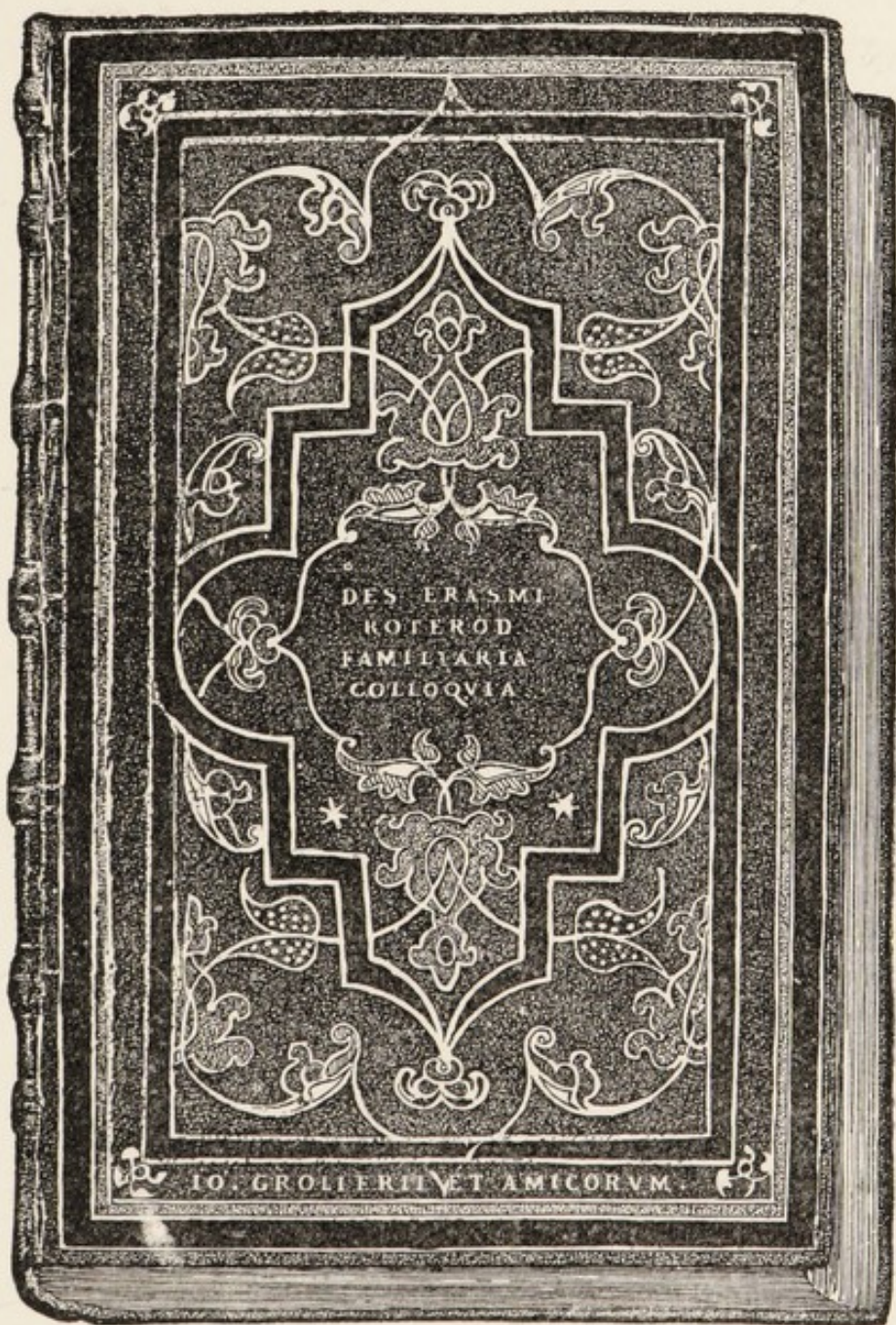
own; they are the result of a finer artistic sense; and the longer I study the books bound during the Italian renaissance, the more I am inclined to agree with Fournier when he asserts that Grolier, "with Italian methods, created a French art." Certainly he gave to his library so definite an individuality that the volumes which composed it three hundred years ago are now treated as veritable works of art; they have their catalogue, like the pictures of a great painter, or the plates of a great engraver; they are numbered. Every existing book bound for Grolier has its pedigree, and is traced lovingly from catalogue to catalogue of the great collectors.

The beauty of the Grolier bindings is in the lavish and tasteful ornamentation of the sides. In the early days of printing, and when the traditions of the days of manuscripts still were dominant, the shelves of a library inclined like a reading-desk, and the handsome volumes lay on their sides, taking their ease. Books then were not packed together on level shelves as they are now, shoulder to shoulder, like

common soldiers; but each stately tome stood forward by itself singly, like an officer. So the broad sides of the ample folios seemed to invite decoration.

The first books which Grolier had bound in Italy are similar in their style of decoration to those then sent forth from the Aldine press; a few have elegant arabesques, setting off a central shield, but most of them have simple geometrical designs in which interlacing bands, formed by parallel lines gilt-tooled, are relieved by solid ornaments very like those with which the Aldus family then adorned the pages of the books they were printing, and which were suggested some, no doubt, by the illuminations of the old missals, but more, beyond question, by the Oriental traditions of the Greek workmen. The distinguishing quality of these ornaments, familiar enough to all who know the Aldine style, was grace united to boldness.

Look at a specimen of the earlier of Grolier's bindings. Note the simplicity of the interlaced bands, the sharp strength of the enriching arabesques, the skill with which they are com-



"COLLOQUIES OF ERASMUS," BASEL, 1537. QUARTO, $7 \times 4\frac{1}{8}$ INCHES; BROWN CALF. (FROM BLENHEIM COLLECTION. OWNED BY MR. BRAYTON IVES.)

bined; and then remember that this, like every other design, was laboriously tooled bit by bit, and line by line, each separate ornament being stamped on the cover at least twice, once to impress the leather, and again to attach the gold.

It is only some understanding of the technic of an art which enables us to appreciate its triumphs. The art of the bookbinder is limited by the "tools" he uses. A "tool," in the parlance of the trade, is the brass implement at the end of which is cut the little device, ornament, or part of an ornament, that is separately to be transferred to the leather. Every figure, every leaf, every branch, every part of the design, is made of one or more tools. The binder conceives his general scheme of decoration, knowing his tools; and it is by a combination and repetition of these tools that he forms his design. One might almost say that tools are style; certainly it is obvious that the tools changed form concurrently with every modification of taste in bookbinding; and a study of the tools, as they have been modified

during the past three centuries, is essential to any real understanding of the art of book-binding.

Thus we see that when Grolier began to gather his library, the binder used tools copied from Aldine typographic devices, and impressed in gold on the cover of a book that figure which on the printed page was a solid black. But the finer taste of the Renaissance soon discovered that, although the broad black of the Aldine devices was pleasing on a white page, an excess of solid gold was less satisfactory on the side of a book. So they made these tools sometimes hollowed, — that is, in outline merely, which lightened them instantly, — and sometimes azured — that is, crossed by horizontal lines, as in the manner of indicating “azure” in heraldry. Then, having the same device in three different values where before they had but one, the adroit binder was able to vary and combine them as he needed solid strength or easy lightness.

The next step was to increase the variety and the complication of the interlacing bands



"ERIZZO, DISCORSO SOPRA LE MODAGLIE ANTICHE," VENICE, 1559. IN 8VO (IMPRIMÉS EXPOSITION, NO. 526. PLAT RECTO). BOUND FOR GROLIER IN THE STYLE OF THOSE OF GEOFFROY TORY.

It is the only example known of work of this class bearing the name of Grolier. The device is on the verso. (From "Les Reliures d'Art à la Bibliothèque Nationale." By permission of Édouard Rouveyre.)

—and it is these interlacing bands which are perhaps the chief characteristic of the Grolier bindings. Instead of being indicated by two fine lines of gold, the bands were marked out by three lines. Finally, the bands traced by plain gold tooling were enriched by paint. Adroitly contrasted colours were chosen to fill



ALDINE TOOLS, SOLID.



ALDINE TOOLS, HOLLOW.

ALDINE TOOLS, AZURED.

up the hollow bands which twisted above and below one another all over the cover of the book. To-day these painted ribbons and the gilding of the design are sadly dulled by the years; but when they were fresh, nothing could have been more magnificently resplendent than this polychromatic decoration.

On one or the other side of Grolier's books was the legend "Io. Grolierii et amicorum," a form which M. Le Roux de Lincy thinks he may have borrowed from his friend Maioli, an Italian collector, of whom almost nothing is known, although his books are greatly sought after — Grolier had several of them. M. Clément de Ris, the author of a pleasant volume on the "Amateurs d'Autrefois," doubts whether Grolier ever lent his books, despite this altruistic declaration. But M. Le Roux de Lincy has been able to trace not a few duplicates and triplicates from Grolier's collection, — he has even found five copies of the same Aldine edition of Vergil, — whence it is fair to conclude that the book-lover meant the legend to be interpreted in the most liberal manner, in that he stood ready to give his books to his friends, even though he was not willing to lend them. Indeed, to lend a beloved volume is the last thing a true bibliophile can be coaxed to do, although the lending of books was a form of charity specially recommended by a Council of Paris so far back as 1212. We know that



BINDING EXECUTED FOR THO. MAIOLI, 1536. (FROM "MANUEL HISTORIQUE ET BIBLIOGRAPHIQUE DE L'AMATEUR DE RELIURE." BY PERMISSION OF LÉON GRUEL.)

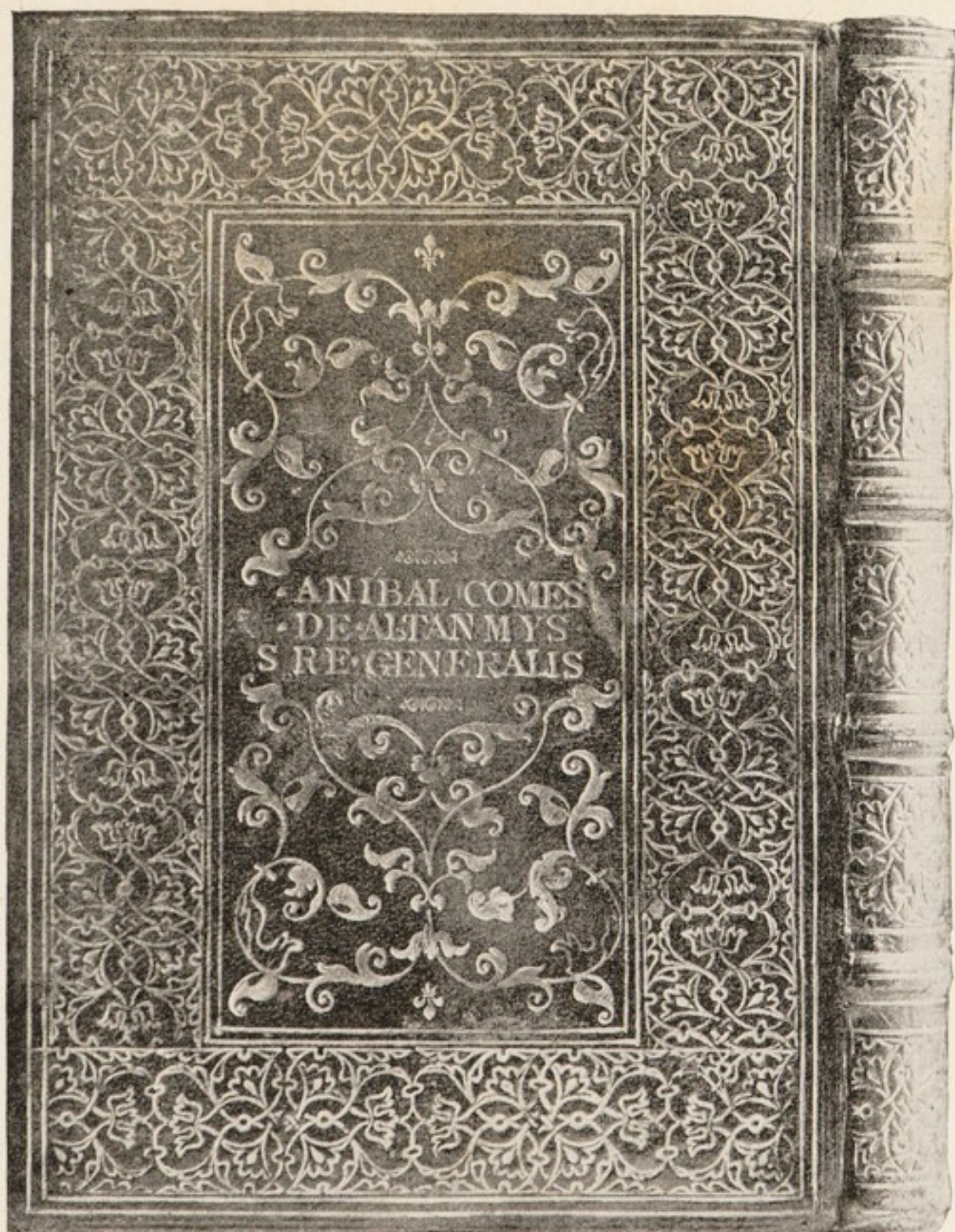
Grolier gave four of the best of his books to the father of J. A. de Thou.

The books bound for Maioli are almost as beautiful as the books bound for Grolier, but, as M. Marius-Michel remarks, Maioli had some poor bindings, and Grolier had none. Perhaps it was also due to the example of Maioli that Grolier chose a motto, which ran, "Portio mea, Domine, sit in terra viventium," modified from Psalm cxli. Maioli's was, "Inimici mea michi, non me michi." Marc Laurin of Watervliet, a friend of Grolier and of Maioli, and a book-lover like them, had for his motto "Virtus in arduo." In as marked a contrast as may be with the friendly legend on Grolier's books is the motto which the learned Scaliger borrowed from the Vulgate, "Ite ad vendentes" — "Go ye rather to them that sell" (Matthew xxv. 9).

PREFIXED to the "Catalogue of an Exhibition of Recent Bookbindings, 1860-1890," held at the Grolier Club in New York in December, 1890, was a note on styles, in which there

was a division of the best known work of the Renaissance into three classes, rather arbitrarily designated as "Aldine or Italian," "Maioli," and "Grolier." The Aldine was said to have ornaments of solid face without any shading whatever, and these ornaments were of Arabic origin, and such as were used by Aldus and the other early Italian printers; the Maioli was said to be composed generally "of a framework of shields or medallions, with a design of scrollwork flowing through it"; and the Grolier was said to be "an interlaced framework of geometrical figures, circles, squares, and diamonds, with scrollwork running through it, the ornaments of which are of Moresque character, and often azured."

Of course, a classification of this sort is lacking in scientific precision, since all three of these styles existed at the same time, and are to be found on books bound for Grolier, although there is no doubt that he most often affected the interlacing geometrical patterns. That three styles different enough to bear distinct names should flourish side by side is evi-



ITALIAN, 16TH CENTURY.

dence, were any needed, of the extraordinary artistic richness of the Italian renaissance.

Nor is this the whole story. While Grolier and his fellow-collectors were developing a French art in Italy, and with Italian workmen, the art was taking root in France, and flourishing lustily. Born in the reign of Louis XII., Grolier died in the reign of Charles IX., and he was a witness of the sturdy development of art in France under Francis I. and Henry II. While he was having books bound in one or another of the three contemporary styles of Italian origin, two styles were in process of evolution

in France, without his assistance, and perhaps without his approval. Certainly there is now extant no volume known to have belonged to Grolier decorated either with a *semé* (as the French call it), a "powder," frequently used by Francis I., or with the elaborately enriched central rectangle, surrounded by a frame

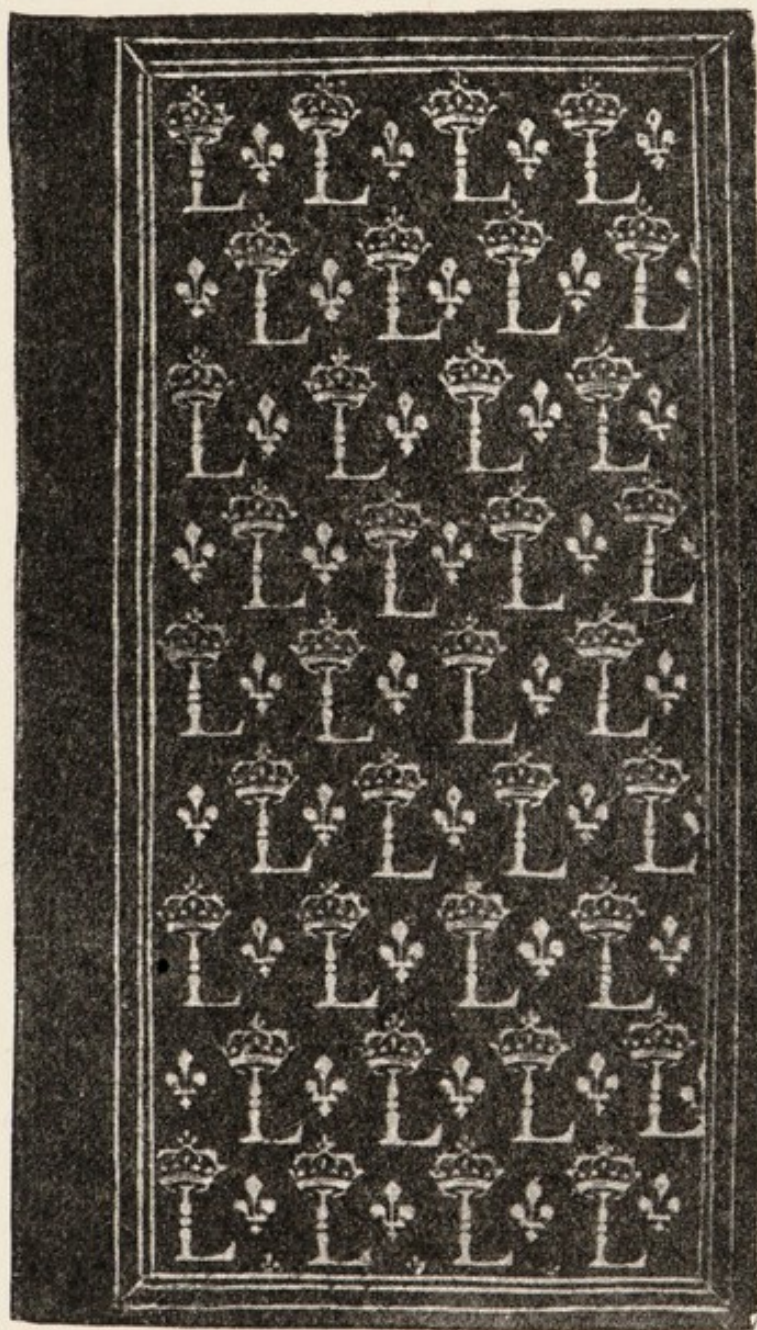


A "POWDER" WITH THE DEVICE OF THE DAUPHIN.

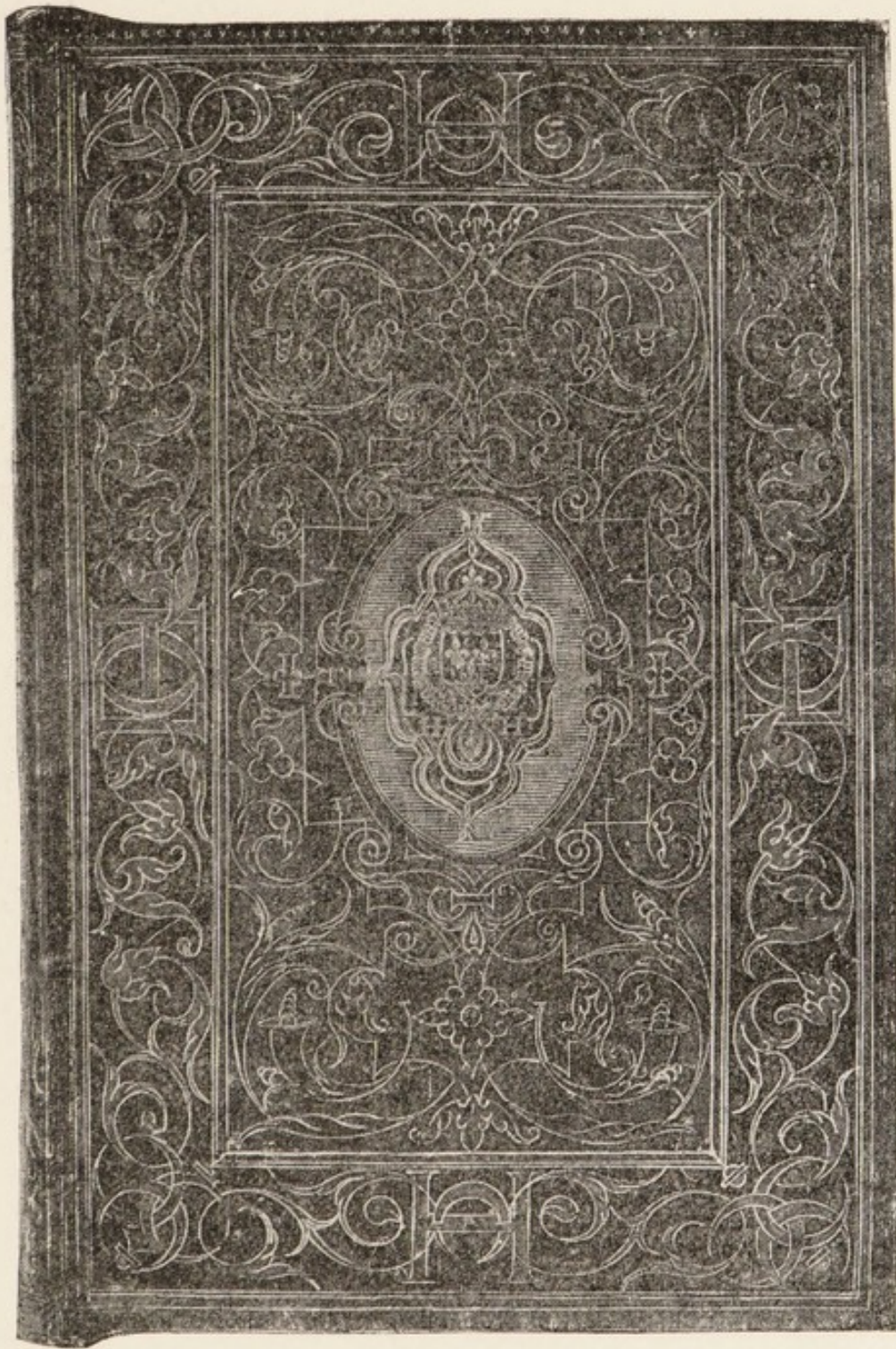
of rolling arabesques, such as we find Henry II. to have been fond of.

In the "powder" there is, perhaps, a lightly tooled fillet around the side of the book, and perhaps a coat of arms, or some other vignette, in the centre, and even at each corner, but the binding derives its decorative richness from the sowing broadcast of the king's initial, or of the royal lily, or of some other single tool, repeated regularly in horizontal and perpendicular lines. Sometimes it contains but one device thus repeated geometrically, and sometimes two or three devices are alternated, and agreeably contrasted. In the hands of a feeble binder the "powder" degenerates easily into stiff and barren monotony; but when the devices are adroitly varied, and made to sustain each other skilfully, it is capable of indisputable dignity and strength.

A kindred artful employment of monogram and personal emblem it is which gives distinction to the beautiful bindings which bear the double H of Henry II., and the triple crescent of Diana of Poitiers. The famous Henri Deux



BINDING EXECUTED BY CLOVIS ÈVE FOR LOUIS XIII. (FROM "MANUEL HISTORIQUE ET BIBLIOGRAPHIQUE DE L'AMATEUR DE RELIURE." BY PERMISSION OF LÉON GRUEL.)



“PANDECTARUM JURIS FLORENTINI, VOL. II.” BINDING WITH THE ARMS OF FRANCE SURROUNDED WITH SCROLLS, AND WITH THE CIPHER OF HENRY II. AND DIANA OF POITIERS. IN THE MAZARIN LIBRARY. (FROM “LA RELIURE FRANÇAISE,” BY M. MARIUS-MICHEL. BY PERMISSION OF DAMASCÈNE MORGAND.)

ware, for which the lover of ceramic art longs in vain, has not a rarer charm than that of some of the bindings executed at the same time and under the same inspiration. M. Marius-Michel, bringing to the study a highly trained understanding of the technic of bibliopegic art, declares that there were in France under Henry II. three, and perhaps four, binders of extraordinary merit. Their work survives to this day, and is more and more admired, but their names have perished forever.

It is a pity that we cannot do honour to the memory of the noble craftsman who executed some of the most splendid bindings with no other implements than the straight fillet and curved gouge, disdaining aid of any engraved tools whatsoever. To him we owe the transcendent folio "Pandectarum Juris Florentini," now in the Mazarin Library at Paris. M. Marius-Michel asserts that no binder had ever such skill of hand. "As clay is transformed under the fingers of the clever sculptor, so the



CURVED GOUGES.

learned arabesques, the graceful volutes, seemed to be born under his instruments; no one has ever carried to such a degree the exquisite sentiment of form."



"VALERII MAXIMI DICTORUM FACTORUMQUE MEMORABILIVM, LIBRI IX."
BOUND BY NICOLAS ÈVE. FROM THE LIBRARY OF DE THOU. (FROM
"REMARKABLE BINDINGS IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM," BY HENRY B.
WHEATLEY.)

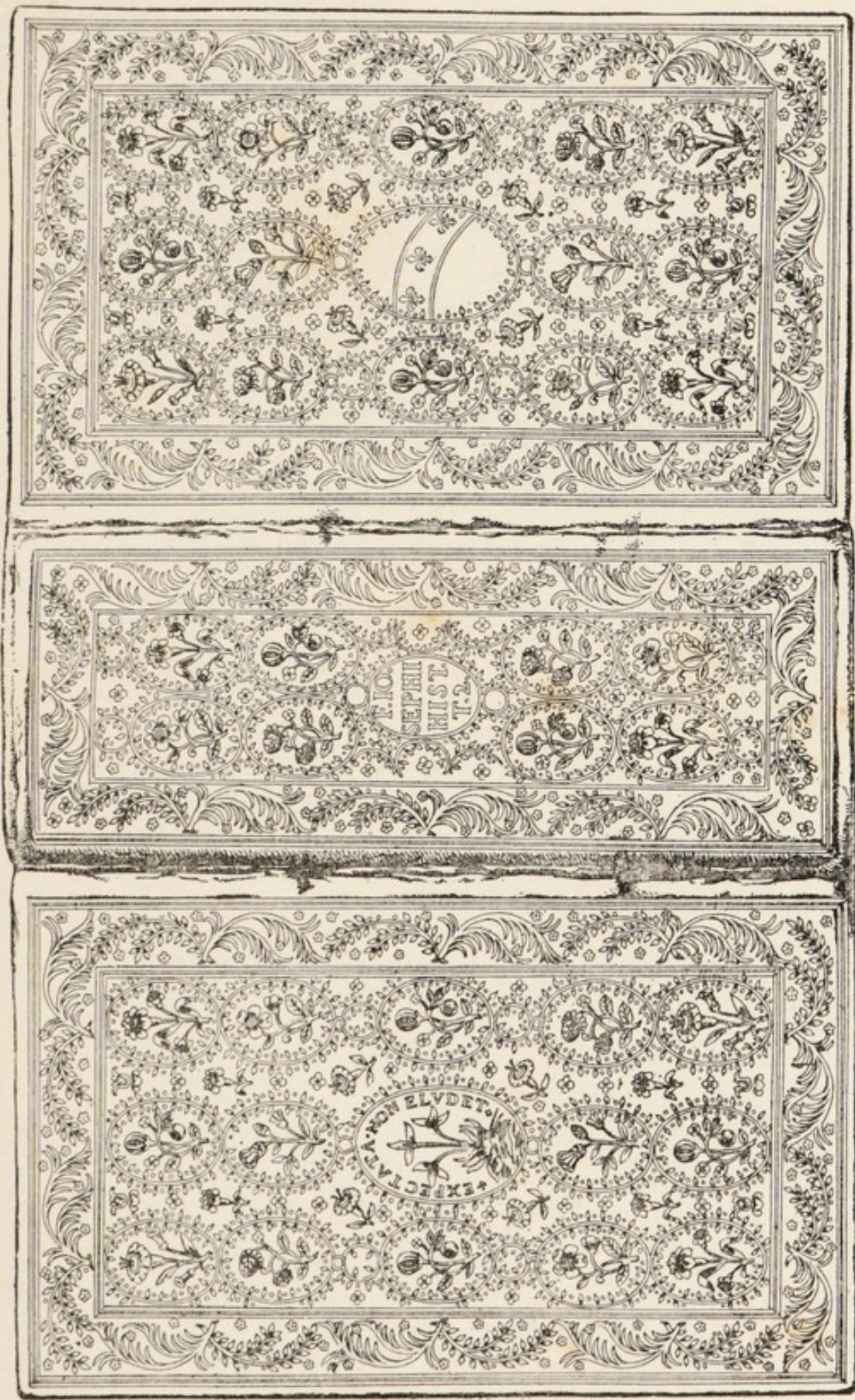
II.

DE THOU AND "LE GASCON."

IN the history of the bibliopegic art the names of book-lovers and of bookbinders are inextricably entangled. At one moment the dominant individuality is seen to be a collector like Grolier or Maioli, and at the next it is an artist-artisan like "Le Gascon" or Derome. After the death of Henry II., the great binders of his reign disappear absolutely; there is no trace of their handiwork or of their tools. Perhaps they were Huguenots, as French historians of the art have surmised, and were done to death, or fled the country, before the promulgation of the Edict of Nantes in 1598. Whatever their fate, the tradition was broken, and the art of bookbinding developed on other lines than theirs; and the personality which next comes into view is that of a collector — Jacques Auguste De Thou.

When Grolier was in danger of his life De Thou's father saved him, and Grolier gave the elder De Thou four of the best books of his library. The son was then only nine years old, but perhaps this was the beginning of his love for books—a sacred fire which thus passed from Grolierius to Thuanus by a sort of apostolic succession. Born in 1553, De Thou travelled from 1573 to 1582, paying a visit in 1576 to Plantin. In 1593 he was appointed to the custody of the books of the king, Henry IV., succeeding Jacques Amyot, the translator of Plutarch's "Lives," and of the "Daphnis et Chloe" of Longus. In his new post De Thou was able to save for the nation the library of Catherine de' Medici.

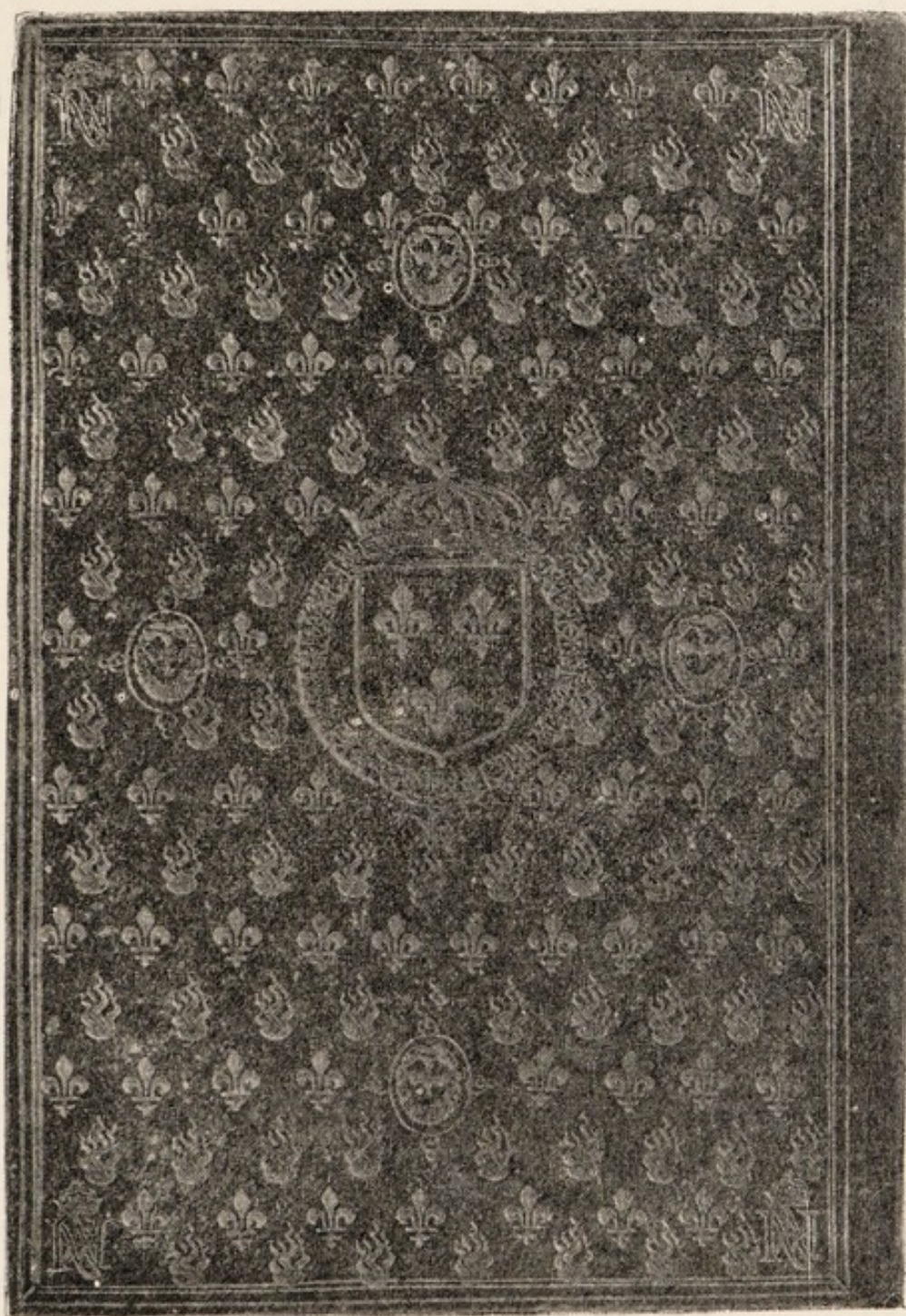
Swift characteristically tells us that "some know books as they do lords; learn their titles exactly, and then brag of their acquaintance;" and there are always book-collectors of this sort. But De Thou was a book-lover of another kind; he knew his books, he used them well, he lived with them; and to-day he lives by the fame they have given him, since he died in



Prof. S. John Jones

John Davenport

BINDING OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY. (FROM "HISTOIRE DE LA BIBLIOPHILIE." BY PERMISSION OF J. TECHENER.)



BINDING EXECUTED BY NICOLAS ÈVE, 1578. (FROM "MANUEL HISTORIQUE ET BIBLIOGRAPHIQUE DE L'AMATEUR DE RELIURE." BY PERMISSION OF LÉON GRUEL.)

1617. It is the love of books which has saved his name from oblivion, as M. Clément de Ris declares in his pleasant gossip about the "Amateurs d'Autrefois." "Distinguished magistrate, remarkable writer, historian of rare merit, statesman of exceptional common sense and of great foresight, what survives is the bibliophile. Who remembers that he took part in the abjuring of Henry IV., or that he was one of the most active negotiators of the Edict of Nantes? No one. Who reads the 'History of his Time'? — 'that grand and faithful history,' as Bossuet called it. Again, no one. But ask any petty dealer in second-hand books what the emblem was with which he marked his books. He will answer you without the error of a letter. A collector, if he have but an elevated taste, is moved by respect for the past; he seeks the driftwood of time which the present despises. The future pays the debt of the past" — and hands the collector's name down to posterity.

It was towards the end of the reign of Charles IX., after the death of Grolier (1565), that we

find the first specimens of a new style. The side of a book was now covered by a framework of



small compartments formed by double-filleted bands. At first these compartments were empty, and Henry III.



added to the barren severity of the design by filling the central space with a stamp representing the crucifixion. As



Henry II. put the bow and arrows and triple crescents of the

unchaste Diana on



the royal bindings, so

THE LITTLE BRANCHES.



the sombre Henry III., taking life sadly because of his lost love, Mary of Cleves,

was fond also of a powder of tears and



of death's heads scattered through the lilies of France. So solemn a style of

decoration did not tempt his sister, Margaret of Valois, afterward known as

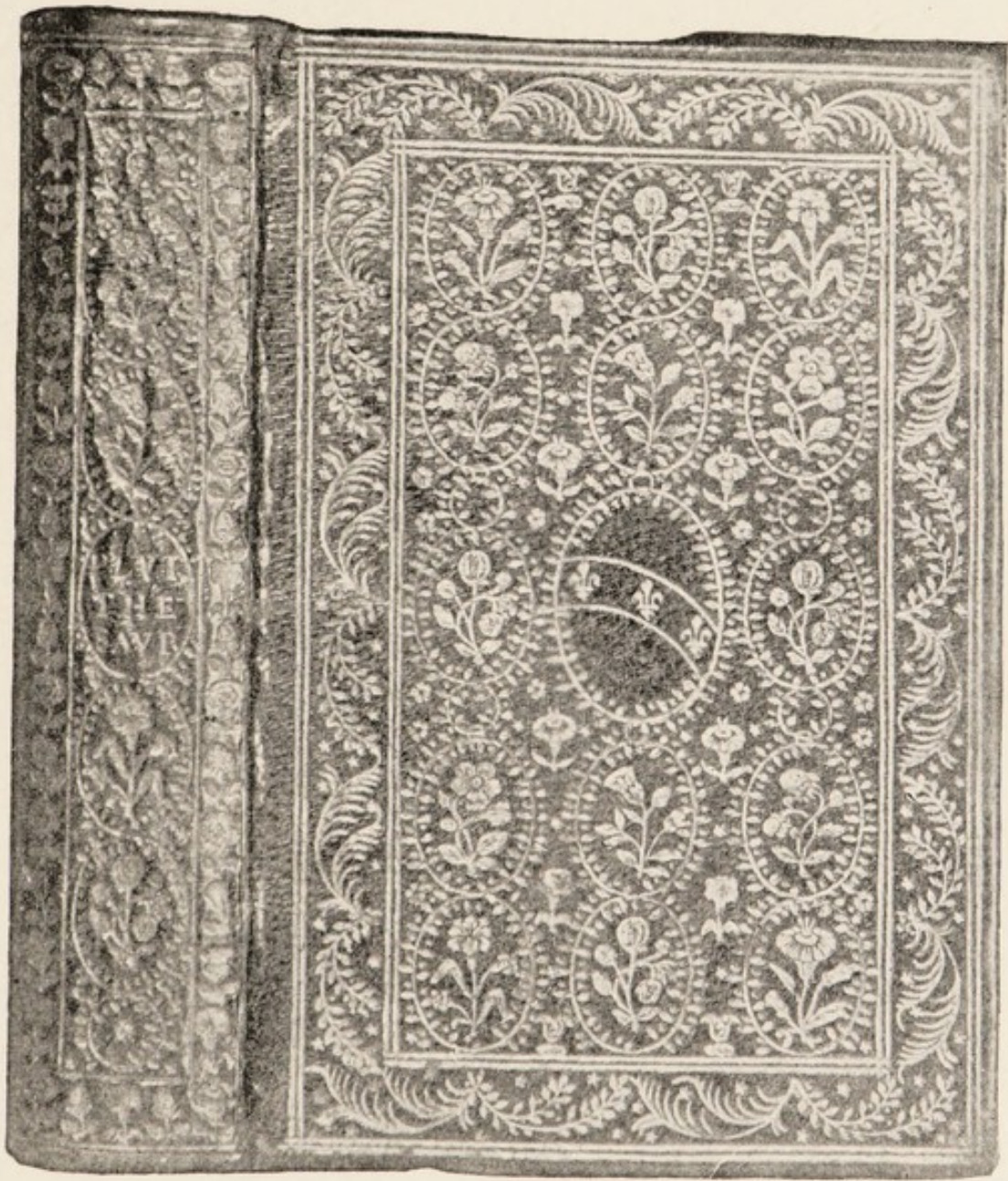
Queen Margot, and she preferred a powder of marguerites, each flower being



TOOLS USED
IN THE
"FAN-
FARES."

framed in an oblong wreath.

For her, also, the cold austerity of the geometrically distributed compartments was done



FRENCH, 16TH CENTURY. ATTRIBUTED TO CLOVIS ÈVE; BELONGED TO MARGUERITE DE VALOIS.

away with, and while the same regular framework was retained, all the hollow spaces within and without the figures, formed by the double fillets, were filled with little branches, with spiral vines, and with a multitude of tiny tools, light, airy, and graceful. These are the bindings which we find on the best of the books of De Thou. These are the bindings which are credited to the Èves, Nicolas and Clovis, two brothers who were the royal binders from 1578 to 1627. Whether or not they are entitled to the credit for the many beautiful bindings rather rashly attributed to them is one of the many moot points in the history of the art. These are the bindings now known as "fanfares" (because that was the chief word in the title of an old book which Thouvenin bound in this style for Charles Nodier during the Restoration). These are the bindings which served as models to that greatest of binders, who is known to us as "Le Gascon," and who, so M. Marius-Michel surmises, may have been a pupil or an apprentice of the binders who worked for De Thou.

AFTER Grolier, perhaps "Le Gascon" is the foremost personality in the history of bookbinding; Grolier was not a binder himself; he was a collector, an art-patron, and when applied to him the term has no taint of the offensiveness which may attach to it nowadays; and, as it happens, we do not know the names of any of the artist-artisans who worked for Grolier, and to whom we owe the many masterpieces of the most magnificent collection ever yet attempted. "Le Gascon" was himself a binder, but this is all we know about him. We do not know for sure whether or not it was he who covered the immortal "Guirlande de Julie"; we do not even know whether "Le Gascon" was his patronymic, or a mere nickname. Probably it is a sobriquet recalling his Gascon origin.

M. Léon Gruel, in his most interesting "Manuel Historique et Bibliographique de l'Amateur de Reliure" (Paris: Gruel & Engelmann. 1887), — one of the most valuable of many volumes the present writer has placed under contribution in the preparation of these pages, — reproduces a binding signed by Florimond



"ARIANUS, DE VENATIONE." PARIS, 1644. IN QUARTO. (IMPRIMÉS EXPOSITION, NO. 619.
FLAT RECTO.)

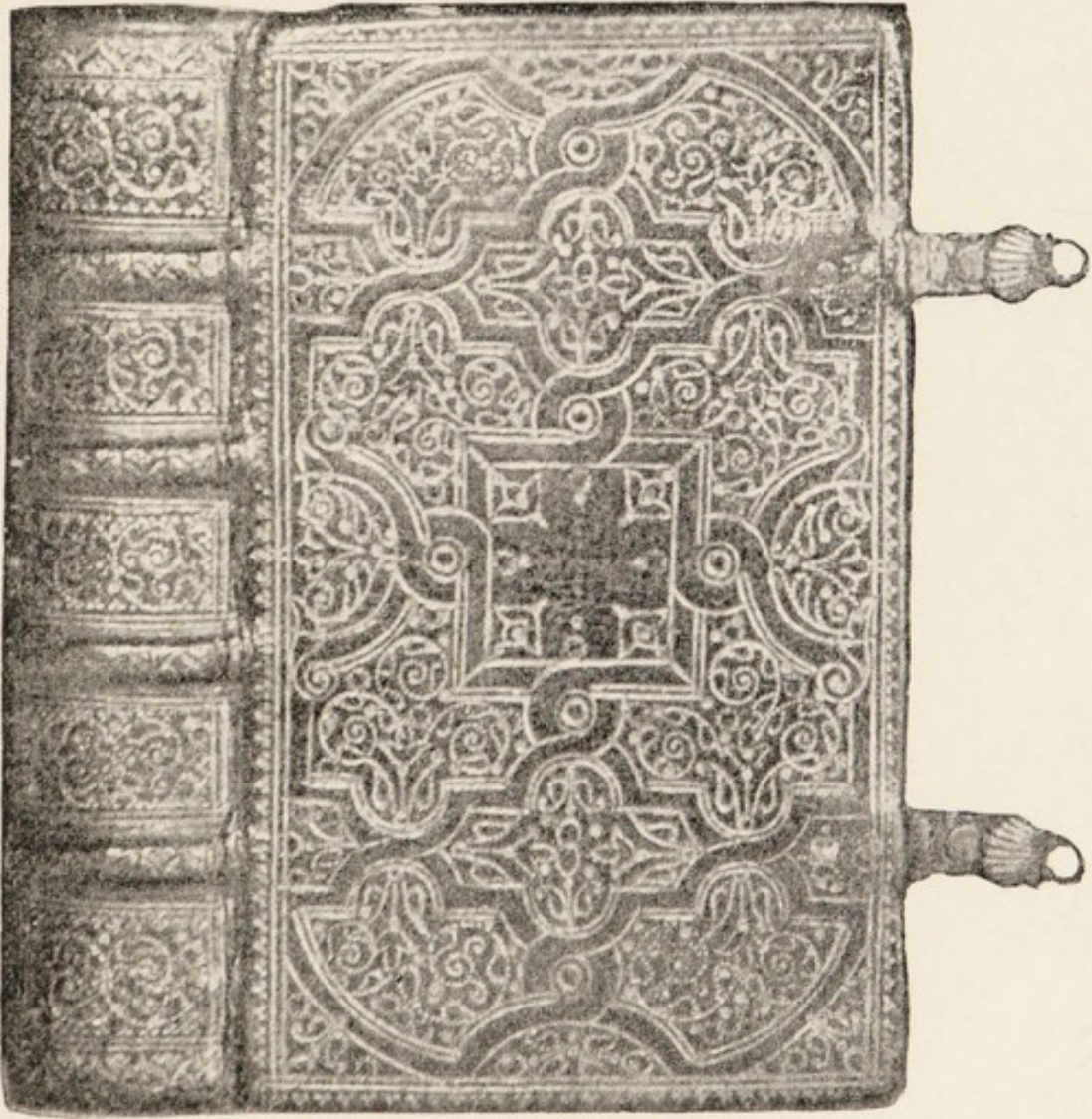
Bound by Ève with the arms of Gaston of Orleans, often attributed to the mysterious "Le Gascon," but which is Ève's, nevertheless. This piece is curious in this respect, that it marks the transition between the flowered decoration of Ève and the pointed foliages of "Le Gascon." From "Les Reliures d'Art à la Bibliothèque Nationale." By permission of Édouard Rouveyre.)

Badier (now in the National Library in Paris), and draws attention to the extraordinary resemblance in style which this binding bears to the bindings generally ascribed to "Le Gascon." M. Gruel ventured the hypothesis that Florimond Badier might be the real name of the man whose nickname was "Le Gascon." But M. Marius-Michel, a practical binder himself (as is M. Gruel), in his book about "La Reliure Française" (Paris: Damascène Morgand et Charles Fatout. 1880),—another book to which the writer owes more than he can here confess,—M. Marius-Michel had declared this binding of Florimond Badier's to be the handiwork of some clumsy imitator of "Le Gascon," who had copied even the dotted outline of a human head which some have taken to be in some sort the trade-mark of the master. Who shall decide when decorators disagree?

If a layman may hazard an opinion, it would be to the effect that although Florimond Badier might well be the true name of "Le Gascon," yet the binding in question is not equal to the best of those accredited to the supreme artist of

bibliopeggy, those marvels of taste and splendour wherein the utmost luxury of gilding is never allowed to become vulgar, tawdry, or even glaring.

That "Le Gascon" is the foremost of all the artists who have embellished a book-cover is the verdict of his fellow-craftsmen. M. Gruel does not yield to M. Marius-Michel in admiration of the magnificent masterpieces which came from the hands of "Le Gascon." In all that M. Marius-Michel has written about "Le Gascon" there is a glow of devoted enthusiasm. Mr. William Matthews is as swift in praise; and Mr. Cobden-Sanderson, when I asked him whom he held to be the greatest of all binders, did not hesitate, but answered promptly and positively, "Le Gascon." As Keats has been called the poets' poet, so is "Le Gascon" the bookbinders' bookbinder. But it does not need the trained eye of the expert to discover his surpassing charm, the richness of his gilding, and the unfailing delicacy and distinction of his design. Yet the most characteristic of his bindings differs but little from those of his immediate



FRENCH, 17TH CENTURY. ATTRIBUTED TO "LE GASCON."

predecessors — in so far at least as the mere structure and outline of the decoration are concerned. It was only by slow degrees that he developed his own individuality, and to the end of his career he employed the formal framework of the fanfares whenever he had to do a binding of exceptional importance.

Now and again, however, he preferred a less complicated design, and he used a lace-like border and a broad rectangular framework, boldly tooled, and almost filled with a dazzling array of coruscating spirals, which set off the red leather of the smaller central space, containing generally the coat-of-arms of the fortunate owner. It was only by degrees that he introduced what was almost his only innovation — tools in which a dotted line replaced the simple fillet. The full-face device of the Aldine bindings was first azured, to lighten it a little, and then hollowed out, leaving it in



TOOLS OF
"LE GASCON."

outline only; and now it was made still airier, when it appeared only as a string of tiny gilt points. This dotted line is the characteristic of "Le Gascon," and it gives their incomparable brilliancy to the best of his bindings. But it is merely one of the implements at the command of his skill and taste, and he would be almost as great an artist if he had not happened on this particular improvement.

M. Marius-Michel thinks that "Le Gascon" in his youth must have been familiar with the best bindings in the library of De Thou. In his manhood he worked for Cardinal Mazarin, and it is worthy of note, as a proof of the mastery of France in an art borrowed from Italy, that when Cardinal Mazarin (himself an Italian) was in Rome in 1643, he sent to Paris for workmen to bind his books. Barely a century and a quarter earlier, Francis I. and Grolier had been forced to import Italian binders into France. Perhaps "Le Gascon" lent the cardinal some of his own apprentices. That he had assistants is obvious. No one man could satisfy the demands of the book-

lovers of his time. M. Marius-Michel thinks that he can pick out certain bindings—four volumes of Thomas Aquinas, for example, now in the Mazarin Library—which were the work of these apprentices, as he believes that he can discern in these books the tools of the master, but not his skill of touch. The tools of “Le Gascon” are graceful in themselves, but to use them as he used them—*ne faict ce tour qui veut.*

III.

PADELOUP AND DEROME.

WHEN Louis XIV. succeeded to the throne of France, and began the long reign which opened in splendour and ended in sadness, probably "Le Gascon" was still binder to the king; but the influence of the greatest of bibliopegic artists diminished as the years went on, and as the proud king sought to dominate every art, and to centre all things in himself as the sun from which all things were to draw light. The reign of Louis XIV. was the golden age of French literature; it was but the over-gilt age of French binding. The characteristic of the art toward the end of the long rule of the Grand Monarch was a brutal luxury of heavy gilding. The king's own books were bound in a fashion as leaden as the architecture of Versailles, and as expressive of the royal pride. The royal arms,

exaggerated out of all proportion, were stamped on the centre of the side of a book, and they were girt about by a broad border, equally emphatic and equally dull. These borders were often imprinted by a *roulette*, a wheel on which a pattern was incised in the same way that the cylinder-rings of the Egyptians were engraved. The use of the roll, repeating the same motive indefinitely as it is rolled over the leather, is indefensible; it is the negation of art; it destroys the free play of hand which is the very essence of handicraft.



THREE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY BORDERS.

The fashion set by the king was copied by the courtiers; and on most of the books bound under Louis XIV. we find little more than a border around the margin, and a coat-of-arms in the centre. Sometimes a wheel was prepared broad enough to imprint a heavy wreath three inches in width; sometimes there would be two or three borders one within the other, the corners forming them-

selves as best they could, haphazard and happy-go-lucky. Sometimes huge and heavy corner-pieces were employed. Sometimes even the whole side of a book was engraved in the same heavy style, thus reducing the binder's task almost to the level of a day-laborer's. When the public accepts a mechanical and lifeless substitute for artistic and individual handicraft, the result is a deadening of the artistic impulse, and a decadence into the inertia of commonplace.

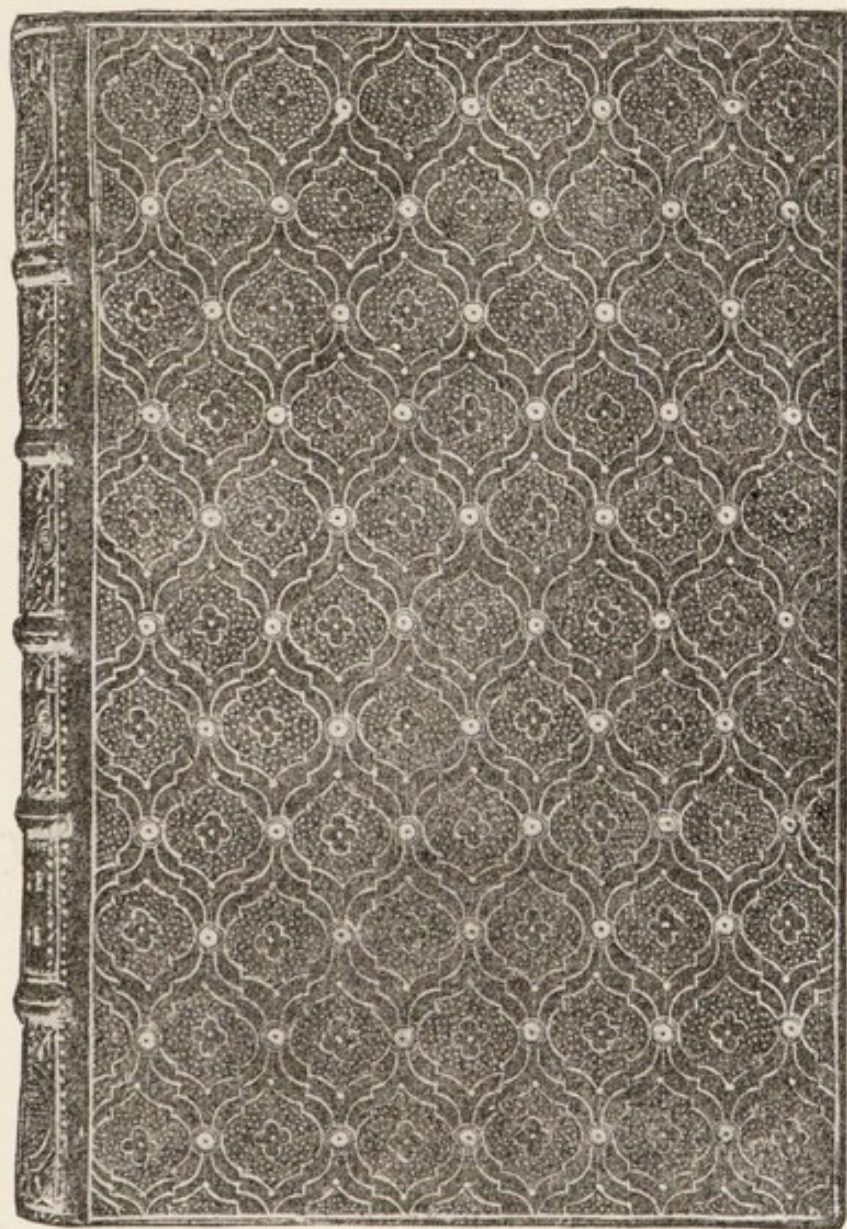
Possibly we may fairly charge this decline to the inexorable self-assertion of the king; certainly there was no great bookbinder in France while Louis XIV. was on the throne, and no great book-lover. His reign is not distinguished by the development either of a Grolier or of a "Le Gascon." Yet it was while he ruled that, under the influence of the traditions bequeathed by "Le Gascon," the tools known to book-lovers as the *fers du dix-septième siècle*, the seventeenth-century tools, were brought into use; and these lovely tools continue in use to this day, and form the

basis of the stock in trade of the best binders of the nineteenth century.

And it was in the reign of Louis XIV., also, by sheer reaction against the leaden showiness of the fashion set by the king, that there arose the simple style of binding called after Jansen, and adopted by the sect of Port-Royal. The Jansenists bound their books soberly, with no gilding whatsoever on the sides, relying on the simple beauty of the leather in which their volumes were clad, and decorating only the inside border — the *dentelle*, as it was called, from its resemblance to delicate lacework. These underdecorated books were better bound, in a technical sense, than those of an earlier day, however much more beautiful the older books were to the eye. The books bound by Boyet, for example, toward the end of the seventeenth century, were more solidly prepared, more carefully sewn, more cautiously covered, than those sent forth from the workshops of his immediate predecessors. The Boyets, one of whom in 1733 was binder to the king, kept

alive the traditions of "Le Gascon," and although they were not encouraged and sustained in their more artistic endeavours, as their indisputable skill deserved, yet they are the bridge from the days of "Le Gascon" to those of the Padeloups and the Deromes.

Shortly after the death of Louis XIV. was produced one of the most remarkable bindings in the history of the art—the "Daphnis et Chloe" of 1715, which is adorned with the arms of the regent, and which was recently in the Quentin-Bauchard collection. Its chief characteristic is that it is a mosaic—that it has a polychromatic decoration formed by inlaid leathers of various colours. The coloured bindings of Grolier's time owed their varied tints to bands of paint, and although there had been now and again attempts at inlaying, there had been no such bold effort as this "Daphnis et Chloe," attributed generally to Nicolas Padeloup, one of a long family of binders, existing for more than a century and a half. A binding in mosaic of the regency, or of Louis XV., is generally credited to



"OFFICE DE LA SEMAINE SAINTE." BOUND BY N. PADELOUP. (FROM
"REMARKABLE BINDINGS IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM," BY HENRY B.
WHEATLEY.)

Padeloup, just as a picture with a white horse is often ascribed to Wouwerman without further warrant. The decoration of the "Daphnis et Chloe" was obviously inspired by the designs of the contemporary potters.

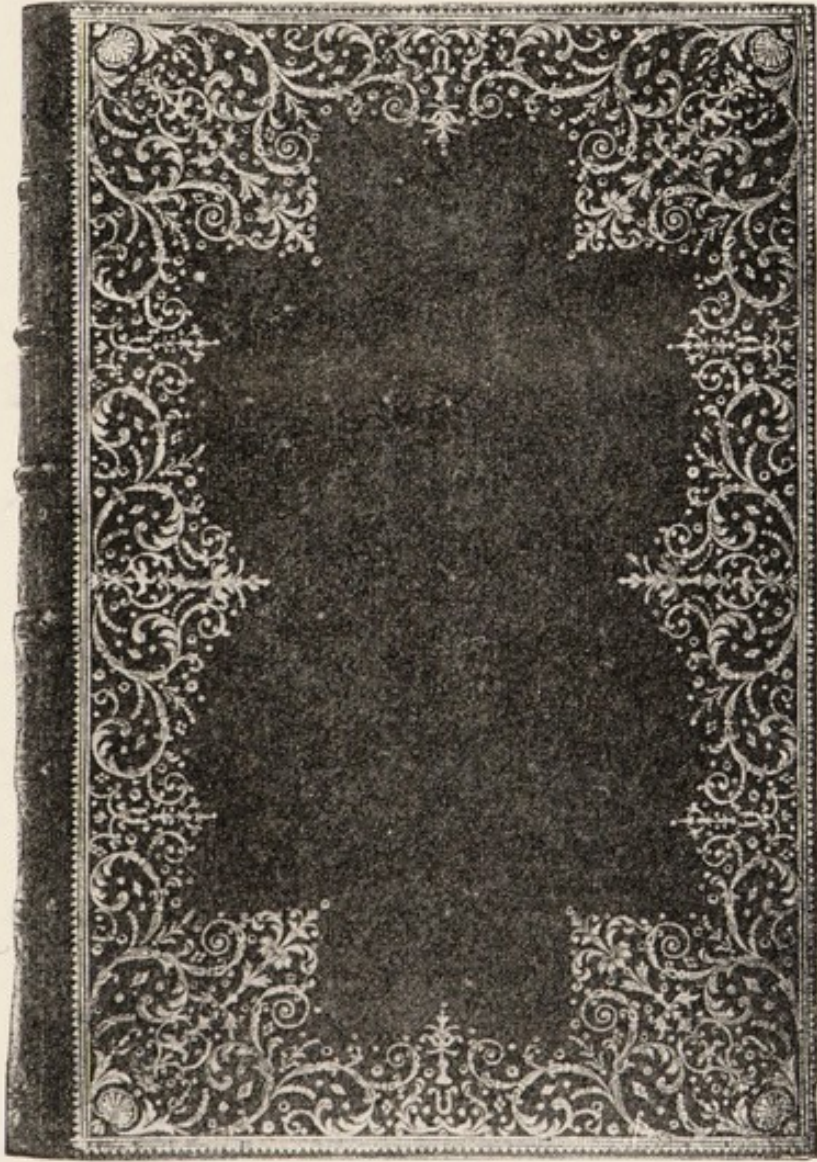
And here occasion serves to say that the interdependence of all the decorative arts, their varying influence one upon the other, can be seen in the history of bookbinding, perhaps more clearly than anywhere else. The modern art of bookbinding began boldly in the fifteenth century in Venice, which had close relations with the Orient, and to which many Greek and Arab workmen had been attracted, bringing with them their theories and habits of decoration. Geometric designs of Arabic origin are abundant on all the objects made by Venetian handicraftsmen at this time, especially on the fragile glassware for which the city of islands is still famous; and M. Marius-Michel reproduced a decorative band taken from the tiles which adorned the interior of a mosque in Constantinople, and applied also the Venetian embroideries, then given as a

model in a volume of Andrea Guadagnino, promptly copied by the Italian bookbinders, and soon borrowed by their French brethren.

At first, very naturally, the decoration of the outside of books was influenced by the decoration of their insides, and we find bindings the design of which was obviously suggested by the rich and lavish embellishment of mediæval manuscripts, and others adorned with patterns modified but slightly from the elaborate typographic ornaments of the early printers. The Aldi were binders as well as printers, and the same devices decorated their noble folios both within and without. Geoffrey Tory, the author of "Champ Fleury," who reformed the art of type-founding and brought about the abandonment of black-letter, was a printer who was also a binder. He is supposed to have worked for his contemporary, Grolier. Mr. Story makes Raphael declare :

It seems to me

All arts are one — all branches on one tree,
All fingers, as it were, upon one hand.



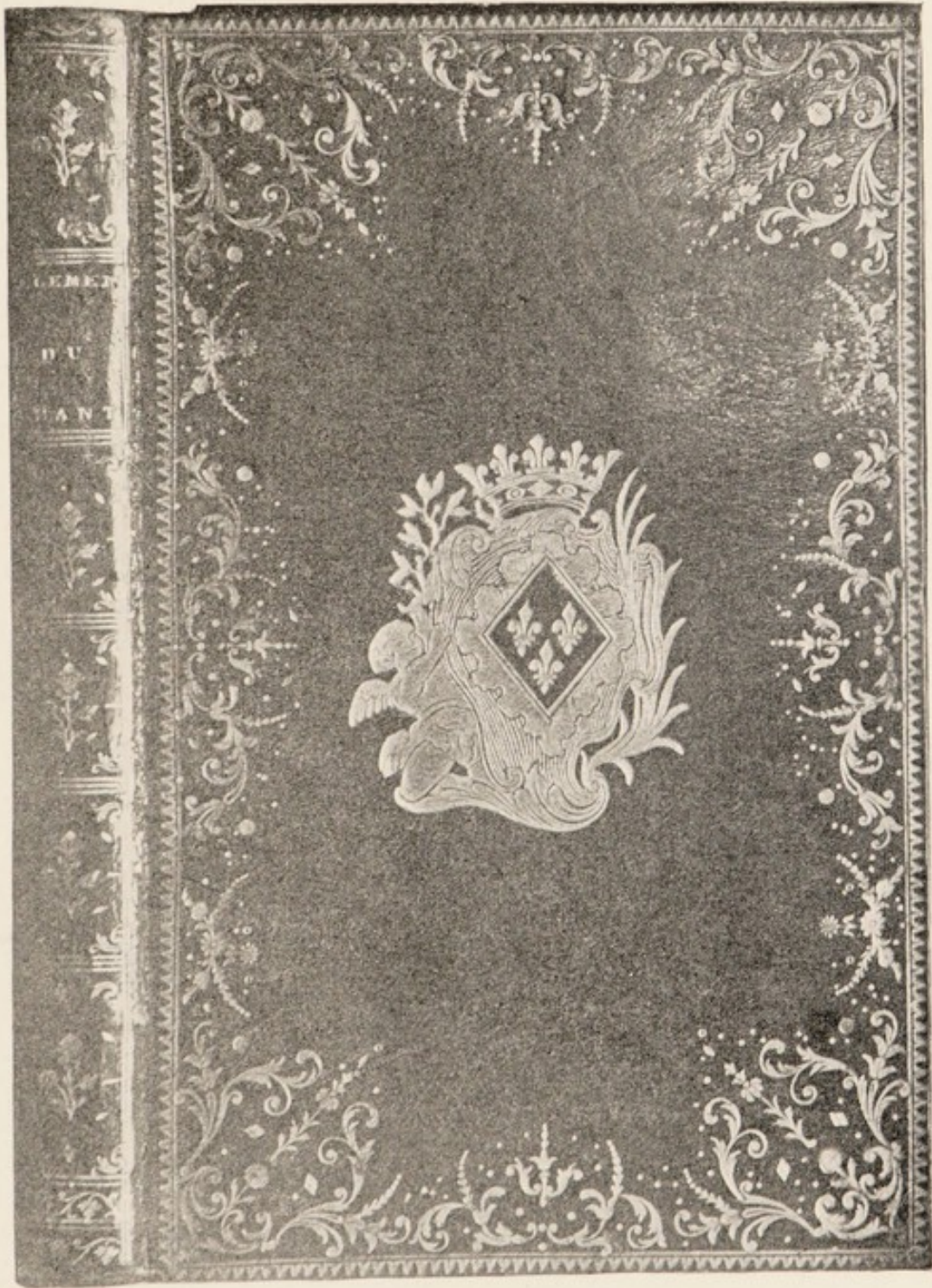
"ARIOSTO, ORLANDO FURIOSO." VENICE, 1584. BINDING OF DEROME THE YOUNGER. EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. (BY PERMISSION OF DAMASCÈNE MORGAND.)

The solidarity of the decorative arts, at least, is indisputable. Even the casual observer cannot but note the hints of design borrowed and lent, and paid back with interest, and borrowed again. Under Louis XIII., for example, when lace-making flourished, the bookbinders took over not a few of the lace-makers' designs, modifying them to suit the conditions of the bibliopegic art. Perhaps it is not fanciful to see something of the formal grace of the stately gardens of Le Nôtre reflected in the covers of the sumptuous tomes of Louis XIV., influenced for the worse, as these were, by the heavy hand of Lebrun.

As we turn the pages of M. Marius-Michel's instructive and interesting essay, we note that "Le Gascon" used tools one design of which was suggested by contemporary embroideries; that Padeloup, with a duller sense of fitness, found models in ecclesiastical stained-glass; and that Derome was influenced by the remarkably varied and skilful work of the master iron-workers of the day.

The close interaction of the decorative arts is made obvious again when we find experts like M. Marius-Michel seeking for the source of certain of the florid designs attributed to Padeloup in the painted pottery of the regency, and in the symmetrically disposed parterres of the great gardens of Louis XIV. and Louis XV. Perhaps the mosaics of Padeloup (or at any rate the turning of his attention to mosaic) are due to the example of Boule, who died only in 1732, and who carried to the highest perfection the art of incrusting in wood designs of gold and of brass, of shell and of ivory.

The main defect of Padeloup was an insufficient sense of form. Some of these floral designs in mosaic are as unrelated to the shape of the book they decorate as though they had been cut out of an embroidered silk or a printed calico. Some of them have a monotonous repetition of the same framework, as though they were torn from a roll of wallpaper. Form and symmetry, composition and balance — these are essentials of decorative art.



FRENCH, 18TH CENTURY. BY DEROME.


Most of Padeloup's designs are fragmentary; they lack unity of motive; they have no centre to which the rest of the decoration is duly subordinate. Some of them, less pretentious than others, have a quality of their own. Beyond all question they are characteristic of their period. In the main they are heavy, and they lack skill, style, grace. Style they lack most plentifully, for Padeloup was as eclectic as a quack-doctor. He would mingle in the cover of any one unfortunate book tools and methods borrowed from the whole history of the art.

I confess to having fallen into a popular error here, in speaking of Padeloup as though he were a single entity, despite the fact that there were, first and last, twelve of the Padeloups. And of the Derome dynasty, which for a while was contemporaneous, there were no less than fourteen who were more or less known as binders. Perhaps the greatest of these was Nicolas Denis Derome, who was received master in 1761, and who is generally known as the Younger Derome. The Younger Derome was a rapid binder, a merit most rare in those who

practise this craft; and he was an honest workman, loyally following the mandates of his customers. His bindings have solidity and substance. But he was too fond of the knife, and, like a cruel surgeon, too careless in its use. He cut to the quick, and many a beautiful book has died under his treatment. Margins and edges were shorn away with merciless persistence; no tall copies ever left his shop. Dibdin cries out against Derome again and again, and we cannot but feel that the cutting-iron of the binder had pierced the soul of that travelling book-lover. The Englishman declares that a folio of "Priscianus," printed by John of Spires in 1470, had lost a head and shoulders, and that a good half of the miniatures are cut into at the top. This is a crime for which the guillotine itself is the only fit punishment.

As it is the custom to attribute to Padeloup all the mosaics of the period, so to Derome are credited all the bindings whereon we see the *fer à l'oiseau*, a gracefully cut tool wherein a tiny bird with outstretched wings gives life and vivacity to the decoration of the cover. In

Derome's hands this decoration consisted generally of a *dentelle*, a lacework border obviously modelled on the marvellously easy and varied wrought-iron of the French smiths of the middle of the eighteenth century. Nothing could be at once lighter and firmer, and of its kind more charming, than the best of the open-work borders of Derome, solidly

tooled on broad morocco. And 

the motives, borrowed from the A DEROME BORDER.

artist-artisans who were forging the gates and making the locks of the French connoisseurs of that century, are capable of infinite variation. Probably there are no two bindings of Derome's exactly alike.



A DEROME BORDER.

I confess that I have here praised Derome more warmly than do the French critics at whose feet I sit, and whose learned taste I envy.



EIGHTEENTH CENTURY TOOLS.

Derome's work seems to me to be preferable at all points to Padeloup's; easier, more graceful, more appropriate — in a word, more decorative. After Padeloup and Derome the eighteenth century had no binder in France over whose work we need dwell now. The art was getting clumsy and sluggish. Strangely enough, the vignettists, even at the height of their vogue, did not inspire those who decorated the outsides of the volumes, the insides of which they had illustrated with such dainty and delicious fantasy. Eisen was a friend of a binder named Dubuisson, but the friendship had no appreciable effect upon Dubuisson's handiwork. Gravelot designed the tools to be used on the sides and back of the volumes of his "Contes" of La Fontaine (1762),

of his Racine (1768), and of his Corneille (1771); but his hand seems to have lost somewhat of its cunning when it undertook a task for which it had no training. At least so M. Marius-Michel thinks, and his is a trained taste which a layman may wisely follow. Cochin did not suggest a chaste disorder to those who bound the books he had adorned with his delicate plates; nor did Moreau — and if a French decorative artist of the last century could not be stimulated by Moreau, then the effort was hopeless.



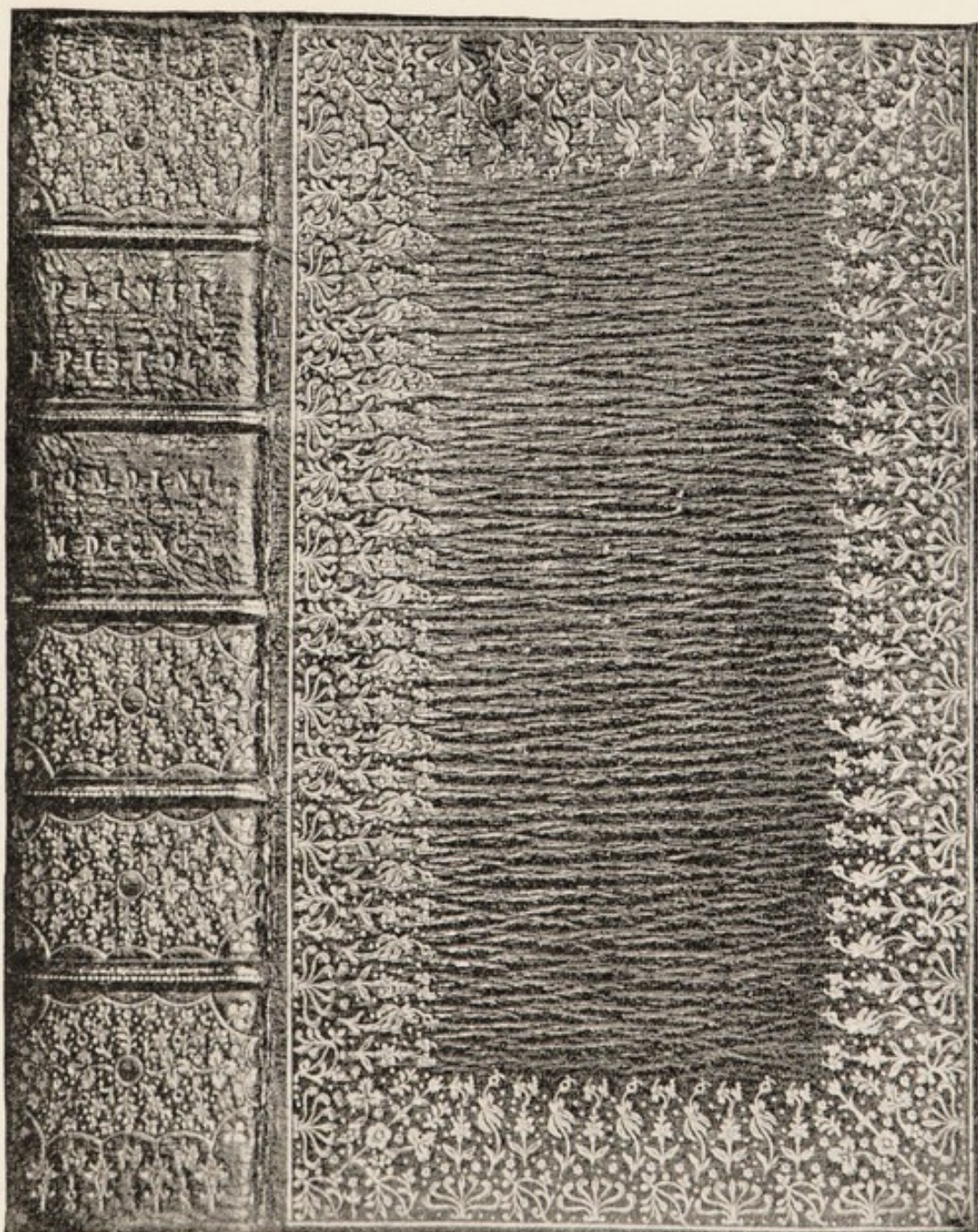
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY TOOLS.

IT is not a treatise on bookbinding that I have here attempted, or a history of the art, or even a set and formal essay. All I have sought to do is to jot down a few stray notes — to gossip about those who have helped to make the Book Beautiful. What I have tried to show in my rambling paragraphs, and in the illustrations chosen to accompany them, is the sequence of styles, and the way one style was evolved from another, and their relations one to the other. At first we find almost simultaneously the Aldine and the Maioli, the Grolier and the Henry II., styles. Then followed the powder (which probably suggested the wreaths), the fanfares of the Èves, and the brilliant fantasies of “Le Gascon.” Finally came Padeloup with his polychromatic mosaics (some of them deriving their monotonous framework from the wreaths and the powder), and Derome with his vigorous borders. And as I wandered down the history of bookbinding, I have tried to show that the key to any understanding of the succeeding styles is to be found in a study of the tools of each epoch.

That the names of the gifted bookbinders and devoted book-lovers which came to the end of my pen in the course of my stroll down the vista of bibliopegy were nearly all French is not wilful on my part, but inevitable. The art of book-binding was cradled in France, even if it was born elsewhere, and in France it grew to maturity. Italy shared the struggle with France in the beginning, but soon fell behind exhausted. Germany invented the book-plate to paste inside a volume, in default of the skill so to adorn the volume externally that no man should doubt its ownership. England has had but one binder — Roger Payne — that even the insular enthusiasm of his compatriots would dare to set beside the galaxy of bibliopegic stars of France.

The supremacy of the French in the history of this art is shown in the catalogues of every great book-sale and of every great library; the gems of the collection are sure to be the work of one or another of the Frenchmen to whose unrivalled attainments I have once more called attention in these pages. It is revealed yet again by a comparison of the illustrations in the many his-

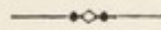
torical accounts of the art, French and German, British and American; nearly nine-tenths of the bindings chosen for reproduction are French. And, after enjoying these, we are often led to wonder why a misplaced patriotism was blind enough to expose the other tenth to a damaging comparison. These remarks, of course, apply only to the binders whose work was done before the beginning of the nineteenth century. Of late years the superiority of French binders has been undisputable, but it has not been overwhelming. There are at present in Great Britain and in the United States binders whom no one has a right to pass over in silence, and about whom I shall gossip again in this volume; but in the past it was France first and the rest nowhere.



ENGLISH, 18TH CENTURY. ROGER PAYNE.

BOOKBINDINGS OF THE
PRESENT.

BOOKBINDINGS OF THE PRESENT.



I.

THE TECHNIC OF THE CRAFT.

As there is unfortunately no word in the English language to describe those familiar, yet dignified, poems which in France are known as *vers de société*, and which are far above ordinary "society verse," and as there is no single term to denote the short-story, the form of fiction in which we Americans have been most abundant and successful, so also is there need in English of a recognized phrase for the defining each of the two halves of bibliopegic art. Book-binding consists of two wholly distinct operations, known to the expert as "forwarding" and "finishing." Forwarding is the proper preparation of a book for its cover and the putting on

of that cover; finishing is the decoration of the sides and back of the book after it has been covered. Forwarding, therefore, is the task of an artisan, while finishing must be the work of an artist.

Mr. William Matthews, than whom there is no one more competent to express an opinion, has declared that "a book, when neatly and cleanly covered, is in a very satisfactory condition without any finishing or decorating." Many book-lovers agree with the foremost of American bookbinders, and order their precious volumes to be soberly clad in plain morocco. The Jansenist binding, as it is called after the leader of the recluses of Port-Royal, calls for the maximum of care in the forwarding, and the minimum of gilding or other decoration of the finisher.

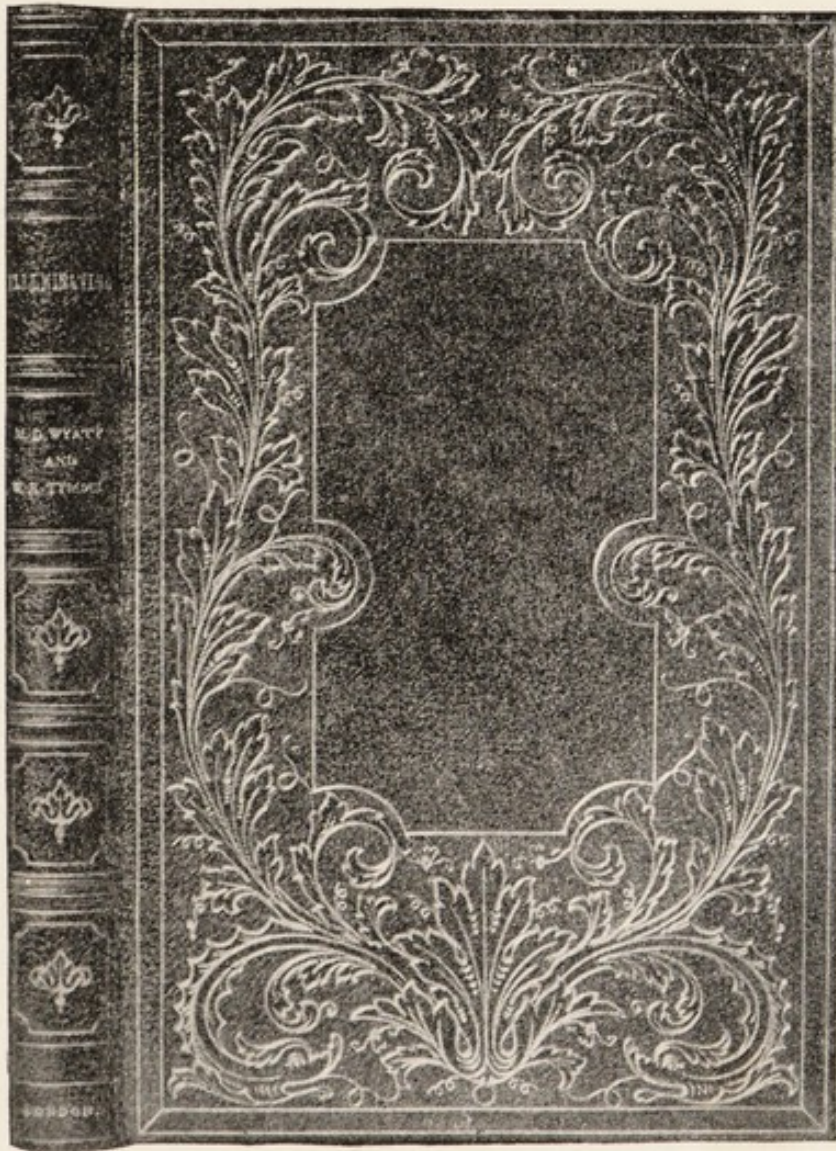
Mr. Matthews went even further, — I quote from his lecture on "Bookbinding Practically Considered," delivered before the Grolier Club of New York in 1885, and by the club printed in 1889, — and having described the successive steps by which a book is prepared, for-

warded, and covered with leather, said: "I now declare the book in this condition is bound, and he who has skilfully mastered these various processes through which a volume has passed deserves the name of binder; he who is called upon to decorate it, finisher. At present the custom is the reverse: the finisher or decorator is credited with being the binder, whereas he has done none of the binding."

Now, there is no doubt that the protest of this accomplished craftsman is well founded. But the error is so old that there is no hope of uprooting it at this late day. When we speak of a book as beautifully bound, we are praising the work of the man who designed and executed the decoration of the cover, not the labour of the man who clothed the book with leather, and who obviously enough was really its binder. Of course, in a great many instances forwarder and finisher are one and the same person. Perhaps this was the case with the books which are catalogued as "bound by Le Gascon," although it is as a finisher that "Le Gascon" is unrivalled, and certainly it is the case with the books

bound by Mr. Cobden-Sanderson, who himself attends to every detail of preparing and forwarding, aided only by his wife. The French term for "finisher" is "gilder," and, in his account of French bookbinding, M. Marius-Michel, a *doreur* himself, is very careful to give credit for a delicate decoration to the special artist who designed and gilded it. It is greatly to be regretted that there is in popular use only one word to designate the two distinct operations.

Although these notes on the art of bookbinding as it is practised to-day have to do with the work of the finisher—the artist who adorns the exterior of a volume, and not with the more humble, but not less important, labour of the forwarder—the artisan who prepares it for decoration, it may not be amiss to begin by setting forth the series of operations a book undergoes at the hands first of the forwarder, and then of the finisher; and in this explanation of technical processes I shall follow two masters of the bibliopegic art, Mr. William Matthews, from whose lecture before the Gro-



"HISTORY, THEORY, AND PRACTICE OF ILLUMINATING." DIGBY WYATT, LONDON, 1861.

Bound by Zaehnsdorf. Crimson morocco, wide borders, inlaid with variegated leathers in a scroll pattern, bold in design; lined with dark green morocco with red border, the whole ornamented with vines and flowers. Owned by Mr. Samuel P. Avery.

lier Club I have already quoted, and Mr. Joseph W. Zaehnsdorf, whose handbook of "The Art of Bookbinding" came forth in a second edition in 1890. Every book-lover should understand the principles of the art of the bookbinder, and the practices of the craft; appreciation is best founded on knowledge.

Often a volume comes into the hands of the binder already bound. The books of American publishers are issued in substantial cloth covers intended to be permanent. The bindings of British publishers are frequently more temporary, and the book is loosely cased in the cloth cover, the owner being expected to rebind in leather any volume which he deems worthy of preservation. The books of French publishers are issued in paper covers, merely stitched, and so are most of those of the German publishers; as Lord Houghton recorded on one of his early visits, "In Germany all the books are in sheets and all the beds without."

The first thing the binder has to do if the book is already bound is to remove the cloth cover, and then very carefully to collate the

volume page by page, to see if title, preface, table of contents, list of illustrations, notes, index, maps, plates, are each and all perfect and in place. If need be, the sheets are refolded so as to make the pages true; then they are beaten by hand, or rolled in a press, which is a more hurried method, and by far less workmanlike; the beating being to compact the pages, and to give the book solidity and strength. After the beating, the loose maps and illustrations, mounted on linen guards, are inserted in their proper places. Then the sheets are sewn to the bands, and generally there should be no saw-cuts in the back of the book, and the sewing should not be "sunk-band," as it is called, but "raised-band," and as flexible as it is firm.

The volume is now prepared for the forwarder, who carries on the work to the point where it is ready for the finisher. The forwarder attaches the end-papers; he glues the back of the book, and rounds it; he squares the mill boards which are to serve as the sides of the book, and he laces them in by means of the

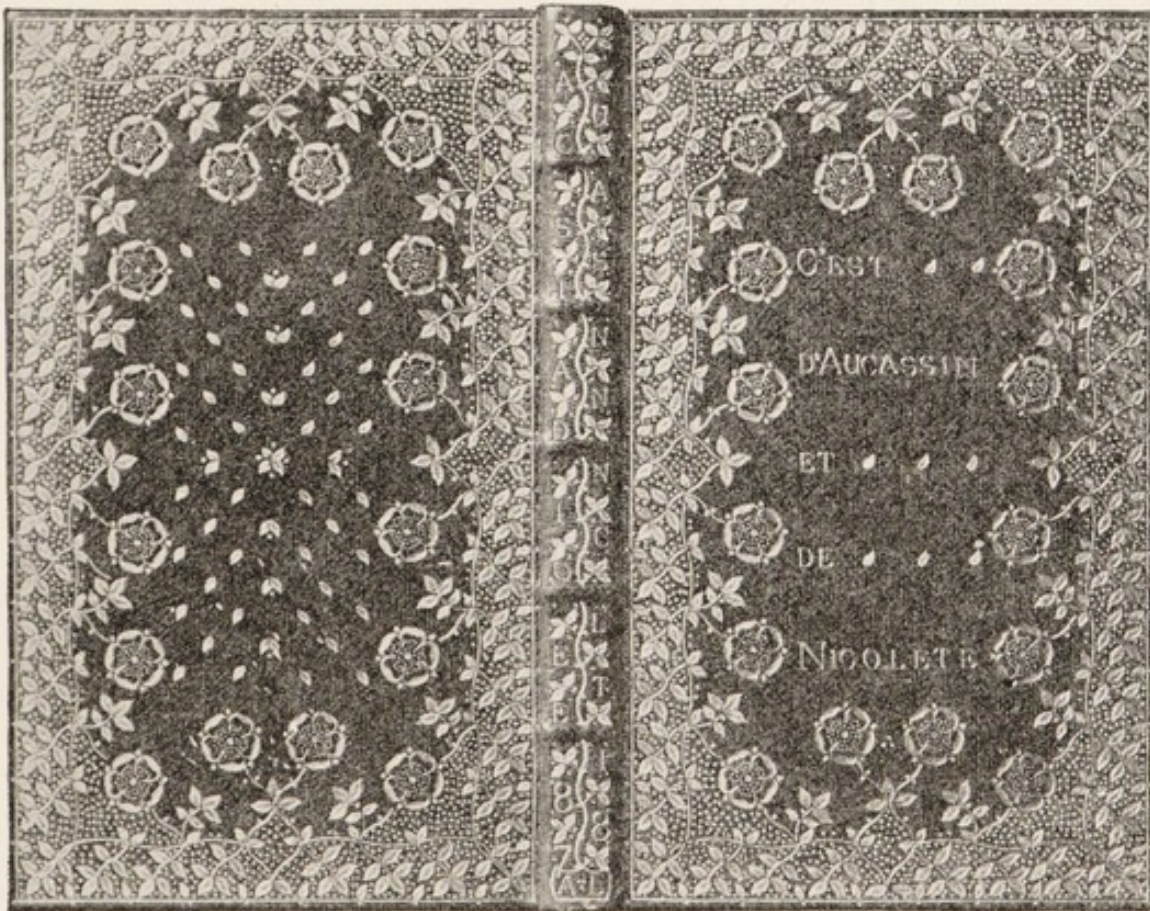
bands to which the sheets have been sewn. The forwarder needs a steady hand, and, above all things, a true eye — “the important principle to be observed in forwarding is *trueness*. The form and shape of the book depend on the forwarder” (Matthews, p. 35).

The volume thus far advanced is clamped in a press; and it is allowed to repose for a while and to gain strength. Then the edges are cut, or at least the top edge is cut, the other margins being better left intact, to delight the owner's eye; as it is only on top that a volume standing on a shelf can accumulate dust, it is only the top edge that needs to be smoothed so that the dust can be blown off or wiped away at will. The cut edges, be it the top only, or top, bottom, and fore edge, are then marbled or gilded; sometimes they are gilded over marbling, to the added richness of the work. The back is then lined, and, when the binder is conscientious, a narrow leather joint is affixed, to act as a hinge for the covers. The headband is woven in. After that the leather — morocco, calf, or what not — is stretched tightly and

snugly over the book, and glued fast. When the end-papers are pasted to the covers, the task of the forwarder is done, and the book is ready for the finisher who is to decorate it.

What the finisher has to do is to invent a design for the sides and back of the volume which is appropriate to the book, to its subject, to its owner, to its size, and to the kind of leather with which it is covered. This design must be one which can be worked out with the implements at his command. Every artist must consider the physical limitations of the art he practises, and the chief limitation of the artist who decorates a book is that the design he invents for it must be capable of accomplishment by the fillets, which make a straight line, by the gouges, which make curved lines, and by the various other tools, as they are termed. In the proper cutting and selection of tools is the secret of book-decoration. Mr. Matthews notes the superiority of the French tool-cutters over the American and British; and Mr. Cobden-Sanderson once told me of the difficulty he has had in getting cut such tools as he needed.

Having determined on the scheme of his design, the finisher selects the tools with which to execute it. Mr. Cobden-Sanderson even makes a habit of using the actual tools in the sketching out of his pattern, blackening them in the flame of a candle so that they can be



A BINDING BY COBDEN-SANDERSON.

transferred to paper. Often professional binders will have tools especially prepared for a special work. The more accomplished the workman, the smaller and more elementary his tools will be; he will decline to use a spray of leaves or

a festoon cut all in a single piece, preferring to impress every leaf separately. M. Marius-Michel is loud in the praises of a finisher who worked for Henry II., and who accomplished intricate and lovely decorations with no other implement than a fillet for the straight lines, and a set of gouges for the curves and circles; and these were all that Gilson used in the finishing of the most elaborate Hispano-Moresque cover and lining of the copy of Owen Jones's "Alhambra," which Mr. Matthews bound for the New York exhibition of 1853, and which took six months to complete, and cost \$500.

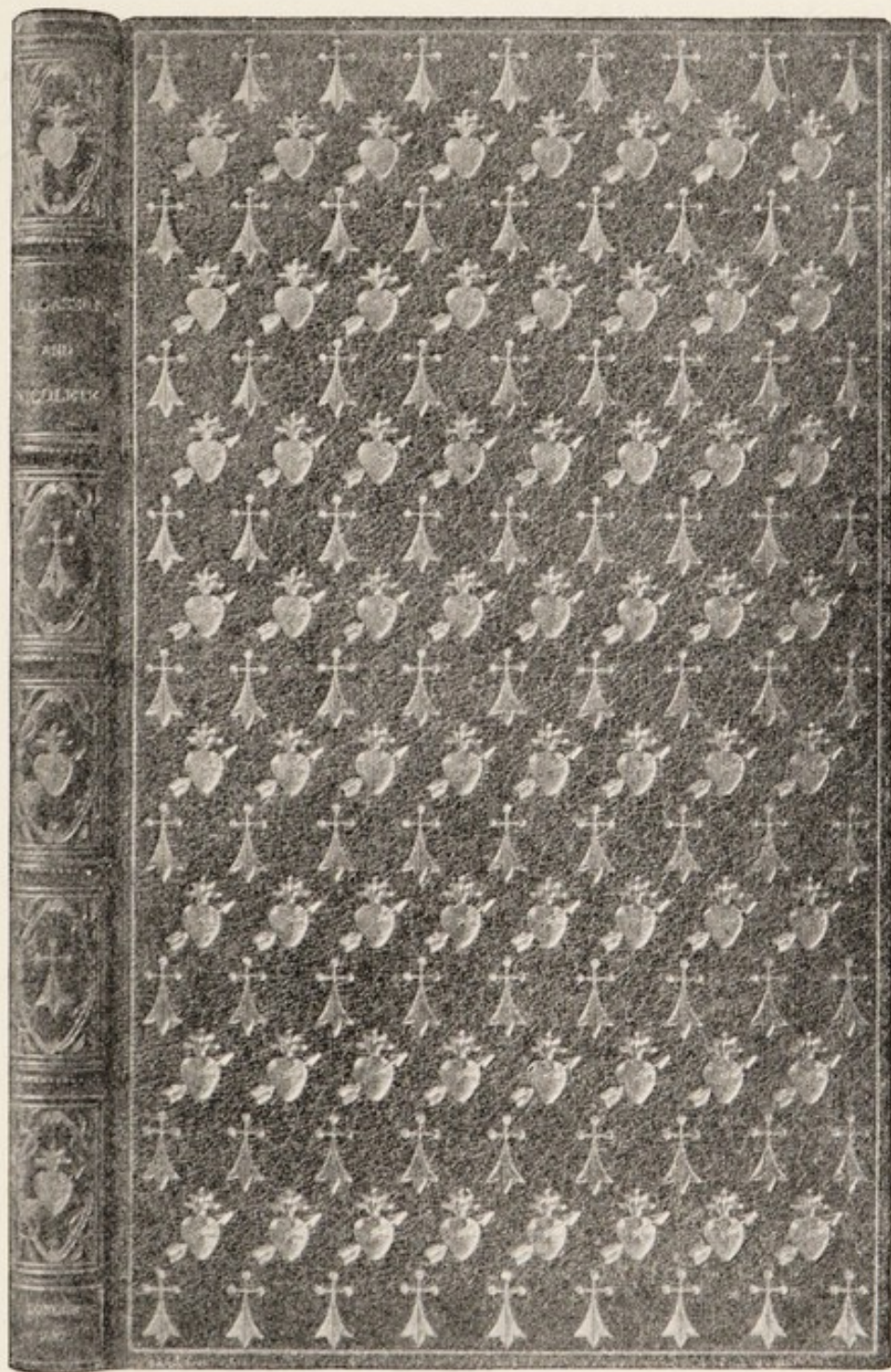
The process of working a design in the best manner is very tedious, so Mr. Matthews testifies, "more so than even connoisseurs imagine. First the design is made on paper, then impressed with the tools through the paper on to the leather; then the paper is removed, and the design again gone over with the tools to make the impression sharp and clear" — the leather being slightly moistened and the tools being moderately heated. "Then, after washing, sizing, and laying on the gold leaf, the

design is gone over for the fourth time before one side of the cover is completed. This, having to be repeated on the other side of the volume, and the back also tooled, will afford some idea of the labour in executing the finest hand-tooling."

Often the inside of the covers is also lined with leather, and as carefully ornamented. Often certain figures in the pattern are excised, and the spaces filled with leathers of a different colour; and this polychromatic decoration is known as inlaying, or illuminating. The finisher needs to have delicacy of taste and nicety of touch; he must have a fancy to invent beautiful designs, and a firm hand to execute them; and he must not expect wide fame, much real appreciation, or high pay. It is no wonder, therefore, that accomplished finishers are very few. Mr. Quaritch, in his catalogue of bookbindings, speaks of the late Francis Bedford as the best binder who ever lived. The best forwarder, he may have been, but he was not a finisher himself, and he never had a first-class finisher in his employ. Mr.

Matthews asserted that there were not more than six finishers in New York "who can even work any intricate pattern with fair ability. In London I question if the number is greater in proportion to the population; and in Paris, where the art flourishes most, where the patronage is encouraging, and the workmen have superior advantages, I doubt if the number of finishers qualified to work intricate designs in first-class manner exceeds twenty."

Any one who was fortunate enough to see the Exhibition of Recent Bookbindings, 1860-1880, at the Grolier Club in the last days of 1890, or who will take the trouble to turn the pages of M. Octave Uzanne's "*La Reliure Moderne*," must confess that there are very few finishers of our time who have originality of invention, freshness of composition, or individuality of taste. But a comparison of the best bound books of this century with those of the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries—which are the golden ages of bibliopeggy, for "Le Gascon" lived in one, and Grolier in the other—will show that the work of our time is technically



"AUCASSIN AND NICOLETE." LONDON, 1886.

Bound by Ruban. Garnet morocco. Owned by Mr. George B. De Forest.

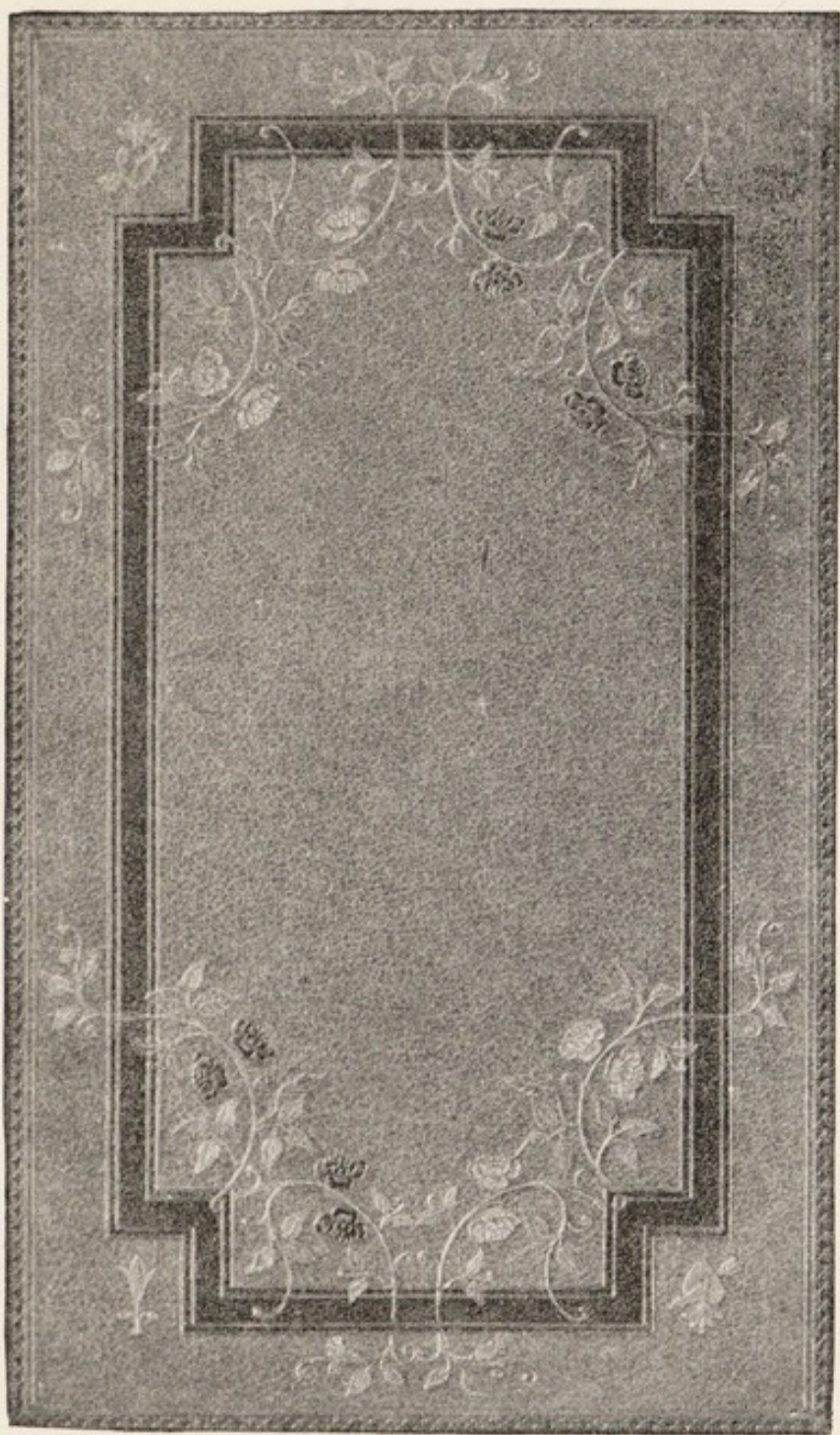


far better than any which has come down to us from our ancestors. There is better forwarding and better finishing. In the gold-tooling especially the modern workman is incomparably neater, cleaner, more exact, more conscientious, than his predecessor: the tooling of the men who bound for Grolier is to our eye inexcusably careless; clumsy irregularities mar the symmetry of the most beautifully designed arabesques, ill-balanced lines overrun their limits, and ends are left hanging out with reckless slovenliness. The superiority of the elder binders in their incomparable fertility of conception must not blind us to the fact that in care, in thoroughness, and in other workman-like qualities, they bear a most obvious inferiority to binders of later years who have not a tithe of their ability.

Probably the same state of affairs exists in other arts. I remember that in 1867, when I was but a boy, I had a chat in Naples with Signor Castellani, the antiquary and goldsmith about the fluctuations of the art of the silversmith. He told me that he had more than one workman then in his shop of greater skill than

Benvenuto Cellini, of a more certain handicraft. These workmen could reproduce any of Cellini's legacies to posterity, little masterpieces of goldsmithery and enamelling, and they would make a better job of it than the great Italian; for the modern imitations would show a finer technical skill than Cellini's, and reveal fewer defects and blunders and accidents than the marvellous originals. But copy as accurately as they might, the modern workmen were wholly incapable of originating anything. In Cellini there was a union of the head and the hand, of the artist and of the artisan, while in Castellani's men the hand had gained skill, but the head had lost its force. The handicraft had improved, and the art had declined. There were now very expert artisans, but there was no indisputably gifted artist.

In solidity of workmanship and in dexterity of handicraft, the art of the binder has advanced in this century; but not in design. The finishers of our time can repeat all the great artists of the past, but they cannot rival them in invention, in fantasy, in freshness, and in charm.



INSIDE COVER OF PRECEDING.

I

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To say this is not to assert that the art is in its decadence, or even that it is in any way going backward; but that it is not going forward one might venture to hint. The nineteenth century is now in its last decade, and it has not yet developed a style of its own in bookbinding — if it has in any other of the decorative arts. The men who bound for Grolier and Henry II. lived in the sixteenth century; the *Èves* and “*Le Gascon*” lived in the seventeenth; and even in the eighteenth century there was Derome, with his lacework borders borrowed from, or at least inspired by, the graceful wrought-iron work of the contemporary French smiths. But the most beautiful bindings of the nineteenth century are in the main imitations of those of the centuries preceding. Often the style is a doubtful and tasteless eclectic, perhaps not unfairly to be stigmatized as bastard and mongrel.

There is hardly to be detected even a vague effort after a style. Sometimes imitation develops into adaptation, and a new style is evolved slowly out of combinations and modifications; but in the art of binding we have not

seen many signs of any such process now going on. Almost the only external influence which has been allowed to affect the accepted formulas is the Japanese; and the example of these surpassingly adroit decorative artists has not been sufficient to destroy the sterility from which the art of bookbinding is suffering. Its effect, at most, has been to increase the freedom of drawing, and to encourage a more realistic treatment of natural objects.

The art of bookbinding has always been claimed by the French as peculiarly theirs, and it is not easy to deny the justice of the demand. Perhaps the position in which the art has found itself during the most of this century is due to the French Revolution, in the course of which, and of the long wars that ensued, the demand for fine work ceased abruptly. The trained workmen died off, the shops were broken up, and the tools were scattered and lost. Even the traditions of the art disappeared — and in every art which is also a trade the traditions represent the acquired force, the impetus. When the Empire came after the Consulate,

and Napoleon wished to pose as the patron of the arts, bookbinding was dead in France. "I doubt if you could find anything more ugly than the books bound for Napoleon I., for Louis XVIII., for Louis Philippe," once declared M. Auguste Laugel, in a letter to the "Nation."

As it happened, the art which had been highest in France, and had then sunk lowest, had kept its humble level in England, and at the end of the last century had even had its only successful effort at originality there. The greatest name in the history of bookbinding in Great Britain is that of Roger Payne, an honest and thorough workman of some taste, and with a certain elementary appreciation of design. "His efforts were always original, never copied," and this is a very rare compliment to pay to a British bookbinder; and it is to this originality, as Mr. Matthews suggests, rather than to any great excellence in his designs, that he owes the exaggerated esteem in which he is held in England. When Matthew Arnold once said to Sainte-Beuve that he did not think Lamartine

very important as a poet, the French critic replied, "He is important to us"; and so it is with Roger Payne—he is important to the British. If he is mentioned at all in French books, his name is usually given incorrectly.

Lewis was the leading English binder early in this century, in Dr. Dibdin's day. Perhaps it was owing to the influence of Dibdin, some of whose rhapsodical writing was translated into French, that the Parisian book-lovers began to send their precious volumes across the Channel to be bound in London. Thus the tradition of Roger Payne, the most original binder the British had ever had, helped to revive the traditions of the French binders, who soon surpassed again their British rivals, just as it was a follower of Bewick who revealed to the French the possibilities of the art of wood-engraving, in which the French have also become superior to the British.

II.

THE BINDERS OF TO-DAY.

WHETHER the vivifying spark was borrowed from Great Britain, or whether it was brought from Germany by Trautz, the French binders soon recovered their former supremacy. Trautz is still the strongest individuality among the French bookbinders of this century, and his influence is still perceptible, though he died in 1879. He is the foremost binder of the nineteenth century, and in his influence we can perhaps detect the foundation of a school, or at least of something more than merely individual, solitary, unaided struggle toward the unknown. At once forwarder and finisher, overseeing every operation of his craft, Trautz led the reform of bookbinding in France. He frowned upon all haste and on all labour-saving devices. He never stinted time or care or hard work. He did his best always. He gave to the vol-

umes which left his hands greater firmness, flexibility, and solidity than any other binder had ever before attempted. He caused a host of new tools to be cut, modelled on those of "Le Gascon" and Derome and Padeloup. He studied the works of these masters reverently and unceasingly, seeking to spy out the secrets of their art. He followed in their footsteps, but although he modelled himself upon them, he never copied, trying rather to imbue himself with their spirit, and to carry forward their methods to a finer perfection.

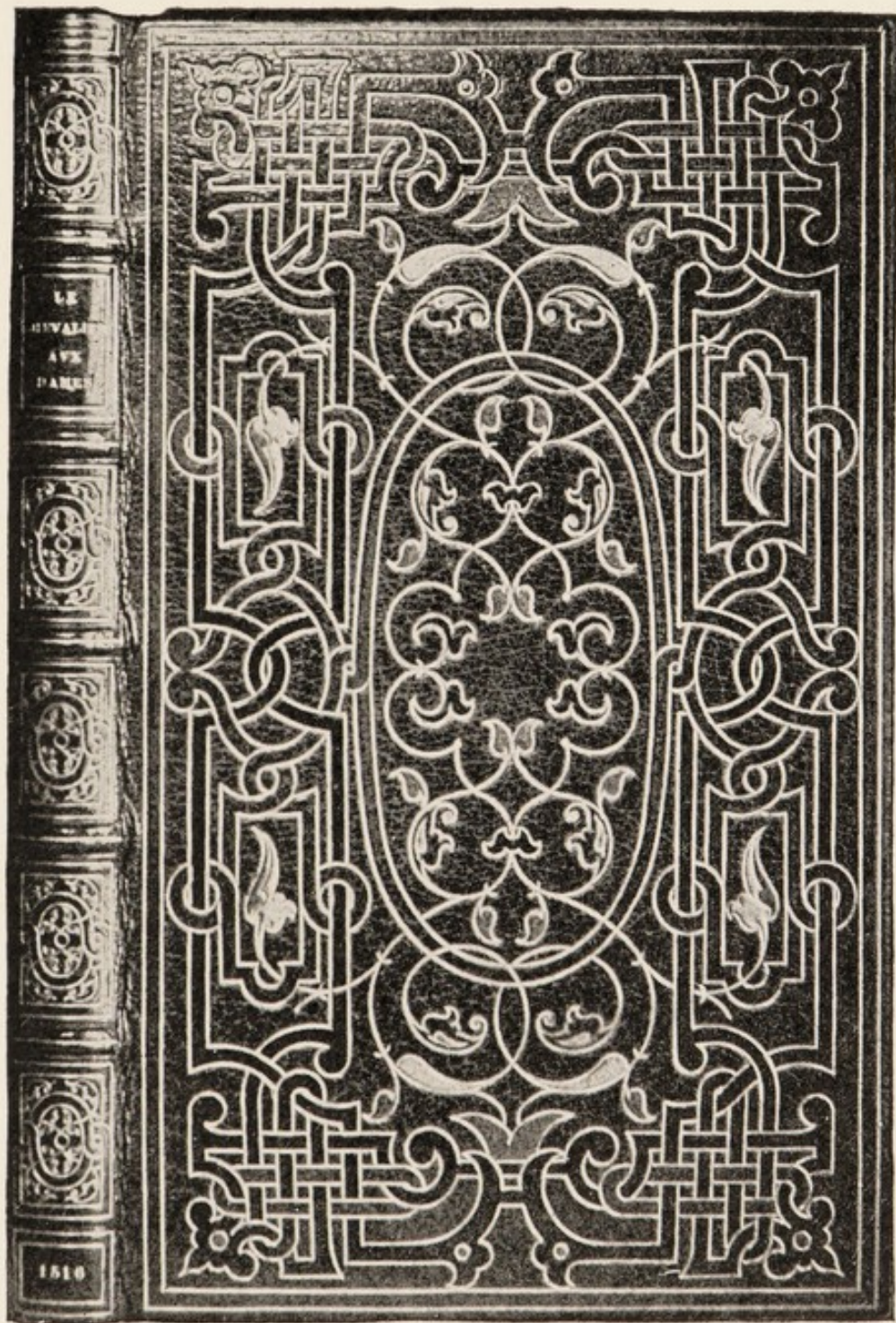
"I do not think that Trautz ever made the same binding twice; there is on every book coming out of his hands something personal, something original," M. Laugel wrote in 1879. "This man, who could make any amount of money by merely putting his name on books, is so conscientious that he only turns out every year about two hundred volumes; he has only three workmen or workwomen; he does the drawing of ornaments and gilding himself. For those who have not seen Trautz or Thibaron (the pupil of Trautz) at work, it is almost impos-

sible to imagine how much pains must be taken for one volume." Nothing that Trautz undertook cost more pains than his mosaics; in the two-score years from 1838 to 1878 he attempted only twenty-two of them, and of these four are now owned by New York collectors. They show, perhaps, the most originality of any of his bindings, and they reveal his characteristics most abundantly. They have the pure beauty of design which we look for in every work of decorative art, wrought with the utmost deftness and delicacy of handicraft.

Of the supremacy of the French in the art of bookbinding since Trautz led them back into the true path, no better evidence can there be than the index of binders represented prefixed to the catalogue of the Grolier Club Exhibition of Recent Bookbindings. New York is perhaps the most cosmopolitan of all the great cities of the nineteenth century, especially in all matters pertaining to art; and the taste of its collectors is eclectic in the best sense of that much-abused term. Of the fifty-one binders whose handiwork was exhibited at the Grolier, thirty-six

lived in Paris, one at Lyons, one at Brussels, six in London, five in New York, one in Philadelphia, and one in Quebec. The artistic superiority of the French bindings shown at the Grolier was almost as marked as the numerical; of the score of bindings finest in conception and in execution, three-fourths at least were the product of Parisian workshops. There were not a few also which had come from these same shops, which were as bad as the worst which had been turned out in New York or London — misbegotten horrors of leather, “whom Satan hath bound,” if it is permissible to borrow a scriptural quotation from that learned book-lover, the late Henry Stevens of Vermont.

But the very best of MM. Capé, Cuzin, Chambolle-Duru, De Samblancx, Gruel and Engelmann, Joly, Lortic, Marius-Michel, Niedrée, Quinet, and Ruban, attains a very high standard of excellence. Now and again, no doubt, we find a French binder who has sacrificed forwarding to finishing, having made his book so solid and so stiff that it can



A BINDING BY FRANCISQUE CUZIN.

scarcely be opened, and so compacted that if it is opened unwarily the back is broken beyond repair. Books I have seen fresh from the hands of a Parisian binder as brilliant as a jewel-casket, and as hard to open as a safe-deposit vault when you have forgotten the combination.

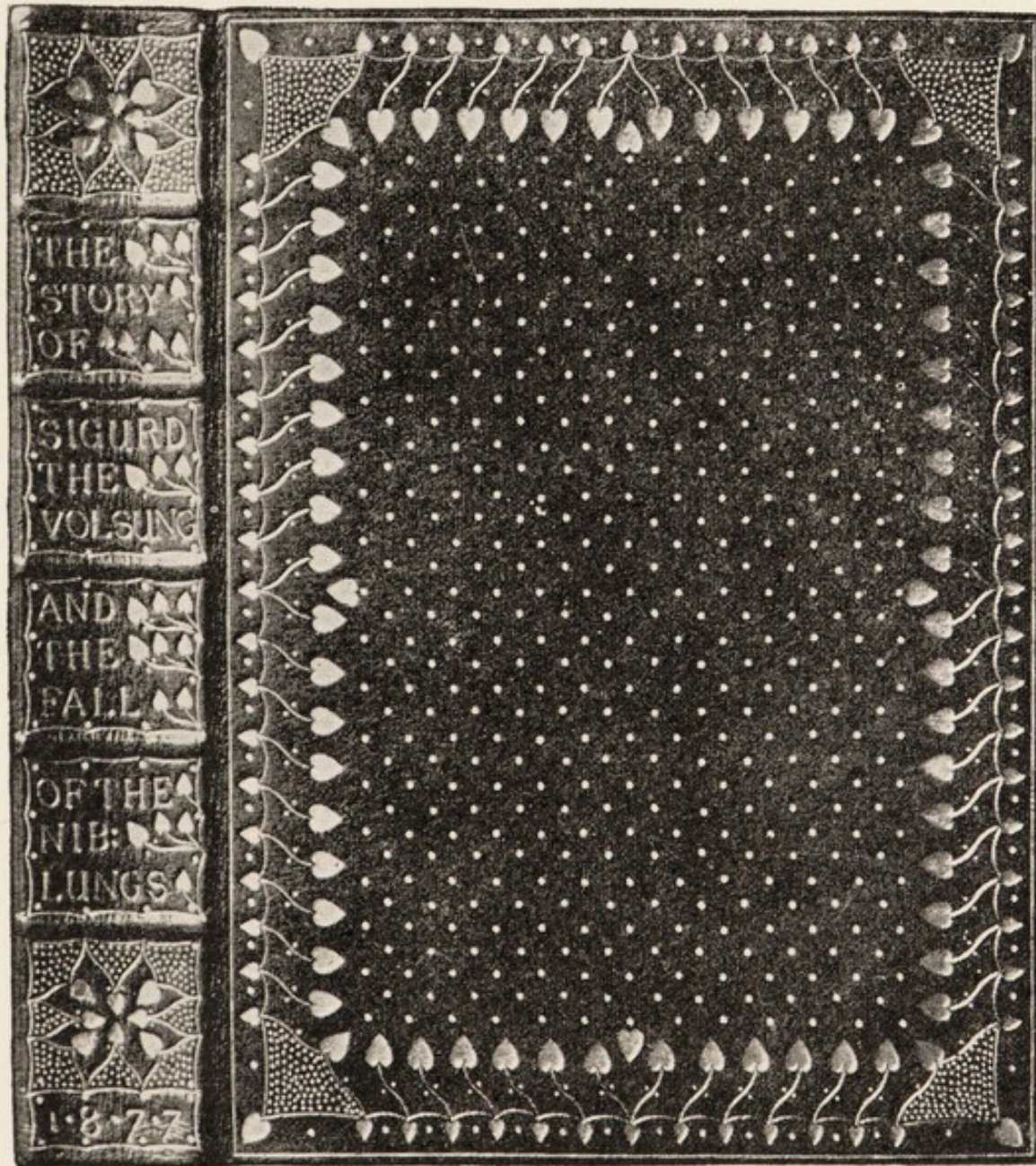
The relatively high position held by the binders of Great Britain was momentary only, and at best it was due to the temporary decadence of the craft in France. Of late years, at least, bookbinding has shared the misfortune of most of the other fine arts in England, and has lingered in a condition only less lamentable than that of sculpture and painting because it contented itself chiefly with dull and honest imitation of the dead-and-gone masters. Every artist must needs serve his apprenticeship and follow in the footsteps of a teacher, but where Trautz, for example, sought inspiration only, Bedford and the other British binders found models which they copied slavishly. The workmanship of the bindings that left their shops was honest and thorough, but the decoration was lifeless and colourless. The British artisan

forwarded conscientiously, but the finishing of the British artist was sadly to seek.

How inert the art of bookbinding was in England during nearly four-score years can be seen by glancing over the "Catalogue of Fifteen Hundred Books remarkable for the Beauty or the Age of their Bindings" issued by Mr. Quaritch in 1888. Here the curious inquirer will find, under numbers 1325-1345, a score of books bound by Francis Bedford, whom Mr. Quaritch declares to be the best binder who ever lived — meaning thereby, no doubt, the best forwarder; and every one of these books is finished in imitation of some French binder. Nos. 1325 and 1326 are "bound in imitation of Derome le jeune," the catalogue declares frankly, in apparent unconsciousness of the hopelessly inartistic position to which this confession assigns the British craftsman. No. 1327 is "in imitation of Padeloup." No. 1328 is "bound in imitation of the work of Hardy-Dumennil," a French binder not of the highest esteem among book-lovers. Nos. 1329, 1331, 1336, and 1339 are copied from Trautz.

Nos. 1334, 1335, and 1345 are "bound in imitation of Chambolle-Duru."

This artistic sterility was probably due to

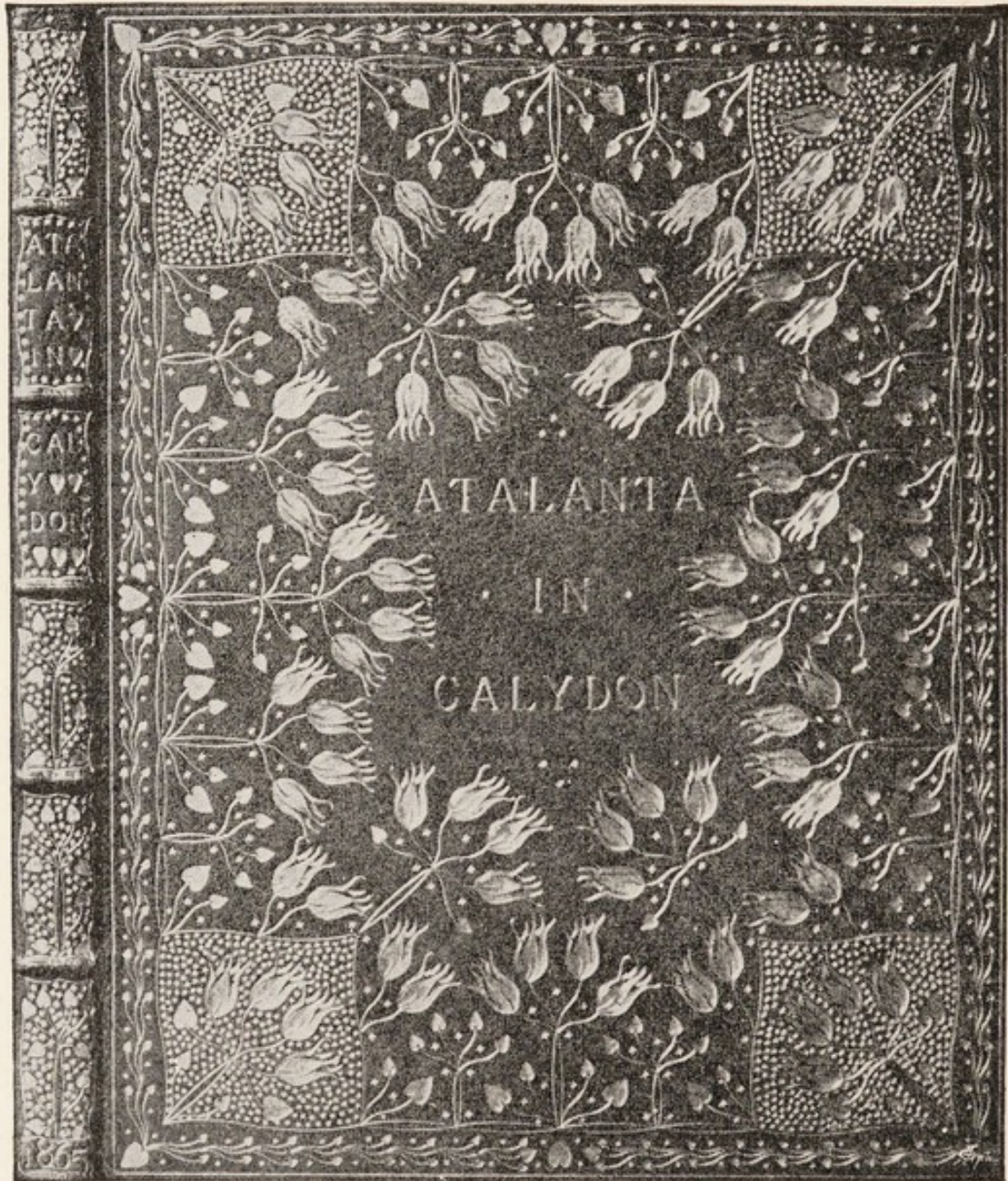


"THE STORY OF SIGURD THE VOLSUNG AND THE FALL OF THE NIBLUNGS."

Size, $7\frac{3}{4}$ in. \times $5\frac{1}{2}$ in. Bound by Cobden-Sanderson.

the lack of intelligent patronage, and the sluggishness of the book-lover is responsible for this disheartening result. But the custom seems

to obtain even in the present day, if one may accept as evidence the second edition of Mr. Zaehnsdorf's "The Art of Bookbinding." In



"ATALANTA IN CALYDON."

Size, 8½ in. × 6½ in. Bound by Cobden-Sanderson.

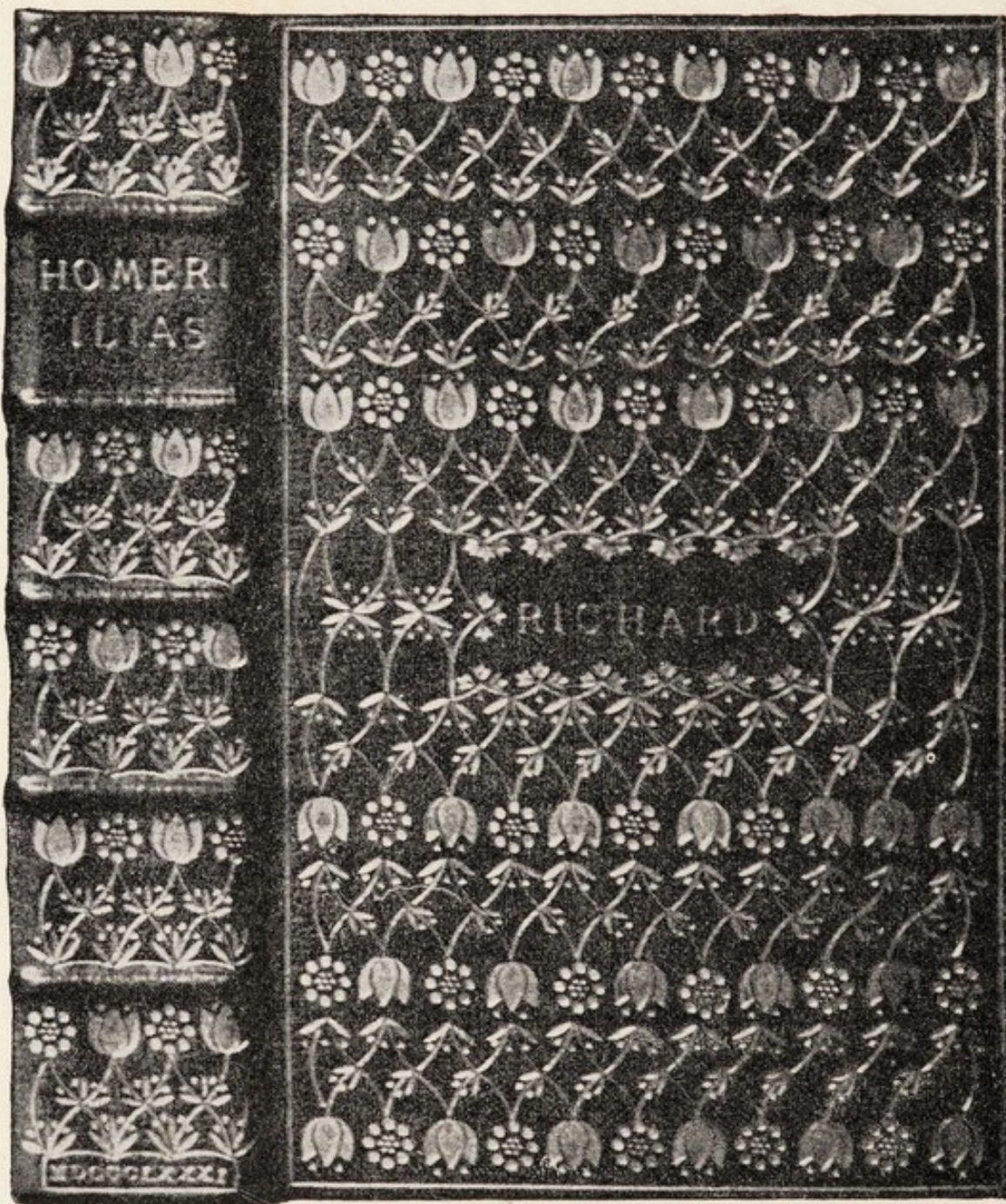
this practical guide to his art, the author, a bookbinder himself and the son of a bookbinder, gives plates of typical covers of the chief styles;

and these are not genuine specimens bound for Grolier or by "Le Gascon." They are apparently Mr. Zaehnsdorf's own handiwork; certainly the plate called "Gascon" (*sic*) cannot be the work of the great Frenchman, because the book is one first published perhaps two hundred years after his death. Here we discover a conscientious craftsman not only content to be a humble imitator, but so deficient in any appreciation of originality that he sees no difference between the model of his master and his own second-hand copy.

And yet Francis Bedford was capable of original work, simple always, but with a quiet dignity of its own. Mr. Zaehnsdorf is an accomplished workman, able to send from his shop books dressed with propriety, and, at times, not without individuality. Mr. Roger de Coverly is another British binder whose labours are liked by book-lovers. The most original figure among the English binders of this century—in fact, the only original figure since Roger Payne—is Mr. Cobden-Sanderson.

Mr. Cobden-Sanderson is one of the most

characteristic personalities in the strange struggle for artistic freedom now going on in Eng-

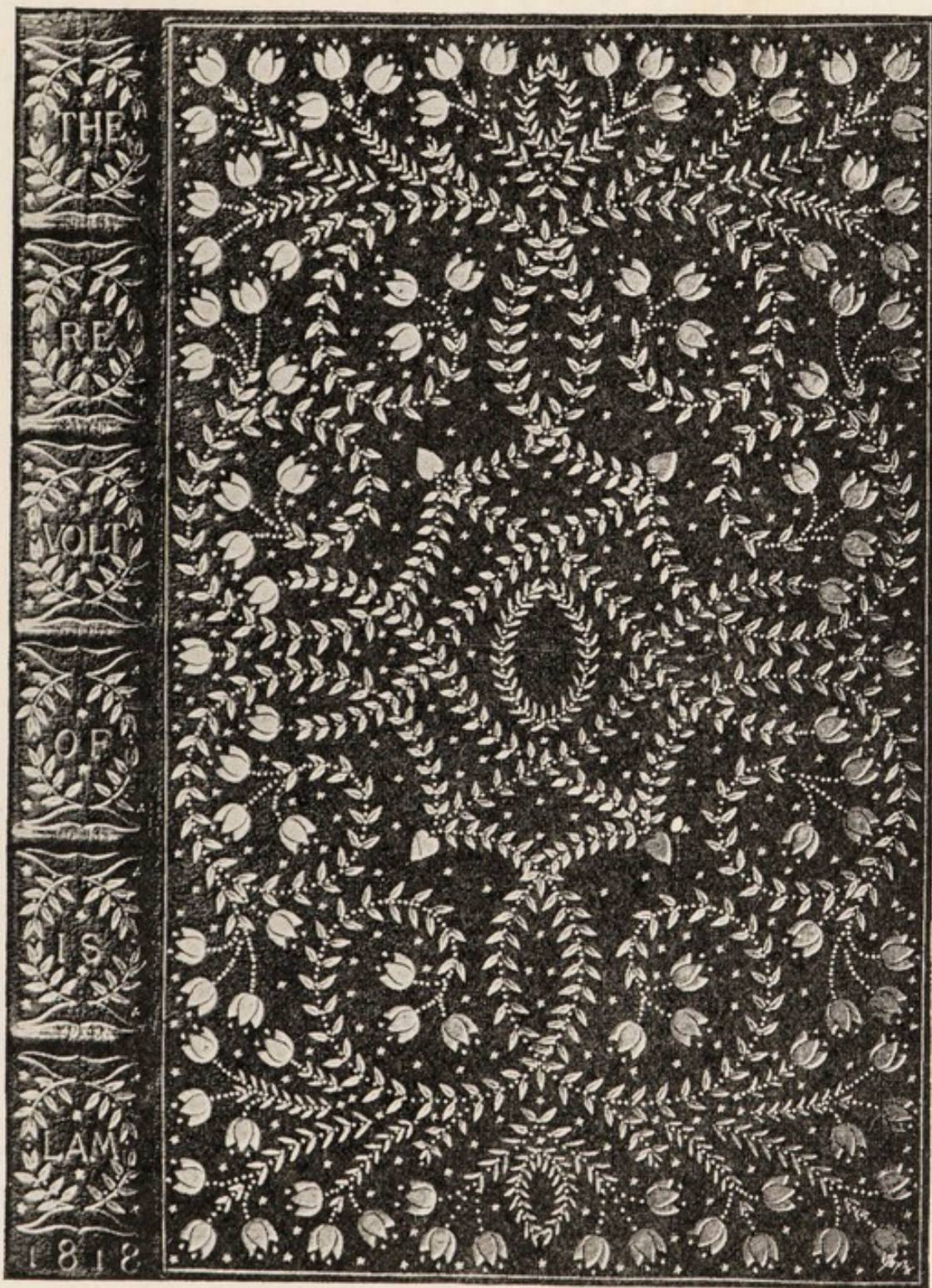


"HOMERI ILIAS."

Size, 5½ in. × 3½ in. Bound by Cobden-Sanderson.

land. He is a friend and fellow-labourer of Mr. William Morris and of Mr. Walter Crane with whose socialistic propaganda he is in sympa-

thy, and with whom he manifests and parades. He takes much the same view of life that they



SHELLEY. "THE REVOLT OF ISLAM."

Size, $8\frac{1}{2}$ in. \times $5\frac{1}{4}$ in. Bound by Cobden-Sanderson.

have; he holds the same creed as to society, and as to each man's duty toward it; he has the

same aim in art; and he is gifted with not a little of the same decorative instinct. Believing in handicraft as the salvation of humanity, and that a man should labour with his hands, he abandoned the bar, and studied the trade of the binder. Perhaps it is hardly unfair to call him an amateur — so Mr. Hunt was an amateur when he designed those most beautiful wrought-iron gates at Newport. Mr. Cobden-Sanderson's forwarding has not yet attained to the highest professional standard. But there are not lacking book-lovers who believe him to be the most original and the most effective finisher who has yet appeared in England.

His tooling is admirably firm and dazzlingly vigorous. Whatever the inadequacy of his workmanship in the processes which precede the gilding, — and in these his hand is steadily gaining strength, — there is no disputing his decorative endowment. He brought to the study of bookbinding an alert intelligence, a trained mind, and a determination to master the secrets of the art. He does all his own work, being both forwarder and finisher, un-



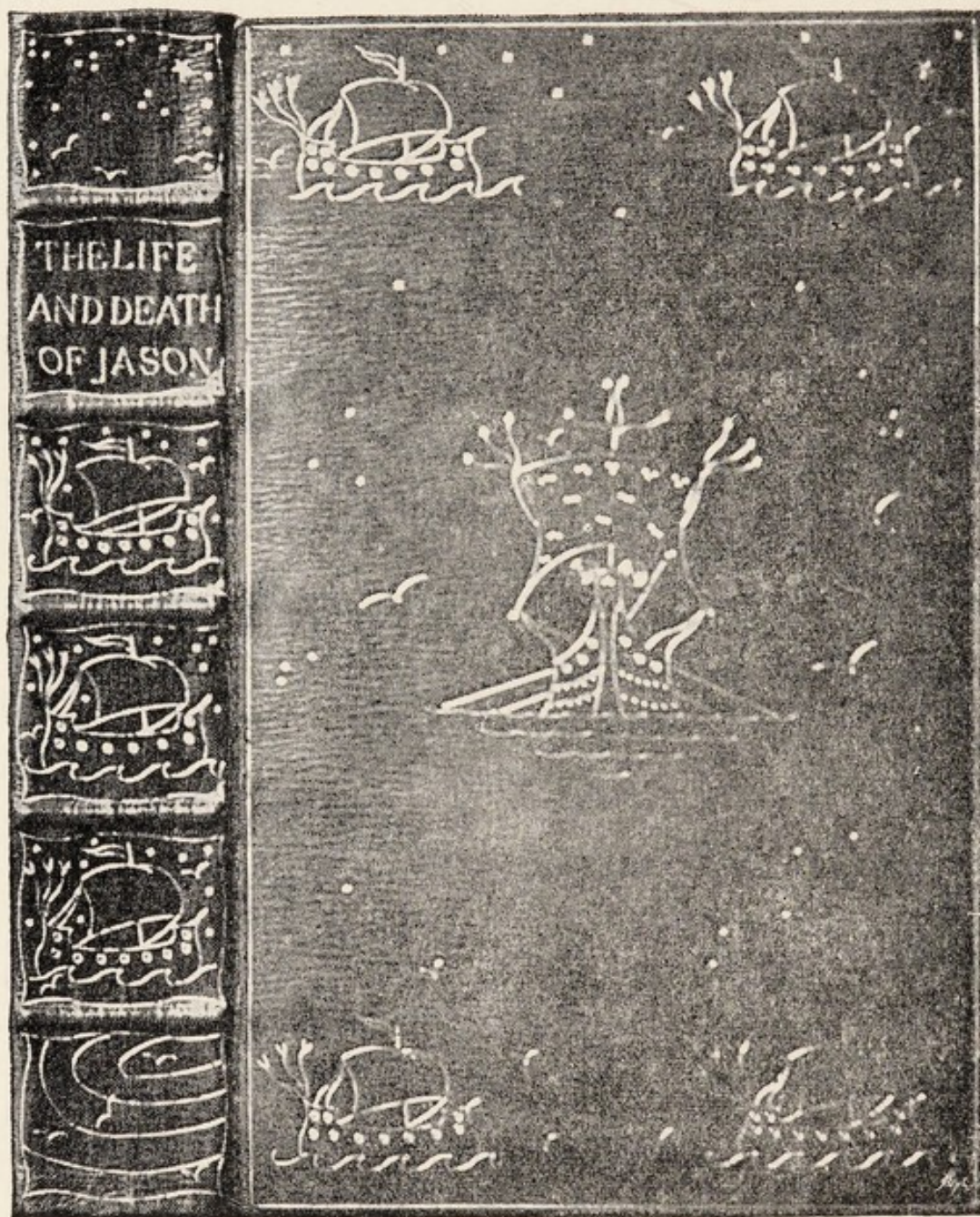
"IN MEMORIAM."

Size, $6\frac{3}{4}$ in. \times $4\frac{1}{8}$ in. Bound by Cobden-Sanderson.

aided even by an apprentice, although his wife (a daughter of Richard Cobden) has taken charge of the sewing. He designs his own tools, having them cut especially for him. Even the letters he uses were drawn for him by Miss May Morris; and he makes a most artful use of lettering, — working initials, names, titles, and mottos into his design, and making them an integral and essential part of the scheme of decoration. He has studied most lovingly the methods of “Le Gascon,” and he has assimilated some of the taste of that master of the art; it is from “Le Gascon,” no doubt, that Mr. Cobden-Sanderson caught the knack of powdering parts of his design with gold points, stars, single leaves, and the like — a device giving the utmost brilliancy to the design if used skilfully.

Mr. Cobden-Sanderson will not work to order. He binds only those books that please him, and he binds them as he pleases. He is independent of the caprices of his customers. He does not undertake many volumes, and with each he does his best.

When a novice, trying his 'prentice hand, he wasted himself more than once on volumes



"THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON."

Bound by Cobden-Sanderson.

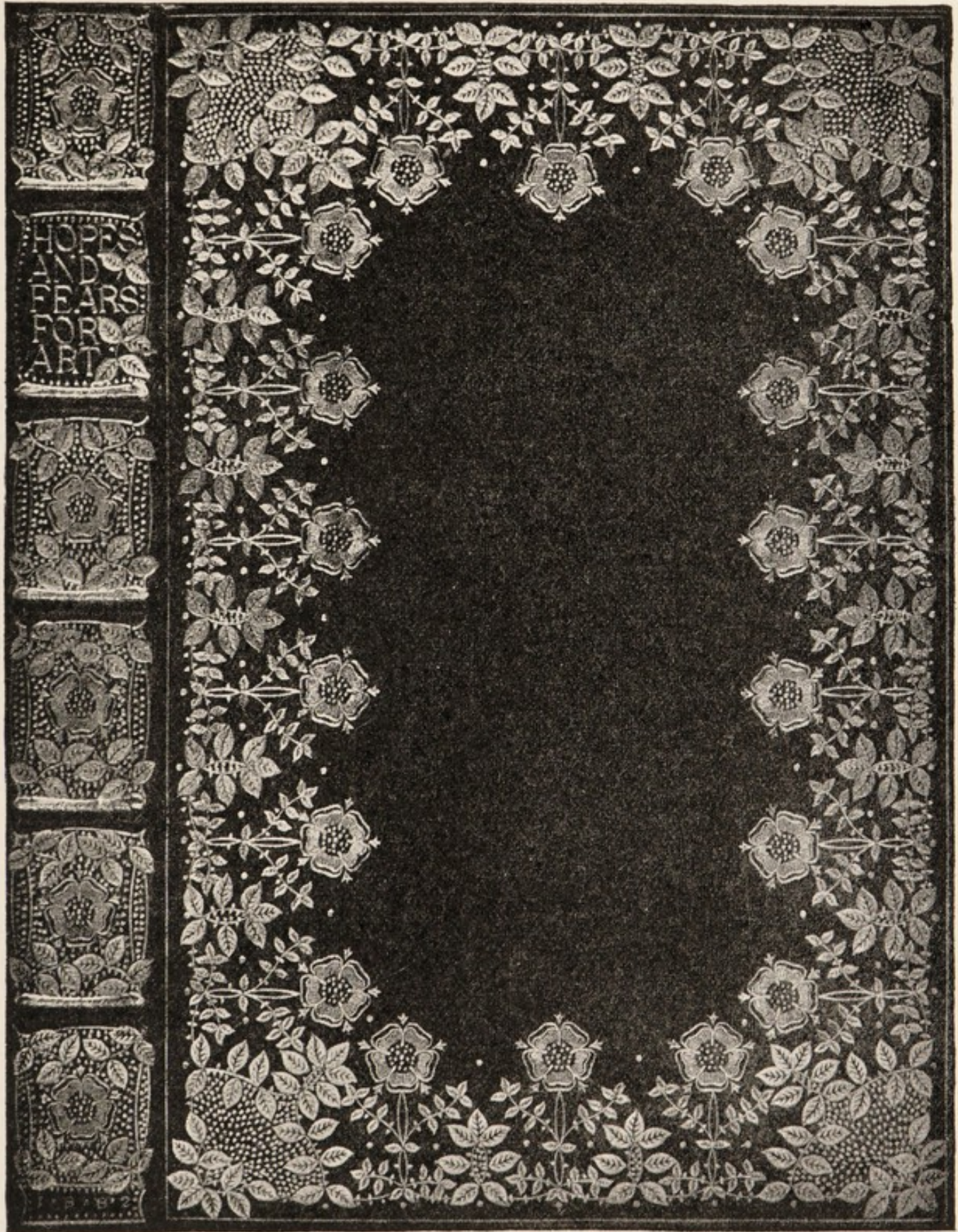
of no great value, and put a fifty dollar binding on a book not worth five — a pecuniary solecism, an artistic incongruity. Of

late he has not fallen into this blunder, and he prefers to spend himself on books of permanent value in the original edition. Of course he never repeats himself; every one of his bindings is as unique as a picture; there are no replicas. Every cover is composed for the volume itself, and is often the outcome of a loving study of the author, a decorative scheme having been suggested by some representative passage.

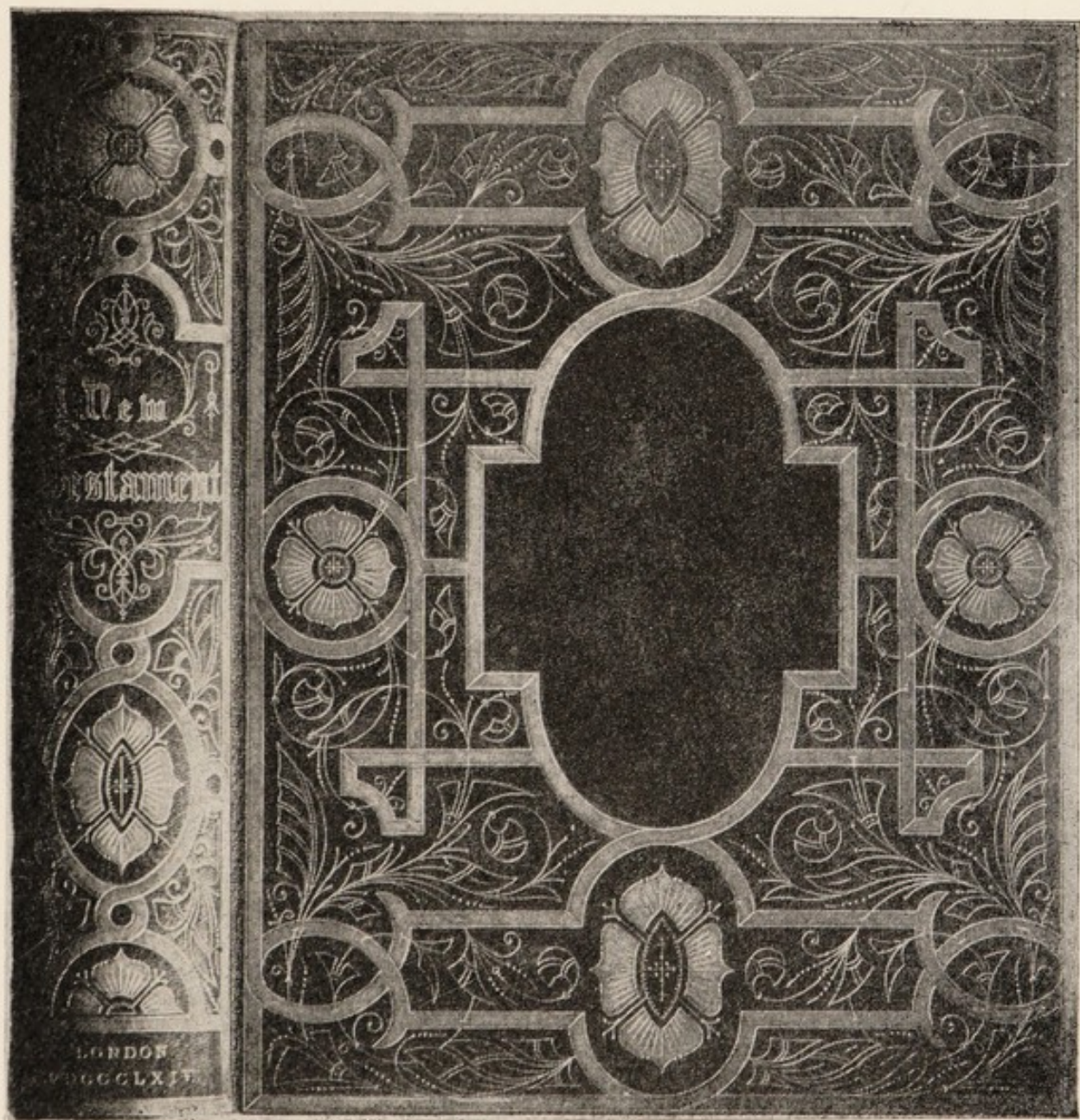
But he never confounds decoration with illustration; as he explained in an article on his art, "beauty is the aim of decoration, and not illustration, or the expression of ideas." So we do not find on his books any of the childish symbolism which has been abundantly advocated in England, and according to which a treatise on zoölogy or botany must be adorned with an animal or a flower—a bald and babyish labelling of a book wholly unrelated to propriety of ornamentation. Mr. Cobden-Sanderson's covers are generally rich with conventionalized flowers arrayed with geometrical precision. He falls

into a naturalistic treatment only at rare and regrettable moments. In a copy of Mr. Morris's "Hopes and Fears for Art," which Mr. Cobden-Sanderson has bound, the design has a careful freedom of composition and an artful symmetry; the treatment of the rose-branches which form the border is almost purely conventional, and the broad blank space in the centre is restfully open.

In America the art of the binder is retarded by reasons really outside of art — by the high wages of skilled workmen, and by the high tariff on raw materials, which have so raised the cost of the best bookbinding that many book-lovers in New York have been wont to send their precious tomes on a long voyage across the Atlantic, to be bound in London or Paris. Americans were among the best customers of Francis Bedford, and the catalogue of the Grolier Club exhibition proves that they have been persistent purchasers of the best work of contemporary French binders. But to send books abroad to be bound is no way to encourage the development of the



A BINDING BY COBDEN-SANDERSON.



NEW TESTAMENT.

Bound by William Matthews, in light brown crushed levant, inlaid with blue and red morocco. By permission of Mr. Matthews.



art at home. This same Grolier Club exhibition showed that American craftsmen were capable of turning out work of a very high rank. The best of the books bound by Mr. William Matthews, by Mr. Alfred Matthews, by Bradstreets, by Mr. Smith, and by Mr. Stikeman, held their own fairly well. Considering the difficulties under which the art has developed in this country, the showing made by the American binders was the most creditable.

For a binding like Mr. William Matthew's "Knickerbocker's History of New York," there is no need to make any apology; it is excellent in conception and in execution, pure in style, modestly original, and most harmoniously decorative, with its appropriate ship, its tiny tulips, and its wreaths of willow. The inventor of these designs for the inside and the outside of the Knickerbocker was Mr. Louis J. Rhead, whom Mr. Matthews had called to his aid.

Although both Mr. Matthews and Mr. Rhead are Englishmen by birth, I think I can feel an American influence in the decoration of this American book. If I am right, this is evi-

dence, were any needed, of the great advantage there is in having a book bound by a countryman of the author, who will treat it with unconscious propriety of decoration. I know a wise collector in New York who makes it a rule to have his French books bound in Paris, his English books bound in London, and his American books bound here in New York.

“ Fifty years ago,” said Mr. William Matthews in his interesting address on his art, “ there was not a finely bound book, except what by chance had been procured abroad, to be found in any collection in America. Fine binding was an unknown art.” Now in the last decade of the nineteenth century, Mr. Matthews thinks “ there are many examples of American workmanship in our collections that would do honour to the best French and English binders of the last half-century.” If this is true, much of the credit for the improvement of public taste is due to the influence of Mr. Matthews himself.

Of modern Italian and German binding there is no necessity or space to say anything here.



IRVING'S "KNICKERBOCKER'S HISTORY OF NEW YORK."
Bound by William Matthews. Published by the Grolier
Club, 1888. Owned by Mr. William Matthews.



The tradition of vellum binding has been kept alive in Rome and in Florence, where the bevel-edged white tomes are often relieved by an inlaid rectangle of coloured calf, tooled with what might perhaps be called fairly enough a Neo-Aldine pattern. The exhibition of the Grolier Club, which has aided in the preparation and in the illustration of these pages, included no Italian work, — and this is evidence that our collectors, rightly or wrongly, do not hold it in high esteem.

Nor was there a single specimen of Teutonic handiwork. Yet Trautz was a German by birth, and earlier in this century there were several German binders established in England — Walther, Kalthoeber, Staggemeier. Even now, while one of the leading binders of London, Mr. Rivière, is of French descent, another, Mr. Zaehnsdorf, is of German. In New York many of the journeyman bookbinders are Germans. Not only was the bibliopegic art of Germany unrepresented at this recent exhibition in New York, but in none of the many recent books about binding, French, English,

and American, do I find any attention paid to the work of the modern Germans. Several years ago M. Rouveyre of Paris, who had published half a dozen books about binding, arranged for a French edition of a collection of German bindings; and of "La Dorure sur Cuir (Reliure, Ciselure, Gaufrure) en Allemagne." Fifty copies were issued, the same publisher having risked fifteen hundred copies of M. Octave Uzanne's "La Reliure Moderne." From the well-made reproductions in this volume, it is fair to infer that the German binding of to-day is not remarkably interesting. It is sometimes dull and sometimes pretentious; it is frequently designed by architects who are without training in the needs and possibilities of its technic; it is often violently polychromatic; and it is sometimes set off by elaborate panels of inserted enamel, and by richly chiselled corners and centrepieces of silver. What is best is the artful employment of vigorous blind-tooling; and what is most noteworthy is the successful revival of the mediæval art of carving in leather, always best understood by the Germans.



INSIDE COVER OF PRECEDING.



III.

THE OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE.

MUCH as one might expect a precious metal to enrich a tome, there is more than a hint of Teutonic heaviness in most of these carved-leather covers, girt with solid silver clasps, and armed with chased medallions. The occasional attempts of American silversmiths at book-decoration are lighter and more graceful. I have seen more than one prayer-book, the smooth dark calfskin of which was shielded by a thin shell of silver pierced with delicate arabesques. But this is almost an accidental return to a method of ornamentation long past its usefulness, and appropriate only when every book was a portly tome bound in real boards, and reposing in solitary glory on its own lectern. The future of bookbinding does not lie in any alliance with silversmithery.

Just where the future of bookbinding does

lie is very difficult to declare. Cosmopolitan commonplace is the characteristic of much of the work of to-day. Craftsmen of remarkable technical skill are content with conventionality and they go on indefinitely repeating the old styles, — Maioli and Grolier, Padeloup and Derome, — styles which were once alive, but which have long since been void of any germ of vitality. To persist in using them is like refusing to speak any language but Latin. For a man alive to-day a living dialect, however impure, is better than a lifeless language, however perfect. There are not wanting signs of a reaction against the banality of modern bookbinding.

One of them is the instant success of Mr. Cobden-Sanderson's innovations. Another is the return to silver-mounting. Yet a third, curious only, and infertile, is the decoration of a book-cover with enamels, either incrustated or applied. The Germans have taken to letting a monogram, ornamented or metal, into the centre of a book-cover; but nothing seems to be gained by this which a mosaic of leather

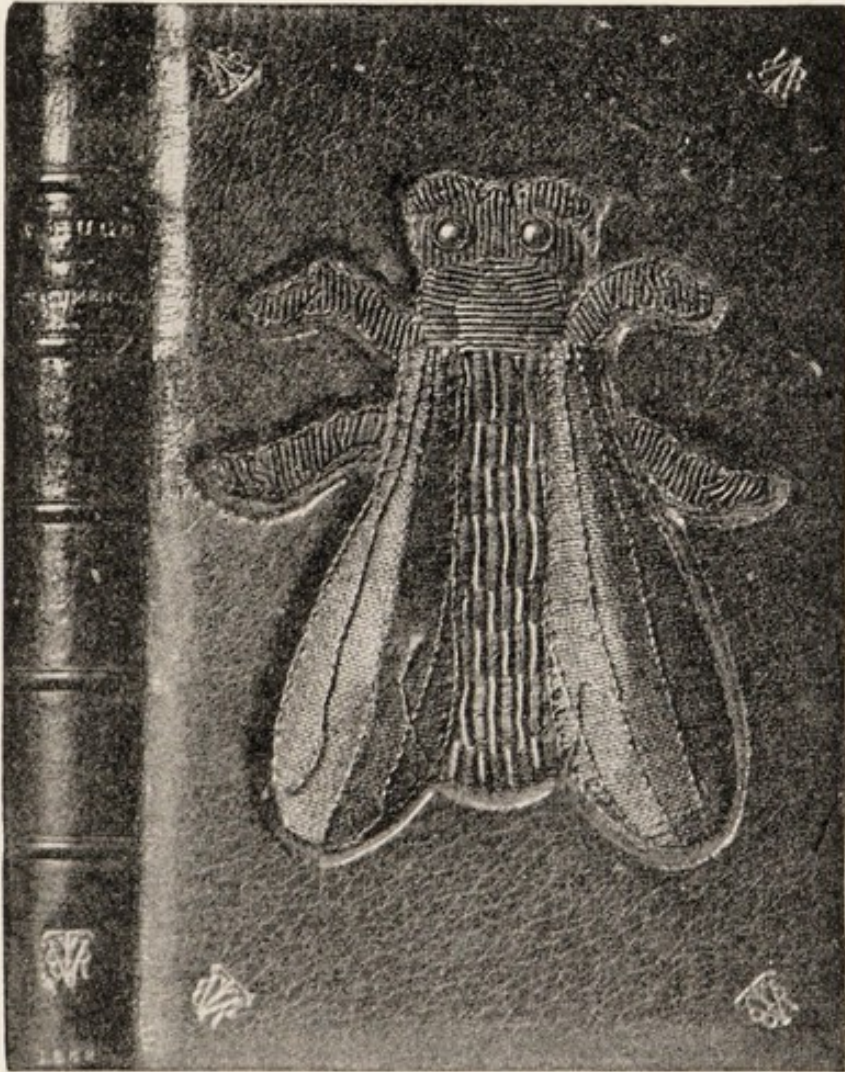
would not have given. The late Philippe Burty, the distinguished French art-critic, and a book-lover with the keenest liking for novelty, had a copy on Dutch paper of Poulet-Malassis's essay on "Ex-Libris"; he enriched it with other interesting book-plates; he inserted a few autograph letters; he had it bound by R. Petit in full morocco, with his monogram at the corners; and in the centre of the side he let in a metal plate on which his own book-plate was enamelled in niello. This singularly personal binding is reproduced in M. Octave Uzanne's volume on "La Reliure Moderne," where we find another of M. Burty's experiments, a copy of M. Claudius Popelin's "De la Statue et de la Peinture" (translated from Alberti), also bound by Petit, and also identified by the owner's monogram, and having, moreover, in the centre of the side, an enamelled panel made by M. Popelin himself for his friend's copy of his own book.

Burty had in his collections other volumes distinguished by enamels; and there were in the Grolier Club exhibition a set of books belonging

to Mr. S. P. Avery, and quite as much out of the common as Burty's. Mr. Avery has sent certain volumes of the "Bibliothèque de l'Enseignement des Beaux-arts" to the authors, asking each to indicate the binding which he thought most consonant with his work; so Mr. Avery has "La Faience," of M. Théodore Deck, decorated with panels of pottery, one of them being a portrait of the author executed at his own ceramic works; and he has Sauzy's "Marvels of Glass-Making," with covers containing glass panels enamelled in colours. These ventures belong among the curiosities of the art; they are to be classed among the freaks rather than with the professional beauties.

Another book of Burty's (now owned by Mr. Avery) has an exceptional interest — an interest perhaps rather literary than rigidly artistic. It is a copy of the original edition of Victor Hugo's scorching satire, "Napoleon le Petit," published in 1853, a few months after Napoleon had broken his oath and made himself emperor; this copy (made doubly pre-

cious by three lines in the poet's handwriting) was bound in dark green morocco, and the side was hollowed out to receive an embroid-



"LES CHÂTIMENTS." VICTOR HUGO, 1853.

Bound by Petit. Green morocco. The "Bee" from the throne of Napoleon III., Tuileries, September, 1870. Owned by Mr. Samuel P. Avery.

ered bee—a bee which had been cut from the throne of Napoleon III. in the Tuileries a few days after the battle of Sedan. This is the very irony of bookbinding. A copy of

“Les Châtiments” was bound to match. Future collectors will find these bees of Burty even harder to acquire than those which mark the books of De Thou.

Unusual, not to say unique, as such an opportunity must be, there is here a hint for the book-lover not by him to be despised. Here at least is an exceptional binding. Here at least we leave the monotonous iteration of the cut-and-dried. Here is a method of establishing a relation between the subject of the book and its exterior not hitherto attempted. For nine books out of ten the conventional binding suffices, Jansenist crushed levant for the costly volumes, simple half morocco for those less valuable. But for the special treasures, for the books with an individuality of their own, why may we not abandon this barren impersonality and seek to get out of the regular rut?

M. Octave Uzanne has avowed that he would prefer to have a copy of the “Légende des Siècles” clad soberly in a fragment of the dark-green uniform which Hugo wore the day he

was received into the French Academy, to the same volume bound with the utmost luxury by the best binder of the time. Perhaps it is carrying this fancy a little too far to bind the Last Dying Speech and Confession of a murderer in a strip of his own hide properly tanned, or even to cover Holbein's "Dance of Death" with a like ghastly integument; but I confess I should find a particular pleasure in owning the copy of Washington Irving's "Conquest of Grenada," which Mr. Roger de Coverly bound "in Spanish morocco from Valencia" for the Arts and Crafts Exhibition in London in 1889.

In his "Caprices d'un Bibliophile," published in 1878, M. Octave Uzanne urged book-lovers to seek out a greater variety of leathers. The French are not afflicted with what Dickens called "that underdone pie-crust cover which is technically known as law-calf," and which is desolately monotonous; nor have they ever cared either for sprinkled calf, as dull and decorous as orthodoxy, or for "tree-marbled calf," much affected by the British.

That the French do not take to tree-calf is proof at once of their taste and of their wisdom. Mr. Matthews declares that he does not recommend tree-calf, and M. Marius-Michel speaks of the process of marbling it with acids as "a diabolic invention," since it rots the leather—as every one knows who has the misfortune to own books bound in this fashion half a century ago. The French, with a full understanding of the principles of book-binding, have confined their attention almost wholly to calf and to morocco, eschewing even the pleasant-smelling Russia-leather, which becomes brittle, and has a tendency to crack, unless it is constantly handled, whereby it absorbs animal oil from the human fingers.

In the employment of other leathers than calf and morocco we Americans have taken the lead. Books bound in alligator, and in sealskin, for example, are to be found in any of the leading bookstores, not always appropriately clad, I regret to remark. There is a hideous incongruity, for instance, in sheathing the wisdom of Emerson in alligator-hide, fit as

this scaly substance might be for the weird tales of Poe. Equally horrible is a prayer-book covered with snakeskins; and both of these bibliopegic freaks have been offered to me by tradesmen more enterprising than artistic.

Gautier's "Une Nuit de Cléopâtre," that strange tale of the serpent of old Nile, might fitly be protected by the skin of the crocodile; and Captain Bourke's book about the "Snake-Dance of the Moquis of Arizona" seems to call for an ophidian integument. So might we clothe a volume describing a voyage to Alaska in seal-skin, or an account of Australia in the hide of the kangaroo. It would be a quaint fancy to put our old favourite "Rab and his Friends" in dogskin (easily to be had from the glovers); and our new friend "Uncle Remus," in the soft coat of Brer Rabbit. Champfleury's "Les Chats," and M. Anatole France's old-fashioned and cheerful "Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard" could be bound in catskin.

In more than one of the old treatises on bookbinding is mention made of an ardent admirer of Charles James Fox, who had the

speeches of his idol covered with a vulpine hide — which would serve better, it seems to me, as a coat for a volume of hunting reminiscences. So might the life of Daniel Boone be bound in the skin of a “b’ar” like that which the pioneer “cilled”; and the life of Davy Crockett could be clad in the skin of the coon, a descendant of the fabled quadruped which volunteered to come down when he discovered that the backwoodsman had drawn a bead on him. Dana’s “Two Years before the Mast” would look well in whale-skin, or, if that were too tough, in shark-skin — shagreen. The “Peau d’âne” of Perrault suggests the use of the hide of the animal who once disguised himself in the lion’s skin; and for any edition of Æsop’s “Fables,” an indefinite number of appropriate leathers lies ready to one’s hand.

In 1890 Messrs. Tiffany & Co. issued a catalogue of more than a hundred different kinds of leather then on exhibition in their store on Union Square, and ready for use in the making of pocket-books, bags, blotters, card-cases,

and the like; and all these are available for the binding of books, if the book-lover will take the trouble to select and to seek for the leather best suited to each tome in its turn. A glance over the list of Messrs. Tiffany & Co. is most suggestive. The skin of the chameleon, for example, how aptly this would bedeck the orations of certain professional politicians! How well the porcupine would suit the later writings of Mr. Ruskin! How fitly the black bear would cover the works of Dr. Johnson, "author of the contradictionary," as Hood called him! I have already noted one book best bound in snake-skin, but perhaps the uncanny ophidian had better be reserved for those books which every gentleman's library should be without. Yet I should like to see the speeches of Vallandigham bound in the skin of a copperhead.

M. Uzanne also advocated that the monopoly of leather should be infringed, and that books be bound in stuffs, in velvet now and again, and in old brocades. And what could be more delightfully congenial to Mr. Dobson's

“Vignettes in Rhyme,” wherein the poet sings of the days when

. . . France’s bluest blood
Danced to the tune of “After us, the flood!”

— what could be more harmonious to his “Proverbs in Porcelain,” than to robe those dainty volumes of verse in a remnant of damask or golden brocade saved from the dress of the Pompadour? What could be a fitter apparel for the “Madame Crysanthème” of Pierre Loti than a Japanese silk strangely embroidered, with a label of Japanese leather on the back, and with Japanese water-colours as end-papers?

In M. Uzanne’s later volume on “La Reliure Moderne” there are photogravures of books bound in accordance with hints of his — the *cartonnage à la Pompadour* for one. But of all those who were reaching out in new directions with hope of renewing the art of the bookbinder, Philippe Burty seemed to me to have been the most fertile. One of his tentatives was a bold and frequent use of his own monogram in the decoration of his books;

especially noteworthy was the skilful employment of this monogram in the *dentelle*, or border of the inside, oftener than not disfigured in America and in England by a hackneyed "wheel," blurring brutally at the corners.

In the bindings of Henry II. and Diana of Poitiers we can see the most admirable utilization of a monogram and a device; and here is a model modern book-decorators may follow from afar as best they can. So, too, Longepierre made use of the emblem of the Golden Fleece, for which to-day bibliopegic argonauts voyage in vain. In the cutting of special tools, monograms, devices, significant emblems, — masks, lyres, torches, or tears, — each owned by the individual book-owner, there is perhaps hope of some relief from the stereotyped insipidity of the ordinary binder's stock in trade.

It is very difficult to indicate the probable line of bibliopegic development. Only after many a vain effort and many a doubtful struggle do we ever attain the goal of our desires. Setting our faces to the future, we must let the dead past bury its dead, and we must

give up the lifeless imitation of defunct styles. Greater variety is needed, greater freedom also, such as some of the other decorative arts have achieved of late years. The duty of the book-lover is equal to that of the bookbinder; they must needs work together for the advance of the art. For their collaboration to be pregnant the book-lover must educate himself in the possibilities and in the technical limitations of the art. Every architect will confess that he has had many a practical suggestion from his clients, and more often from the wives of his clients; and the influence of the book-lover on the bookbinder can be even more beneficial.

In dealing with the ordinary uninspired workman, perhaps the less said the better, and the simpler the work entrusted to him the more satisfactory it is likely to be. Here, perhaps, the most that can be done is to follow the fashion and prescribe the style. With an intelligent binder, fond of his art, and not afraid of a step aside from the beaten path, the book-lover can do much, encouraging his

ally, lending him boldness, keeping him up to the mark, sustaining him to do his best, showing him the most interesting work that has been done elsewhere. The relation of the patron — offensive vocable — to the decorative artist is not unlike that of the stage-manager to the actor, Samson to Rachel, for instance, M. Sardou to Mme. Sarah-Bernhardt; he can show what he wants done, even though he cannot do it himself. This is what Grolier did, and De Thou, and M. Burty. Thus the bookbinder and the book-lover fare forward together, making interesting experiments, whereby the art progresses, even though the most of the experiments fail.

That the book-lover and the bookbinder can put their heads together, it is needful that the latter should be an individual and not a factory. There must be binderies for the commercial work (of which I shall speak in the next chapter), for "edition binding," as it is called; but "extra binding," the covering of a single volume in accord with the wishes of the owner of that one book, can best be done

where the artist-artisan is at liberty to meet his customer face to face, that they may talk the matter over. Most binderies are little more than factories, with many machines, and a close division of labour, and a foreman who lays out the work of the "hands." This is not the way Mr. Cobden-Sanderson is able to delight us with his lovely design, nor is it the way Trautz carried on his business. An artist as independent as Mr. Cobden-Sanderson, and as rigid in his independence, is best apart; he broods in solitude, and we profit by his dream. Trautz had three assistants at the most; he was his own forwarder and his own finisher: and the patron had no difficulty in dealing directly with the man who was to do the work.

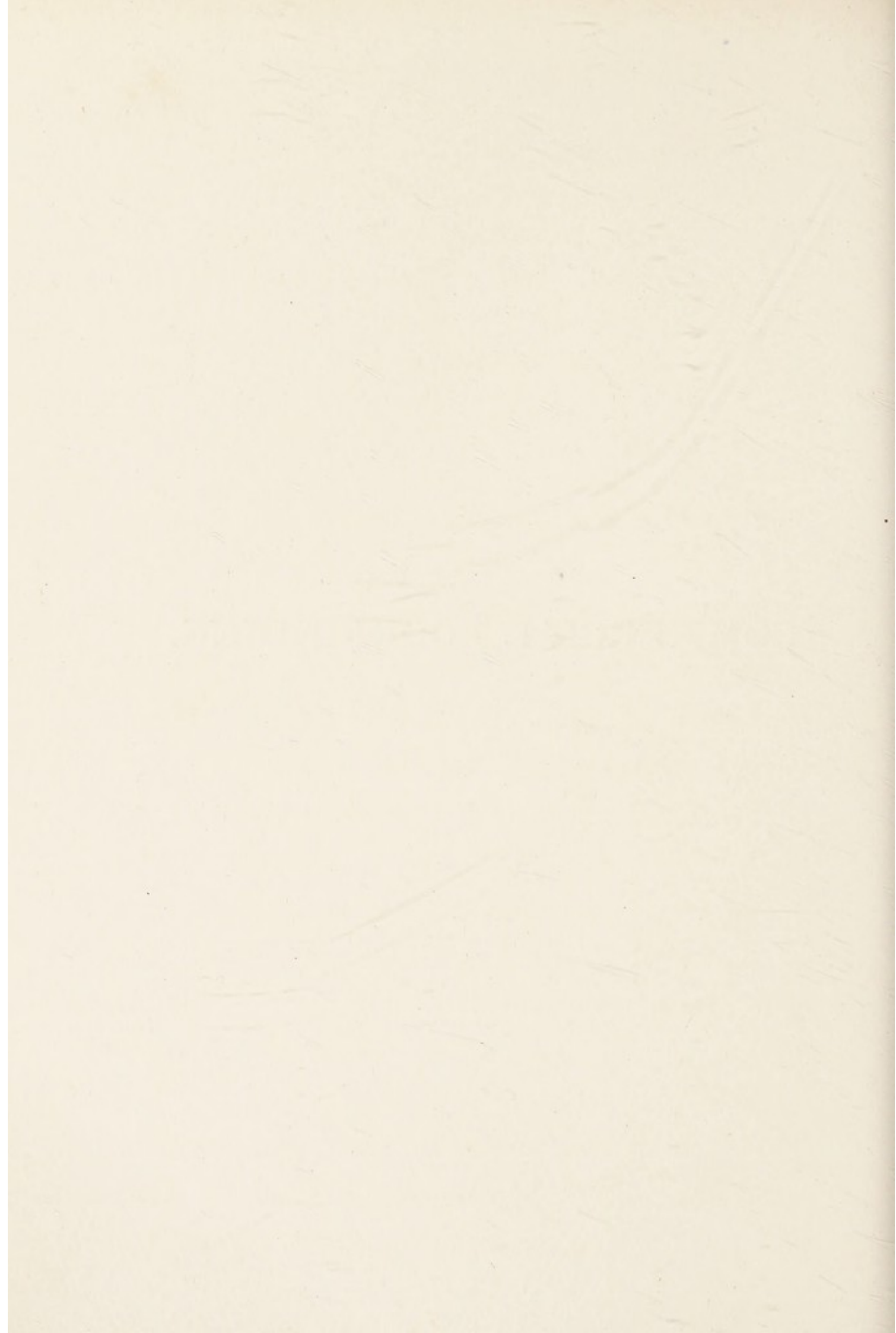
Not only is this friendly relation vital to the progress of the art, but the factory system is fatal to it, when the capitalist at the head of the bindery is willing selfishly to take the credit of all that is done in his shop. For a competent designer, with the proper pride of an artist, so suppressed a position is intolerable. If the forwarding and the finishing of a

book are by different hands, the owner of the book ought to know it, and the two men who coöperate ought to know that he knows it.

Perhaps what the art of bookbinding is most in need of just now is the establishment of the individual binder, an artisan-artist in a shop of his own with an immediate assistant or two, and maybe a pair of apprentices. Then the binder will sign the work he does, and the work will bear the name of the man who really did it and no other. The superiority of American wood-engraving over the British is due partly at least to the fact that in the United States the engraver is one individual artist, while in Great Britain he is either a shop-keeper or a factory hand.



COMMERCIAL BOOKBINDING.



COMMERCIAL BOOKBINDING.



I.

THE ANTIQUITY OF EDITION BINDING.

IN one of the annual volumes of "La Vie à Paris," stout tomes of cheerful gossip, intermitted now that the author is the director of the Théâtre Français, and a member of the French Academy, M. Jules Claretie tells a pleasant anecdote of a contemporary Parisian binder who was asked to cover one of the beautiful books which M. Conquet sends forth spasmodically from his little shop, and who drew back with scorn, declaring, "Sir, I will not dishonour myself by binding a modern book."

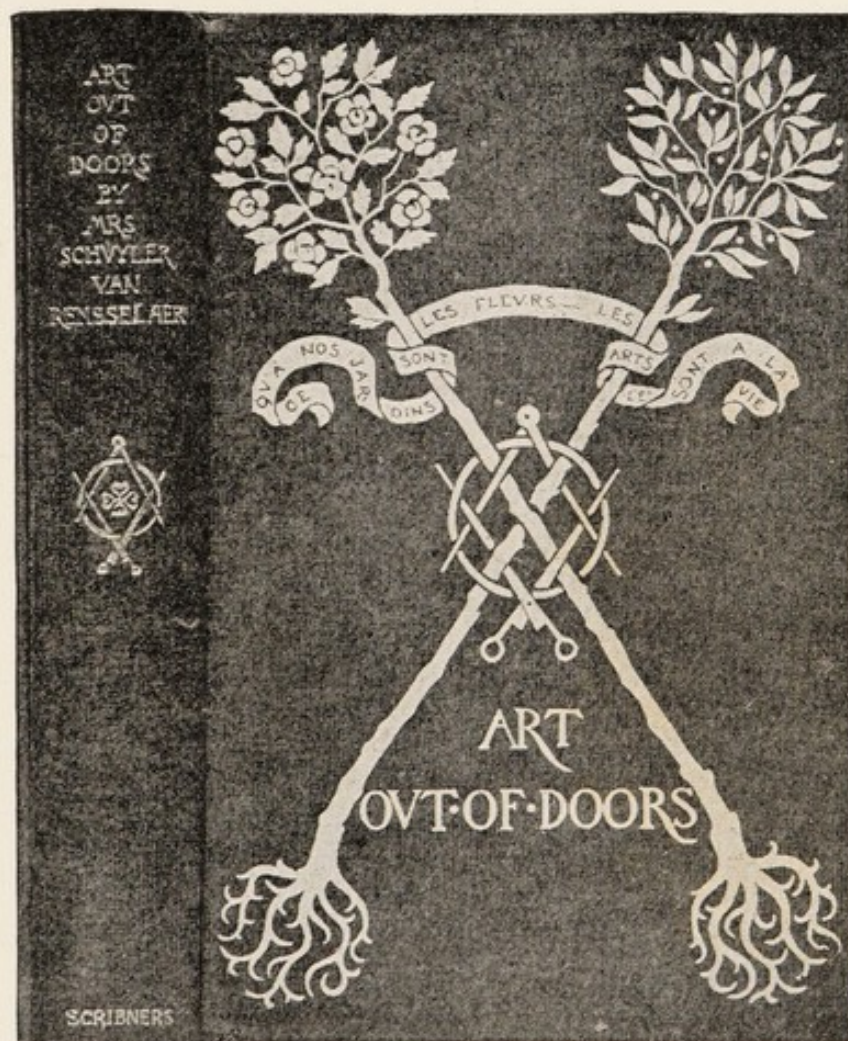
This craftsman's pride it was, no doubt, to clothe the stately Aldine and the pigmy Elzevir in fit robes of crushed morocco, decorat-

ing them with delicate gold tracteries tooled bit by bit, and lingered over lovingly. To him it would have been a sad shock, had he been told suddenly that, in the eyes of the average reader, a book is bound when it is merely cased in a cloth-cover whereon a pattern has been imprinted by machinery. Yet so it is.

Not as ours the books of old —
Things that steam can stamp and fold ;
Not as ours the books of yore —
Rows of type, and nothing more.

Ours are not the books of old, but sometimes, when they are the result of taking thought and pains, they have a merit of their own; and the thing that steam can stamp and fold may be as lovely in its way as the poet's missal of the thirteenth century, around which the illuminator's brother monks sang "little choruses of praise." The beauty of the modern book is not that of the book of yore. There will always be between them the difference which separates work done by machine from work done by hand — a difference wide enough, and deep enough, to admit of no denial. But the vol-

umes stamped by steam may have their own charm and their own qualities — to say nothing of their superior fitness for the nineteenth century, when democracy is triumphant.



Designed by Margaret N. Armstrong. Published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

“ART OUT-OF-DOORS,” BY MRS. SCHUYLER VAN RENSSELAER.

The books bound in thousands for publishers are mostly ill-bound from haste and greed, from ignorance and reckless disregard of art. But once in a way they attain a surprisingly high

level. Just how excellent some modern commercial bindings are, scarcely any of us have taken time to discover; for we are prone to overlook not a few of the best expressions of con-



Designed by Mrs. Henry Whitman. Published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

"AN ISLAND GARDEN," BY CELIA THAXTER.

temporary art, natural outgrowths of modern conditions, in our persistent seeking for some great manifestation which we fail to find.

Of a certainty the great manifestations of art

are hopelessly rare; and, as a matter of fact, little things far more often attain perfection and reward our seeking. A chromolithographic placard does not seem to promise much—but in M. Cheret's hands the pictorial poster is never insipid, and has often a most engaging and masterly originality. Cast-iron is an unlovely material—but by recognizing its limitations, Alfred Stevens was able to give dignity to the little lions on the outer rail at the British Museum. So a book-cover stamped by steam may be a thing of beauty if it is designed by Mrs. Whitman or by Mr. Stanford White. It is a fact that commercial bookbinding, often ignorantly looked down on, is now at a most interesting stage of its history; and it seems to me very well worth while to consider some of its recent successes.

In a paper on “Bookbinding considered as a Fine-Art, Mechanical Art and Manufacture,” read before the Society of Arts in London, Mr. Henry B. Wheatley declared that “cloth-binding is entirely an English invention.” Just as the fine-art of bookbinding began in Italy dur-

ing the Renaissance, and was most highly cultivated in France, so the art of cloth-binding, arising in Great Britain, has been carried to a higher level of mechanical perfection by machines invented or mightily improved in the United States; and I am inclined to think that the principles which should govern the decoration of cloth covers are better understood in New York than in London—in so far at least as one may judge from the results of their application.

While it is true enough that cloth-binding is an English invention, commercial binding, "edition work," as it is called, is almost as old as printing itself. The early printers, from Aldus in Venice to Caxton in London, were binders as they were also publishers; and very early in the history of the trade were there attempts to simplify the toil of the finisher who decorated the leather sides and backs of the broad volumes. In the finest of the early books every touch of gold on the cover was made by a separate tool, which the skilled workman impressed on the leather at least twice, once

without the gold, and once to affix it, a slow, laborious, and expensive process.

One of the first of the devices adopted as a short cut was the "*roulette*" or roll, a complete pattern engraved on the circumference of a wheel, and reproducing itself as the wheel was rolled across the leather. This wheel served for borders and frameworks; it was often most admirably engraved; and its employment was not altogether injurious if proper care was taken to match the corners with precision. In these days when omniscience is everybody's foible it may seem like affectation for me frankly to confess ignorance as to the origin of the roll, but I think it was first seen in Italy.

In like manner I must avow that I do not know for certain the origin of the next labour-saving device, but I think it came from Germany; and beyond all question its use was most frequent there. This was the combination of engraved blocks into a pattern more or less appropriate to the book. The binder had in stock a variety of these blocks, of different sizes and independent in subject, or related in

pairs, or even in sets of four; and he would rearrange these corners, centre-pieces, and panels as best he could to suit every succeeding book, availing himself also of the roll, and falling back on hand-work where the occasion seemed to demand it. Careless as this method often became, it was still a crude form of design, even though the toil of the hand was minimized to the utmost.

But one step needed to be taken to get rid altogether of hand-work on the cover; this was to engrave a design for the whole side of a book, and to stamp it on at a single stroke of a press. These plates—*plaques* is the French term—were probably first employed by the Italians; but the most noted of those who made early use of them was a Frenchman, Geoffroy Tory, the friend of Grolier, and the would-be reformer of the alphabet. All collectors know the plate he designed for the Book of Hours he printed, which was a staple of the book trade, and for which there was an unfailing demand. Tory's plate was original and complete in itself; but another plate contemporary with it, and also

reproduced in the invaluable essay of M. Marius-Michel on "La Reliure Française, Commerciale et Industrielle," is incomplete; it was intended to spare the time and trouble needed to adorn the book-cover with the elaborately interlacing arabesques of the Grolier type; but it left to the hand of the workman the task of adding the name of the owner of the book, the scattered gold dots which greatly enriched the appearance, and a few other details here and there. It is instructive to note how adroitly the means have been adjusted to the end.

These three devices, the roll, the combination of blocks, and the plate complete or incomplete, mark different stages of the development of wholesale binding; and they existed simultaneously for centuries. M. Marius-Michel declares that out of every hundred of the smaller sized volumes sent forth by the printer-publishers of the sixteenth century, eighty have their sides stamped by a plate simulating handwork. The original editions of Rabelais, of Montaigne, of Ronsard, and of Clément Marot, were issued more often than not with plate-

marked sides. There is in M. Marius-Michel's essay a drawing of a block used to aid in the imitation of the brilliant *fanfares* of "Le Gascon." There is in M. Gruel's "Manuel Historique" a most sumptuous binding by Derome, in which there was no hand-tooling at all, save perhaps a monogram or a coat-of-arms here and there; it is formed by combining corners and border-pieces, and it was stamped in a press.

The chief characteristic of the early German, Italian, and French commercial binding is that it was an imitation of artistic binding done wholly by hand. It was a humbug trying to pass itself off as something other than it really was, and failing, of course, as fraud always fails. It was forever forging the designs it found on the books of the best binders; and very often its thefts were stupid, although once in a while they were adroit. Now this copying was foolish, because in art the impersonal machine can never rival the personal hand—for art is indeed only individuality. M. Zola defines art as "nature seen through a temperament"—and even in the decorative

arts personality is omnipotent. But by abandoning all thought of imitating hand-work, modern commercial bookbinding has a fair chance of developing according to its own conditions. The machine has tireless power of production and absolute regularity; and it is for those who set the machine going to supply that personal touch without which all art is as naught.

II.

THE MERITS OF MACHINE BINDING.

THIS is the great merit of modern commercial bookbinding done by machinery — that it is independent, that it has freed itself from the trammels and the traditions of hand-work, that it is no longer a savourless sham copying blindly, that it lives its own life. It recognizes the fact, obvious enough nowadays, that we cannot all be as Heber, to whom Ferriar sang:

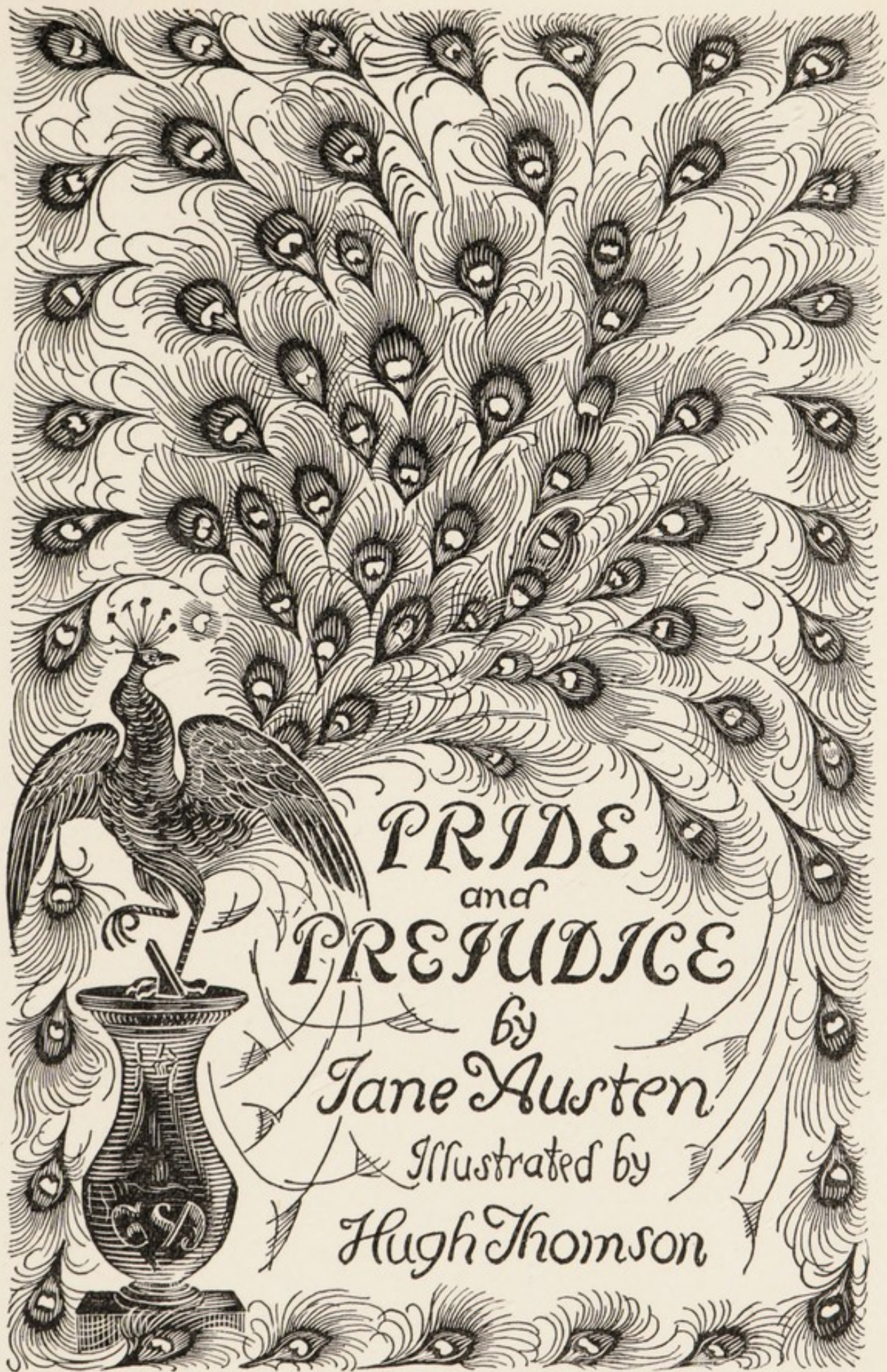
The folio Aldus loads your happy shelves,
And dapper Elzevirs, like fairy elves,
Shew their light forms amidst the well-gilt twelves.

In this change Great Britain and the United States have led the way, followed for once by France, and, after an interval, by Germany. It was in frugal Germany that “half-binding” had its origin. Half-binding is a money-saving contrivance, which lordly book-lovers have reprobated as equivalent to genteel poverty.

The Jansenists used to keep the leather sides of their books free from ornament; and some sparing German carried this simplicity one step further, substituting paper for the plain surface of leather and using morocco and calf only for the back, and for a narrow but needful hinge on each side. To push this economy a little further yet was easy; and so it came to pass in the last century that the English binders altogether omitted the leather, and covered with paper both the sides and back. Strictly speaking, those books were not bound at all; they were merely cased — that is, sheathed in boards. A casing of this kind was the most temporary of makeshifts. Every librarian knows how fragile are the paper and pasteboard which envelop the books of the last century. The back is prone to crack and to peel off, and the sides are prompt to break away; the method was as slovenly and as inconvenient as possible.

Early in this century the disadvantage of paper-covered boards led to the use of plain glazed calico in place of the paper. There was at first no thought of decoration: the plain

calico was substituted for the plain paper because it was stronger and did not chip and tear quite so easily; the title was still printed on a label of white paper, and pasted on the back of the volume. The exact date of this improvement is in doubt. I have among my *Sheridaniana* the third edition of Dr. Watkins's "Memoirs of the Public and Private Life of the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan," printed for Henry Colburn in 1818, and both volumes are clad in glazed calico, with a slightly ribbed surface and of a faded purple tint. The date of the biography is that of the binding. "Constable's Miscellany," the publication of which was begun in 1827, said to have been the first collection regularly bound in cloth; the cases were covered in the simplest fashion with plain calico, and distinguished by a paper label. The edition of Byron's works in seventeen volumes published in 1833 is supposed to have been the first work issued without the paper label, and with the title printed in gold on the backs of the books; but certain volumes of a series of "Oxford English Classics" may perhaps have preceded this "Byron."



PRIDE
and
PREJUDICE
by
Jane Austen
Illustrated by
Hugh Thomson

Designed by Hugh Thomson.

Published by Macmillan & Co.

"PRIDE AND PREJUDICE." BY JANE AUSTEN.

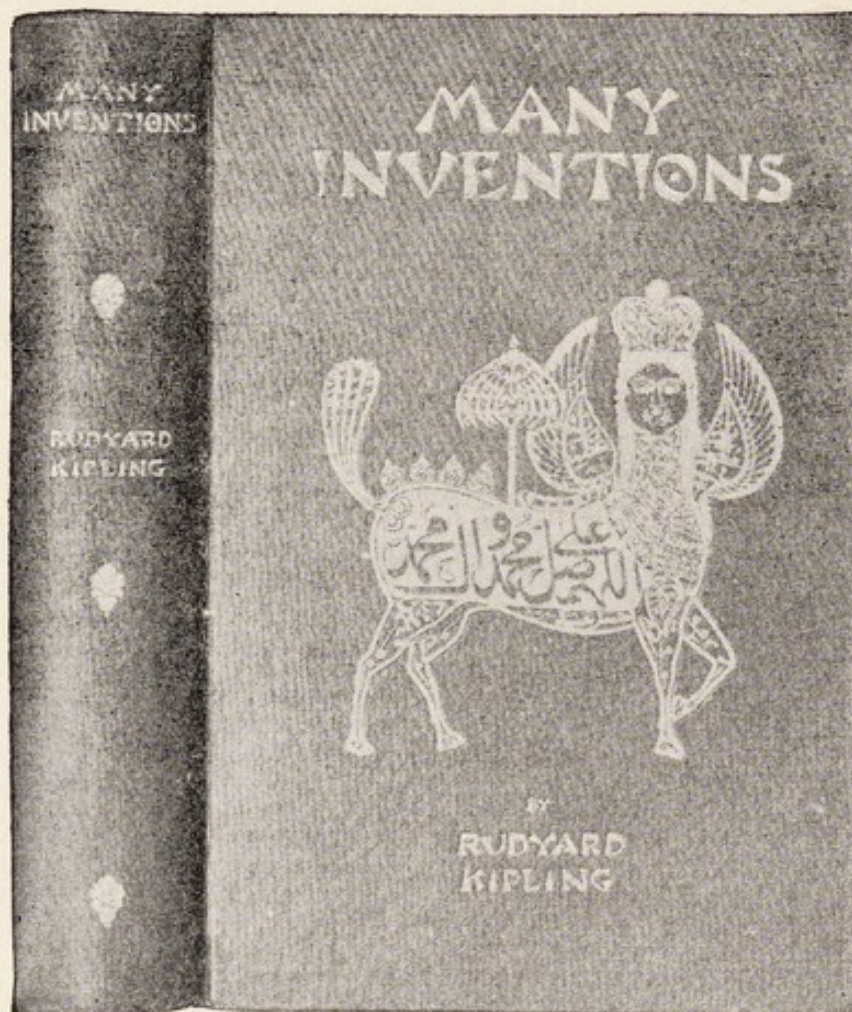
185



Stamping was probably done by a handpress, such as British binders kept ready to impress on the sides of leather-covered volumes the broad block with the owner's arms. From this "arming-press," as it was called, has been evolved by slow degrees the powerful and rapid machinery of the modern bindery. Murray's "Family Library" was probably the first series on which the title was printed with ordinary ink. Then came, in 1832, Charles Knight's "Penny Magazine," and, in 1833, his "Penny Cyclopædia," the successive volumes of which were bound by Archibald Leighton in stamped cloth. Mr. Wheatley says that at first the cloth was stamped before it was put on the boards, a proceeding which proved unsatisfactory from the beginning, so the boards were covered with cloth, which was then stamped.

Thereafter the art speedily improved. The cloth was dyed to any desired colour; and it was run through rollers to give it any desired grain or texture. The old-fashioned arming-press was modified and made stronger;

and steam was swiftly substituted for foot-power. Subsequent improvements enabled the pattern to be imprinted on the side and back of the book in as many colours as an artist



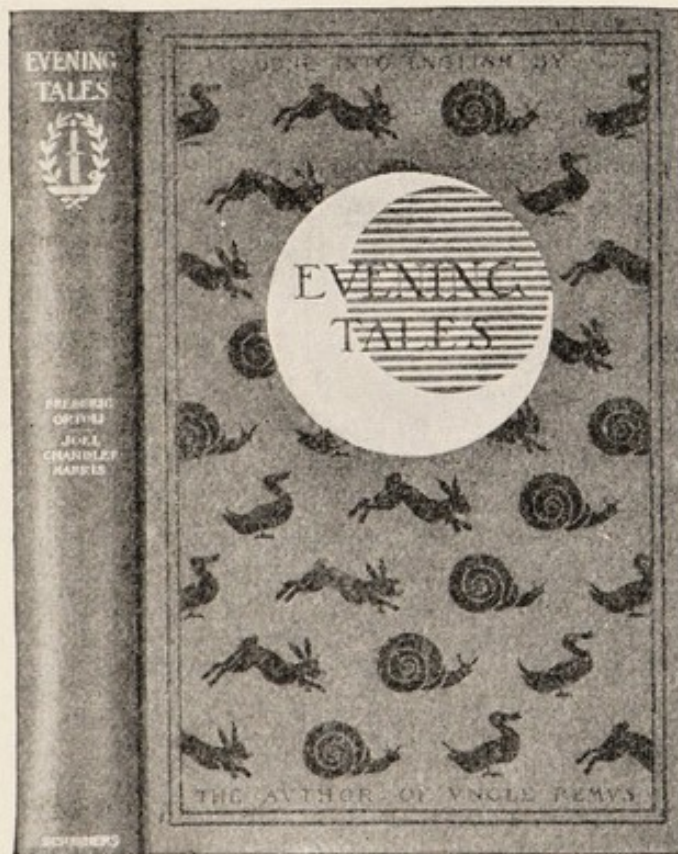
Designed by Harold B. Sherwin (the Figure by J. L. Kipling).
Published by D. Appleton & Co.

“MANY INVENTIONS,” BY RUDYARD KIPLING.

could use to advantage or the publisher was willing to pay for. And the work can be done with extraordinary speed; it is no unusual thing now for a bindery to turn out

several thousand copies of a book in the course of twenty-four hours.

Here we come to the essential difference between bookbinding by hand and bookbinding by machinery. In artistic hand-work the



Designed by Margaret N. Armstrong.

Published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

"EVENING TALES," BY JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS.

book is bound in leather and then decorated. In edition work the cloth case is made and decorated apart from the book itself, which is afterward fastened in. The former is a slow process, and in its higher manifestations

it is an art. The latter is a rapid process, and it is wholly mechanical, except in so far as the designer of the stamp is concerned. And therefore it is on the designer of the stamp that the duty lies of making beautiful



Designed by D. S. Maccoll. Published by T. Fisher Unwin, London.

"GREEK VASE PAINTINGS," BY D. S. MACCOLL AND J. E. HARRISON.

the books demanded by our modern and democratic civilization.

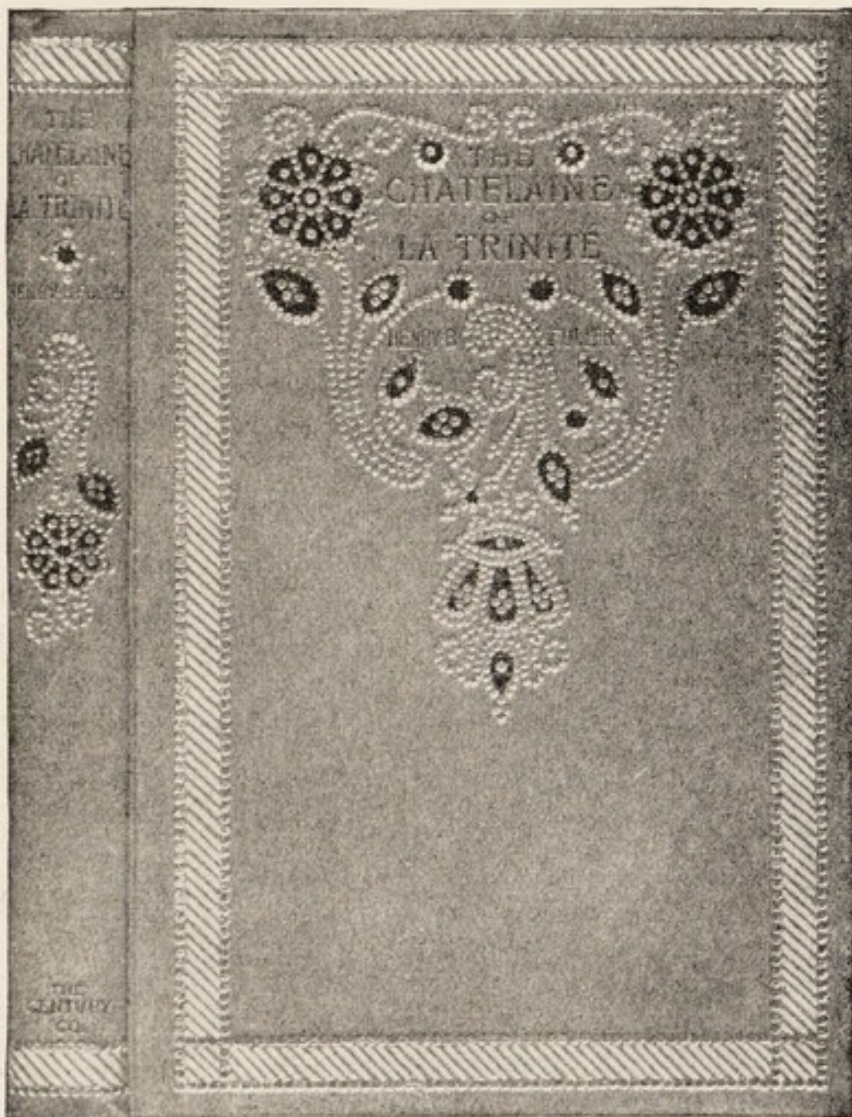
In Great Britain those who were called upon to invent ornament for the outside of clothbound books were free from the disad-

vantages under which their fellow-labourers in France were placed. In France there still lingered the dominating influence of the traditions of the great bibliopegic artists of the past, and there was pressure on the designer to devise a decoration which should make his machine-made cloth cover look like the slowly tooled leather of a book bound by hand. In England where the solid cloth-casing was hailed as a manifest improvement on the flimsy paper-boards which had immediately preceded it, there existed no such pressure, for no one seemed to see any necessary connection between the new cloth-work and the old artistic leather-work. So the designers were at liberty to develop a new form of decoration suitable to the new conditions. In this endeavour they have been unexpectedly successful; indeed, there is hardly any form of modern decorative art which has achieved its aim more satisfactorily. One might hazard the suggestion that there has been less copying and less conventionality, more inventiveness and greater appropriateness, in the commercial

bindings of England and America during the past thirty years than in the avowedly artistic "extra" binding.

Of course there have been countless millions of tomes disfigured by hideous covers; and of course every one of us can recall cloth cases which were the epitome of everything they should not be. But a selection of machine-made covers most pleasing to the trained taste is equally easy. When Thoreau bought back the many unsold copies of his first book, "A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers," remarking with characteristic humour that he had now a library of nearly nine hundred volumes, more than seven hundred of which he had written himself, he had added to his collection books probably quite as appropriately bound as those which he owned before. No doubt if he could see the neat attire his "Walden" wears now that it is included in the trim and tasteful Riverside Aldine Series, Thoreau would acknowledge that he could ask no fitter garb for his offspring. Nor could there be anything more modestly satisfactory

than the maidenly simplicity of the little tomes in this series, with their smooth blue cloth, with their chaste lettering, and with



Designed by Alice E. Morse. Published by the Century Co.

“THE CHÂTELAINE OF LA TRINITÉ,” BY HENRY B. FULLER.

the golden anchor of Aldus — a hopeful emblem of good books yet to come.

In comparing many modern books to select illustrations and examples for this paper, I

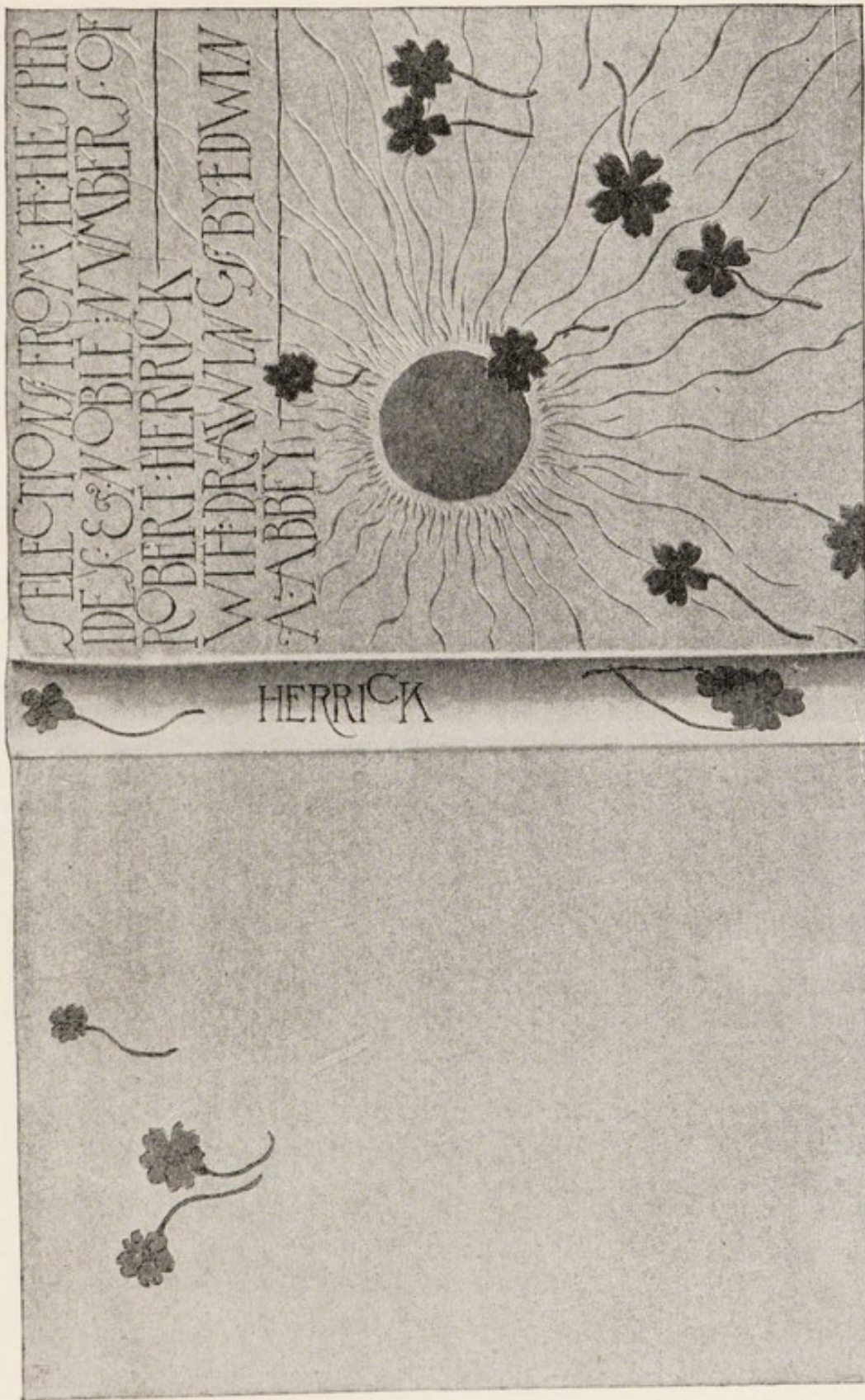
have been led to the conclusion that there is more thought given to book-decoration in the United States than in Great Britain.



Designed by Hugh Thomson. Published by Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., London.

"THE BALLAD OF BEAU BROCADE," BY AUSTIN DOBSON.

There are not a few beautiful book-covers to be found in the shops of British booksellers, but not so many, I venture to think, as might be collected from American publishers. And



SELECTIONS FROM THE SPIRITUALS OF ROBERT HERRICK WITHDRAWN BY EDWIN A. ABBEY

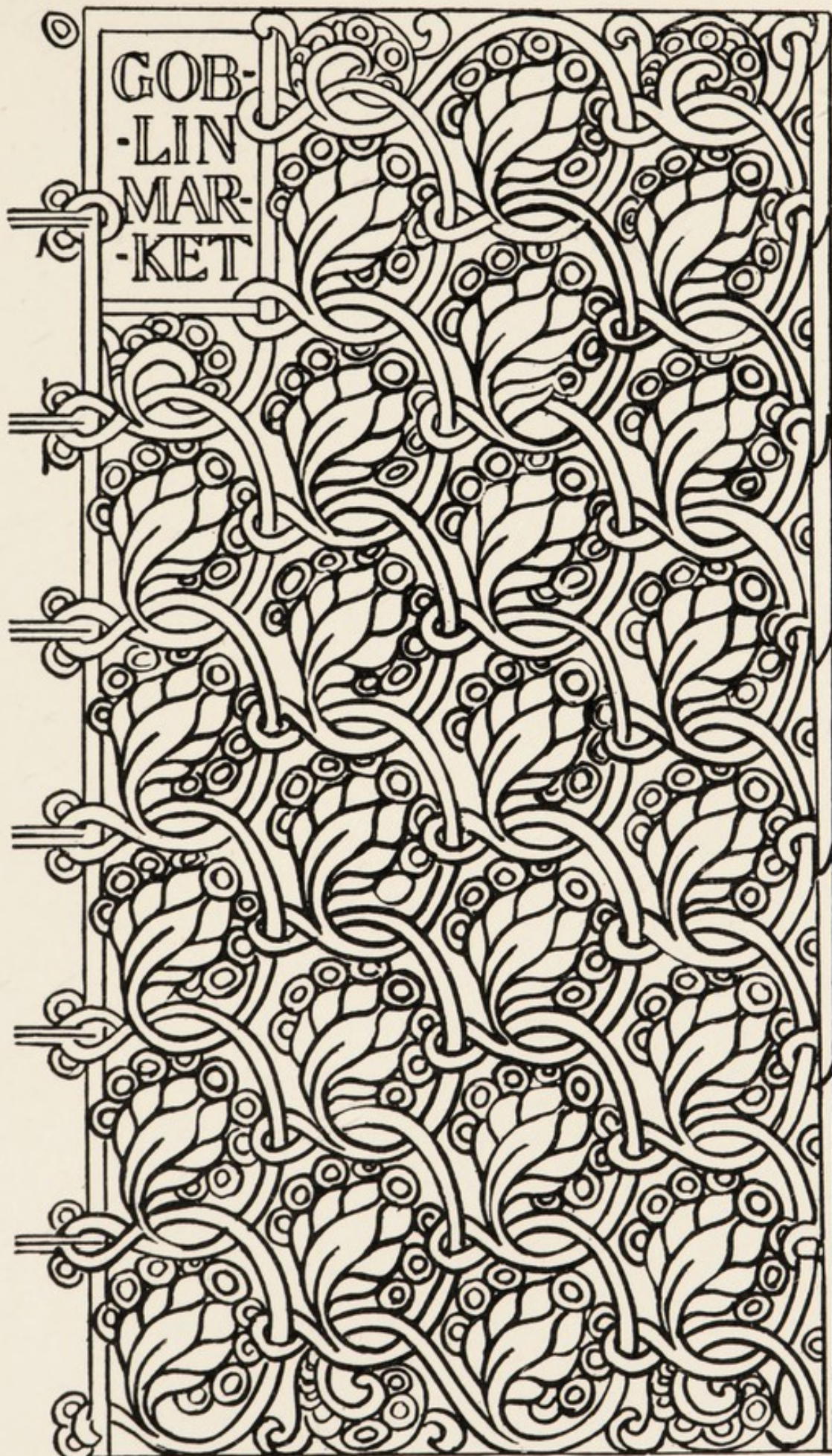
HERRICK

Published by Harper & Bros.

"SELECTIONS FROM ROBERT HERRICK."

Designed by Edwin A. Abbey.





Designed by Laurence Housman.

Published by Macmillan & Co.

"GOBLIN MARKET." BY CHRISTINA ROSSETTI,

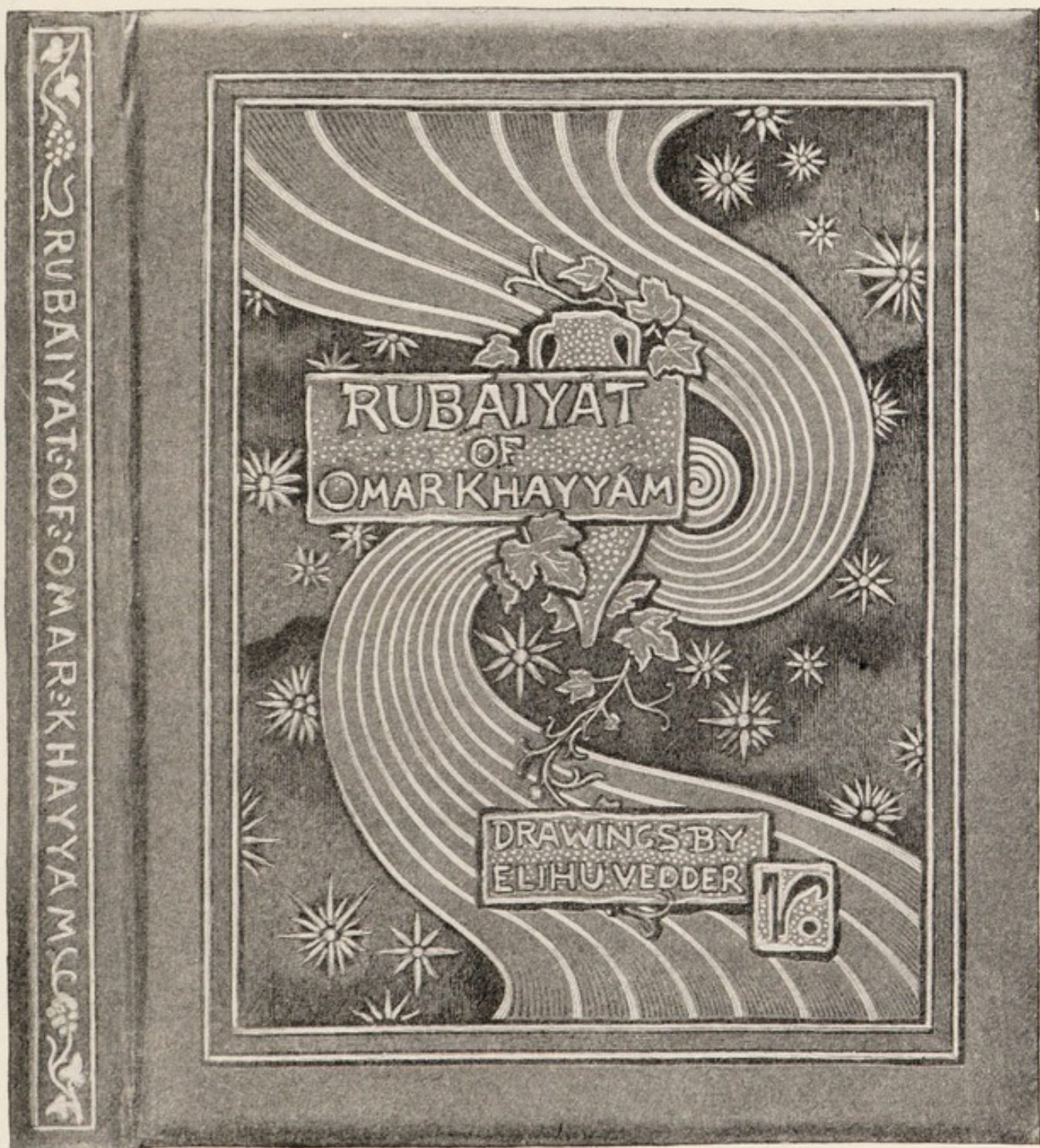


the reason of this, I take it, is partly that the British are borrowers of new books rather than buyers, and partly that the British still desire to have the books worth owning bound finally in leather, and they therefore still look upon the cloth case as merely a temporary convenience. The American reader, for the most part, accepts the cloth binding as a permanency; and the American publisher is moved, therefore, to expend more time and attention on the decoration of the books he offers for sale.

Consider, for example, the gaudy cover which the British publisher put on Mr. Du Chaillu's "Land of the Midnight Sun," and compare it with that prepared by Mr. E. A. Abbey for the American edition. A true book-lover would be in haste to get Mr. Du Chaillu's entertaining work out of the British cloth case; but he would feel it absurd to wish to rebind a copy adorned with Mr. Abbey's cover. He would be ready to echo Hawthorne's protest against those who "strip off the real skin of a book to put it into fine clothes."

Again, take Mr. Vedder's remarkable edition of Fitzgerald's "Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyám," for which the artist designed the cover-stamp. To rebind this folio, even in the most sumptuous crushed levant, is to deprive one's self of not the least interesting of the illustrations by which the American painter has interpreted the Persian poet. And what could be more ingenious or more characteristic than the Dutch tile which is seemingly set into the golden cover of the "Sketching Rambles in Holland" of Mr. George H. Boughton and Mr. E. A. Abbey?

Simplicity is an ingredient of dignity, and there are book-lovers who love simplicity above all things, having a Jansenist taste even in cloth bindings. There is nothing noisy or fussy in the cover of Mr. Harold Frederic's "In the Valley," due to the pencil of Mr. Harold Magonigle, or in the cover of Mr. Aldrich's "Sisters' Tragedy," with its severe and yet elegant myrtle wreath designed by Mrs. Whitman. To Mrs. Whitman also is due the credit for the tea-leaf border of Dr.



Designed by Elihu Vedder.

Published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

"RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM."



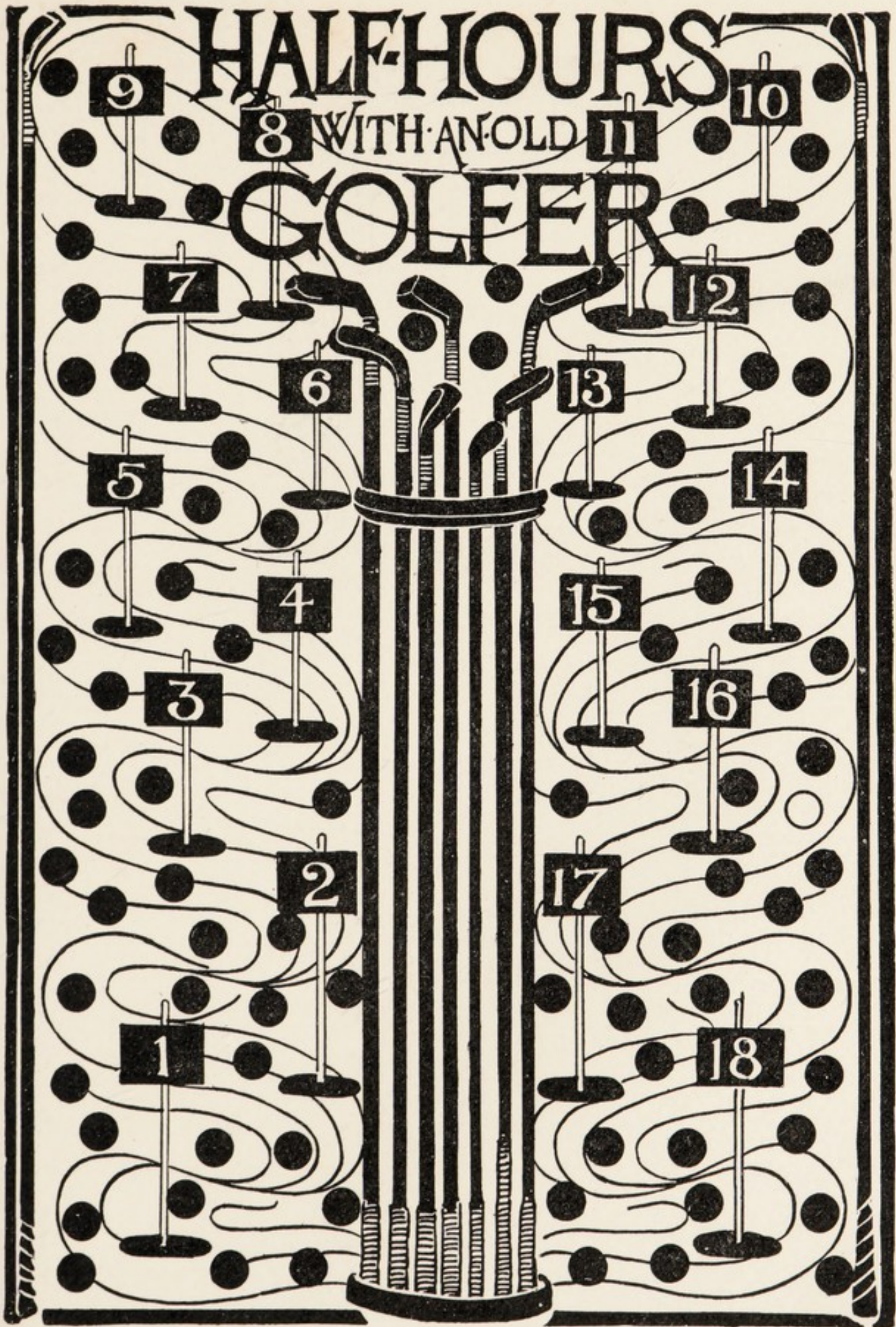
Holmes's "Over the Tea-cups" with its vigorous lettering, and its subordinate teapot of a fashion now gone by. None of Mrs. Whitman's book-covers are frivolous or finicky; they have always reserve and purity.

Yet decorations of this chaste severity are not alone on our book-shelves; and there are not a few devised on other principles and compounded in another fashion. Some satisfaction there is in finding an old German woodcut border doing duty on the cover of Mr. Woodberry's "History of Wood Engraving," or in observing the apt use of the orange with its full fruit and its green leaves as they are wreathed in the arabesques of the medallions which adorn the back and side of Mr. Lafcadio Hearn's "Two Years in the French West Indies," and which were designed by Miss Alice E. Morse, with a full understanding of the value of colour on a book-cover, and an apt appreciation of the technical means whereby it is best to be attained.

It is essential to good decorative design, whatever its kind, whether it be a book-cover or a

wall-paper, a carpet or a tapestry, a carved panel or an inlaid floor, that the artist shall recognize technical limitations, shall preserve technical possibilities, and shall be in sympathy with the materials employed. The decorative artist must be swift to seize that one of the processes presenting themselves which will best suit his immediate object. "One reason for our modern failures lies in the multitude of our facilities," suggests Mr. Lewis F. Day in his little book on the "Application of Ornament," and he adds that "the secret of the ancient triumphs is often in the simplicity of the workman's resources." Where a man has but a single tool, he must perforce devise ornament which that single tool can accomplish, or else go without ornament altogether. Out of the struggle comes strength.

When we see the rather violently polychromatic cover which that most accomplished artist Jules Jacquemart placed on the book on "La Céramique" illustrated by him, we cannot but wonder whether he would not have given us something quieter and more



Designed by G. A. Laundry.

Published by George Bell and Sons.

"HALF HOURS WITH AN OLD GOLFER."



beautiful if the resources of modern colour-printing had not been ready to his hand. And yet, nothing venture, nothing have; the decorative artist, if he wishes to get outside the little circle of every-day banality, must try the hazard of new fortunes as often and



Designed by Harold B. Sherwin. Published by the Century Co.

PANEL FROM BACK AND COVER OF "OLD ITALIAN MASTERS."

as boldly as the explorer or the soldier. Often he will discover strange countries fair to see, which he will annex forthwith.

Sometimes the search for novelty is rewarded only by a chance fantasticality. A volume of ghost-stories by Mrs. Molesworth

had a plain cloth cover, from the side of which, as one gazed at it, there seemed suddenly to start a shadowy figure—due to a stamp which did no more than remove the glaze of the calico, not changing its colour. Colonel Norton's glossary of "Political Americanisms" was covered with a dark-blue cloth turned inside out, and exposing a blue-gray grain, on which there was printed, in the original dark blue, the title, set off by the figure of the fearsome gerrymander. But these are trifles—the casual freaks of commercial bibliopeggy.

III.

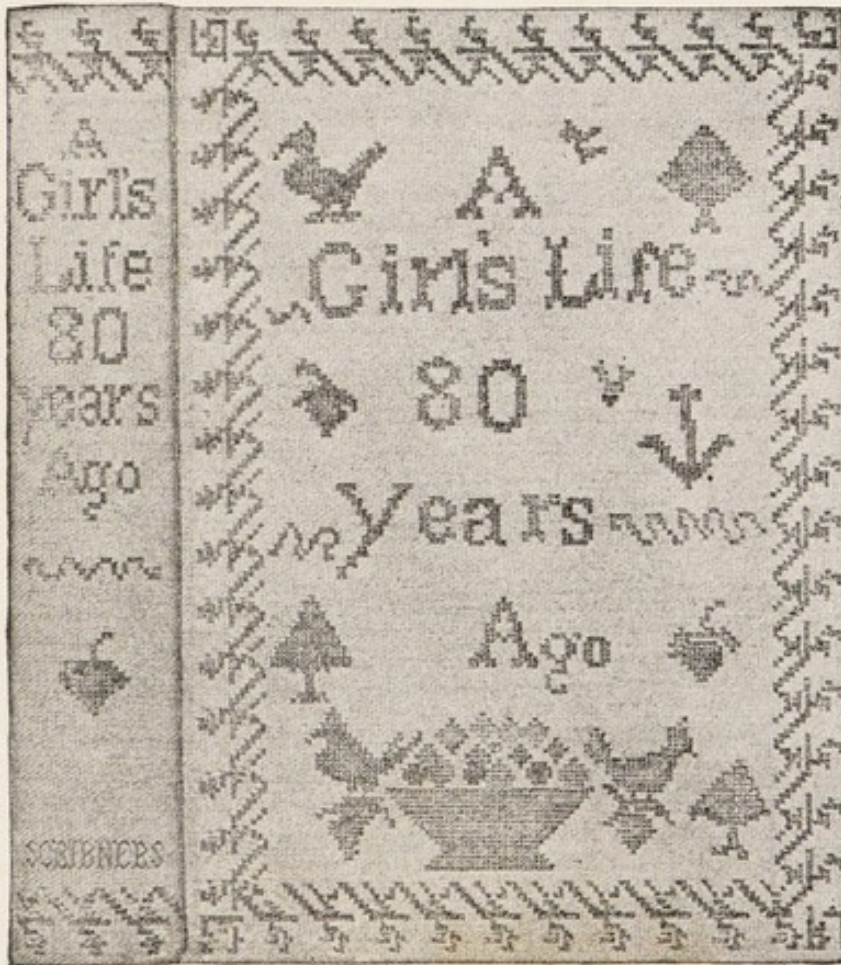
THE SEARCH FOR NOVELTY.

MORE fertile is the effort to find special cloths for special books, to enlarge the number of fabrics from which the binder may choose. The very step in advance which M. Octave Uzanne urged upon the artistic bookbinders of France has been taken by the commercial bookbinders of America; and we are constantly seeing new stuffs impressed into the service. M. Uzanne claims the invention of the *cartonnage à la Pompadour*, the clothing of a light and lively tale of the eighteenth century in a brocade or a damask of the period. This is almost exactly what a publisher in Boston did when he sent forth Mrs. Higginson's "Princess of Java," clad in the cotton which the Javanese wear. It was what a publisher in New York did when he sent forth Mr. Lafcadio Hearn's "Youma,"

the story of a slave, covered with the simple fabric that slaves dress in. It was what a London publisher did when he sent forth a tiny little tome of old-time fashions, "Our Grandmothers' Gowns," bound with the chintzes and calicoes of bygone days.

The American edition of Charles Lamb's "Poetry for Children" was issued by Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons in a half-binding of some woven material such as is used in the nursery for the pinafores of childhood; and the same publisher covered Mr. Riis's stimulating account of "How the Other Half Lives," with a stuff very like that from which the labourer's overalls are made, a most appropriate garment for a book like Mr. Riis's. Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co. have made experiment of a more æsthetic fabric, Persian silk; they used it for the back of Miss Jewett's "Strangers and Wayfarers," on which it contrasted boldly with the white side bearing Mrs. Whitman's decorative lettering imprinted in the colour of the silk; and they employed it again for Browning's latest volume of poems, "Asolando," in

this case covering the whole book, one side of which was further decorated by a dignified panel and border of Mrs. Whitman's designing. I know of no recent commercial binding more satisfactory than this, or more adequate



A copy of the sampler worked by the "girl." Lettered by A. Hilgenreiner, die-cutter. Published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

"A GIRL'S LIFE 80 YEARS AGO," BY ELIZA SOUTHGATE BOWNE.

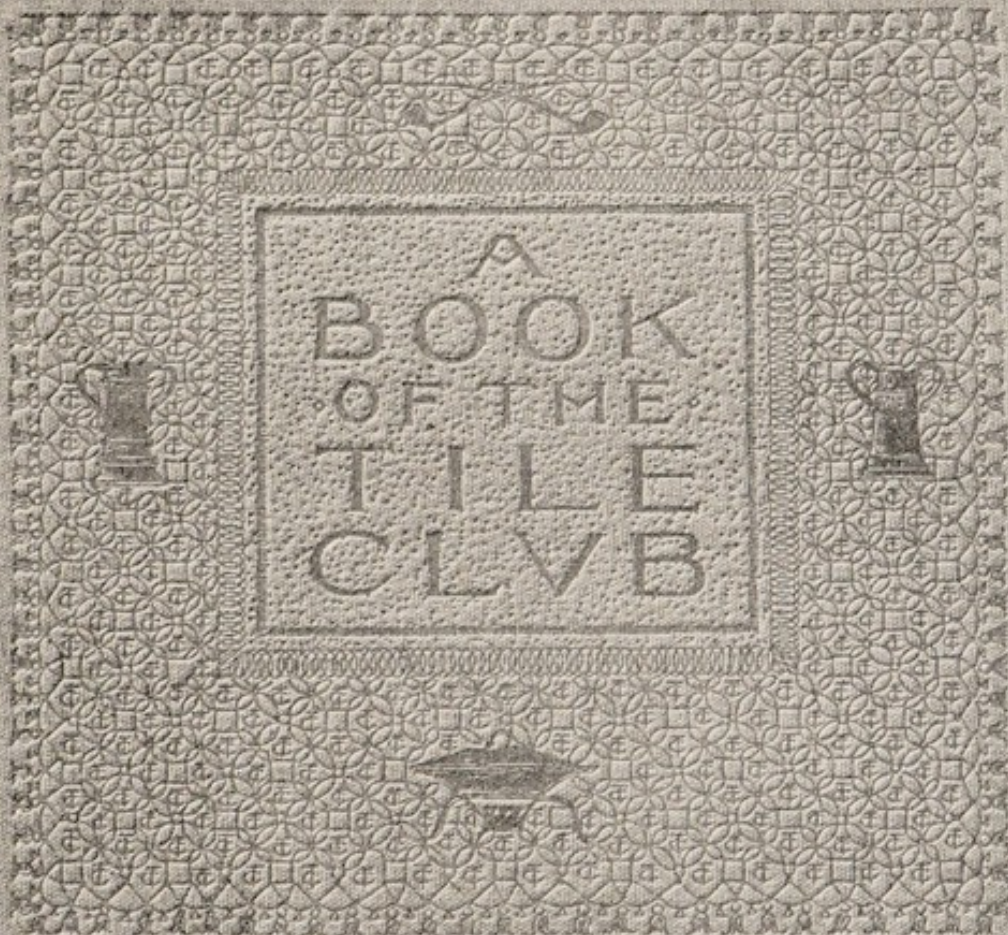
to its purpose, the appropriate sheathing of a poet's last words.

This same house published the "Book of the Tile Club," a portly folio bound in sturdy

canvas — a material already used by Mr. Marvin (for Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons) in the cover of "A Girl's Life 80 Years Ago" (whereon the title was printed in imitation of a child's sampler, a pleasant fantasy). The "Book of the Tile Club" was altogether a more imposing tome, with its delightfully decorative side-stamp by Mr. Stanford White, with its prominent (not to call them aggressive) nerves across the back, with its brass-bound corners, with every page separately and securely mounted on a linen guard, and with its personal and peculiar end-papers wherein we can trace the portraits or insignia of the Tilers, with every one his *nom de guerre*. "The Book of the Tile Club" was aimed high; and it hit its mark fairly and squarely in the bull's eye.

End-papers of special design are among the refinements of book-making, which might be seen oftener than they are when publishers are giving time and thought to the preparation of an exceptional volume. Those in the Grolier Club edition of the "Philobiblon" were admirably

BOOK
OF
THE
TILE
CLUB



MDCCCLXXVII.

Designed by Stanford White.

"A BOOK OF THE TILE CLUB."

Published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co.



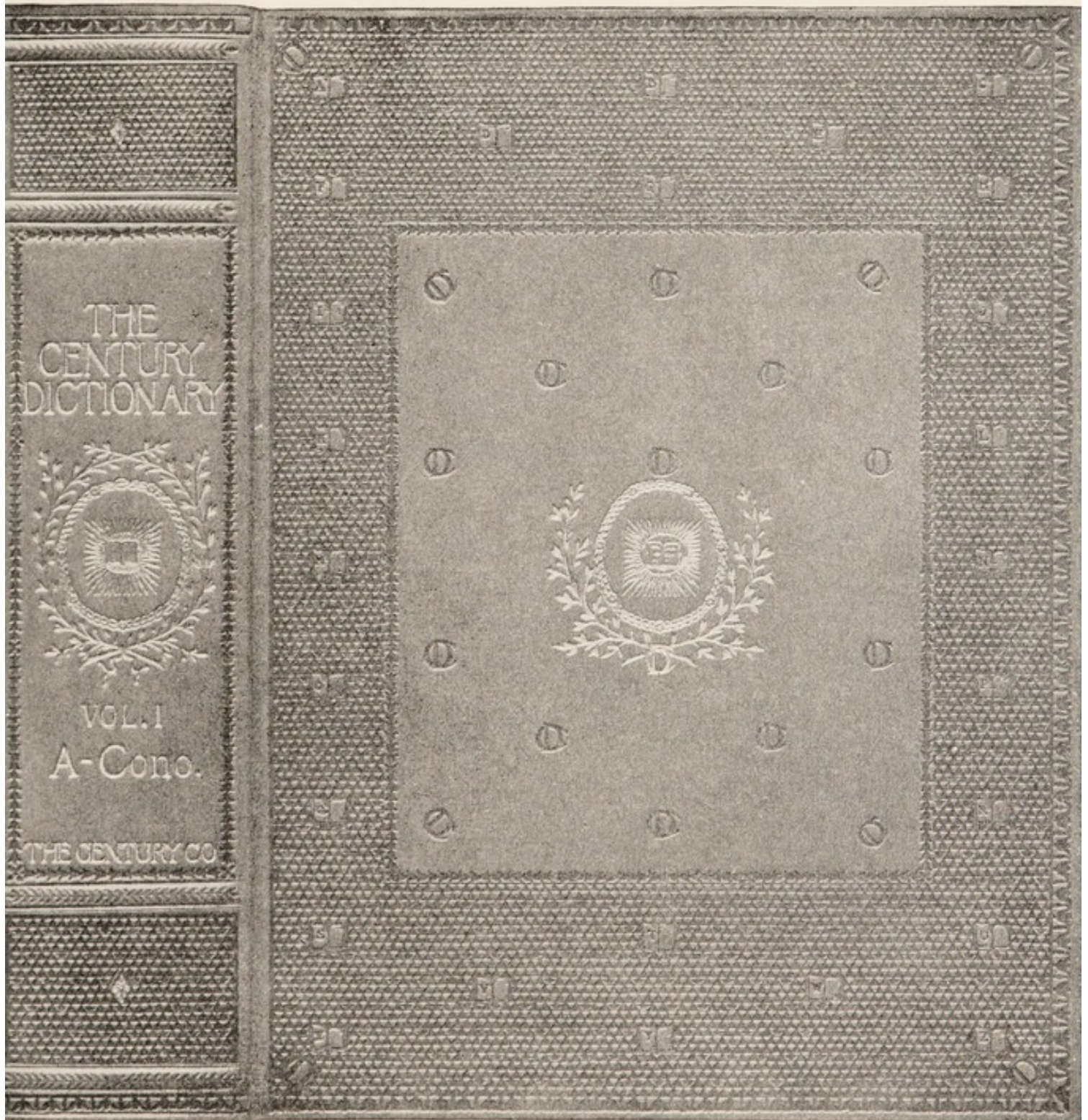
in keeping with the text. They may even be made useful, as they were in Dr. Eggleston's histories of the United States, where they are maps. But supplementary delicacies of this sort can be expected only when, in the phrase of the cockney art-critic, "the book is illustrated by the celebrated French artist De Luxe."

Still rarer is another ancillary adornment to be found in certain proof copies of Mr. W. J. Loftie's "Kensington: Picturesque and Historical." These, it was announced by the publisher, would "have painted in water-colours on the front, under the gilt edges of the leaves, a couple of Kensington views, which, until the leaves are bent back at an angle, will be invisible." In Mr. S. P. Avery's copy of the Grolier Club edition of Irving's "Knickerbocker," the water-colours under the gilt of the fore-edge are the work of Mr. G. H. Boughton. But this is an excursus. There are so many byways of booklore that the book-lover can hardly help digressing occasionally.

IV.

STAMPED LEATHER.

FROM the beginning commercial binding has concerned itself chiefly with cloth, with but an occasional venture with other fabrics,—linen, or dimity, or silk. The few copies of certain single books, and of full sets of certain authors, which publishers now and again advertise as ready in half-calf, in tree-calf, or in crushed levant-morocco are not really commercial bindings; they are more or less artistic bindings done chiefly by hand, but done wholesale. Generally they are to be avoided by all who hope to see their books really well bound, for they lack the loving care with which a conscientious craftsman treats the single volume intrusted to him to bind as best he can; and they are also without the merits of another sort which we find in the best cloth coverings. Sometimes, of course, the sets which publishers offer in leather are honestly forwarded



Designed by Stanford White.

"THE CENTURY DICTIONARY."

Published by the Century Co.



and thoroughly finished: but for the most part they are hasty and soulless.

To the true book-lover's eye no crushed levant can be too fine or too magnificent for the book he truly loves:

In red morocco drest he loves to boast,
The bloody murder, or the yelling ghost:
Or dismal ballads, sung to crowds of old,
Now cheaply bought for thrice their weight in gold.

Knowing this, some American publishers have issued the whole edition of certain books bound in full leather, and with the covers stamped in appropriate designs. Here we have the methods of the best cloth-binding applied to the best material, leather. These books are as carefully forwarded and finished as though they were hand-work; indeed, almost the only objection the purist might make against them would be the saw-cuts in the back; and this objection is minimized by the fact that the volume is now permanently clothed, and that there will therefore be no need to rebind it.

Although plates were engraved even in the fifteenth century to stamp the sides of leather-

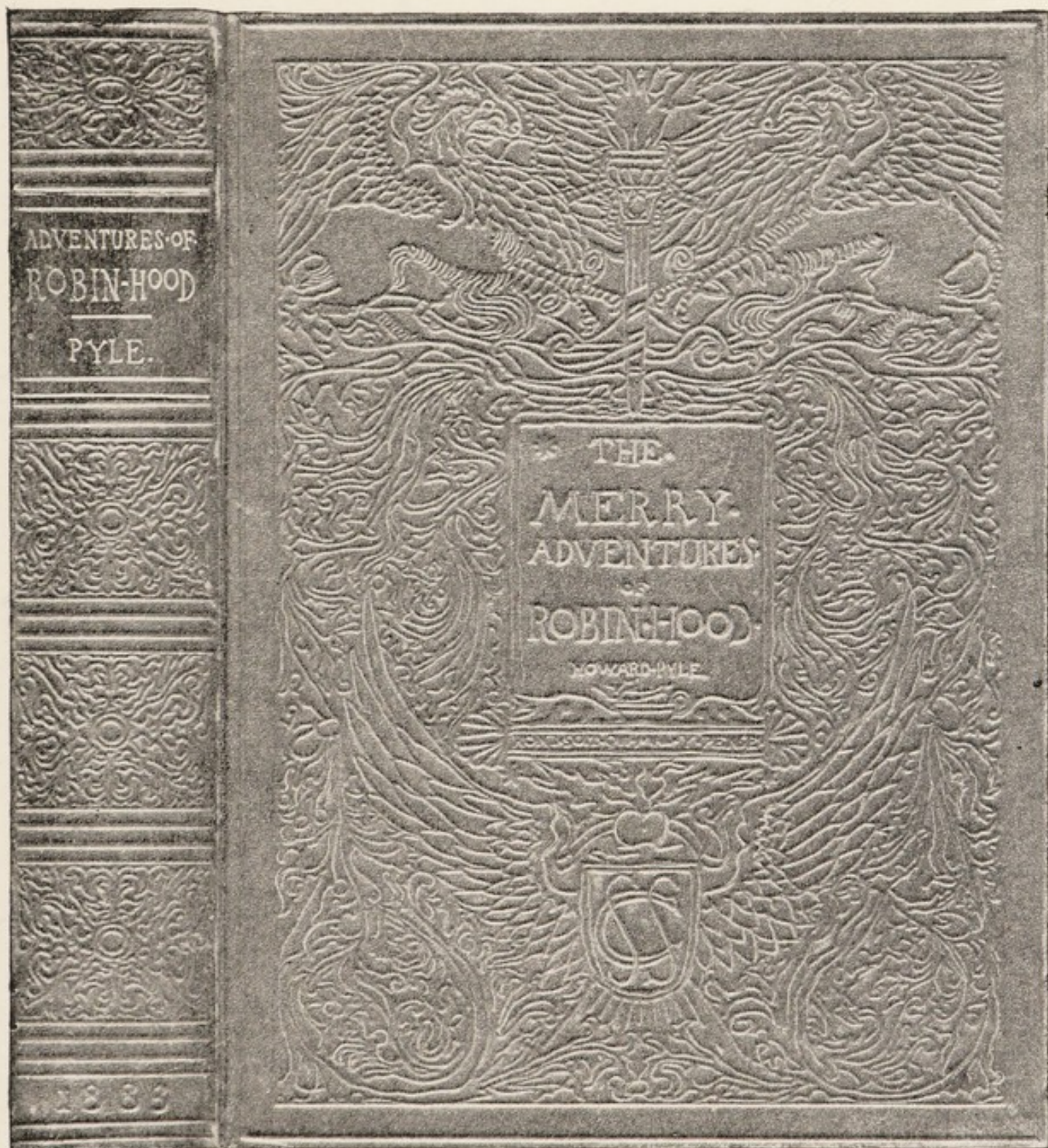
bound books, the practice had long ceased except so far as dictionaries, prayer-books, and bibles were concerned; and even in its palmiest days the plate was an imitation of a hand-tooled side, and not an original design of a nature appropriate to the individual book. It is the



Designed by George Wharton Edwards. Published by the Century Co.

“THUMB-NAIL SKETCHES,” BY GEORGE WHARTON EDWARDS.

quality of modern commercial bookbinding that it has separated itself wholly from the traditions of hand-tooling, and that it stands on its own merits. Consider the massive and substantial solidity of the side-stamp Mr. Stanford White designed for the “Cen-



Designed by Howard Pyle.

Published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

"THE MERRY ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD," BY HOWARD PYLE.

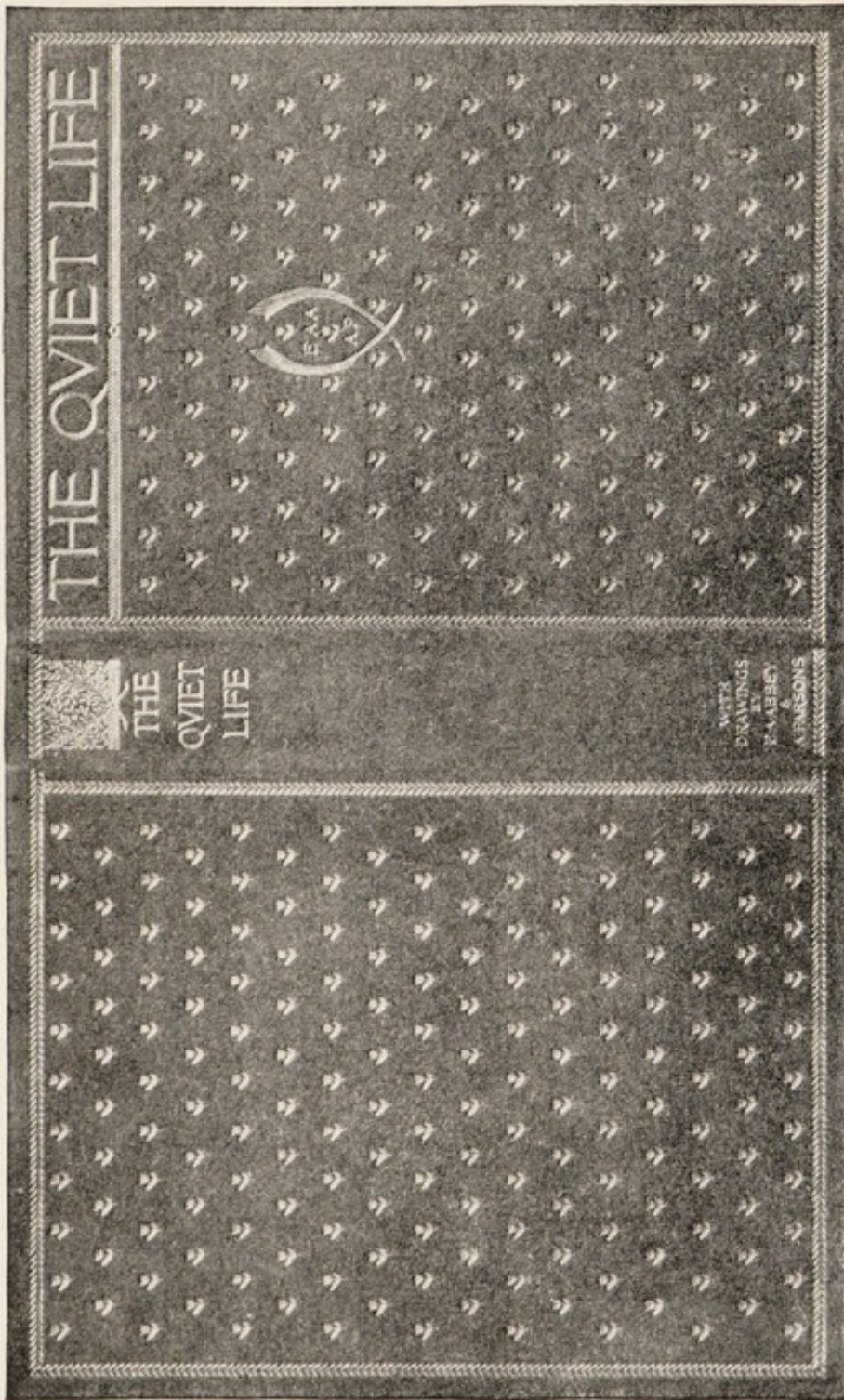


tury Dictionary," and note how different it is in its vigorous firmness from even the most elaborate hand-tooling. Technically, this dictionary cover is most interesting, for the design is impressed on damp sheepskin by a heated plate, which changes the tone of the leather, thus imparting to the decoration colour as well as relief.

Although I recall the stamped leather cover of the photolithographic facsimile of the first folio of Shakspeare, — blind-tooled in accordance with Teutonic tradition, — I think that it is only within the past few years, and here in the United States, that publishers have made a practice of issuing the whole edition of certain beautiful books bound in leather stamped by machinery as though it were cloth. Mr. Howard Pyle's re-setting of "Robin Hood" was issued by Messrs. Charles Scribner's Son's in 1883 with a leather cover embossed with a Düreresque design by the artist-author. Then came the lovely volumes illustrated by Mr. E. A. Abbey with the collaboration of Mr. Alfred Parsons, and published by Messrs. Harper & Brothers. For Goldsmith's

“She Stoops to Conquer,” an ample folio, Mr. Stanford White devised a cover decoration, modern, tasteful, and graceful; a border surrounded the two sides and the back, here treated as if they were a single plane surface (although outlined straps crossed the back); and a cartouche on the side held the title of the work and the name of the artist who had made the sprightly and refined drawings that illustrated it. The gold of the lettering was of a different tone from the gold of the decorative design; and by another mechanical device the filleted border was filled by a ribbed surface.

Quite as effective as this, although simpler, was the cover of “The Quiet Life” of Messrs. Abbey and Parsons, with its powder of flowers, also due to the ingenuity of Mr. White. From the same publishers have since come the “Old Songs” by the same illustrators, the “Sonnets by William Wordsworth,” with drawings by Mr. Parsons alone, and “The Boyhood of Christ,” of General Lew Wallace, the covers of which were all conceived in the same spirit as the two earlier



Designed by Stanford White.

Published by Harper & Bros.

"THE QUIET LIFE."

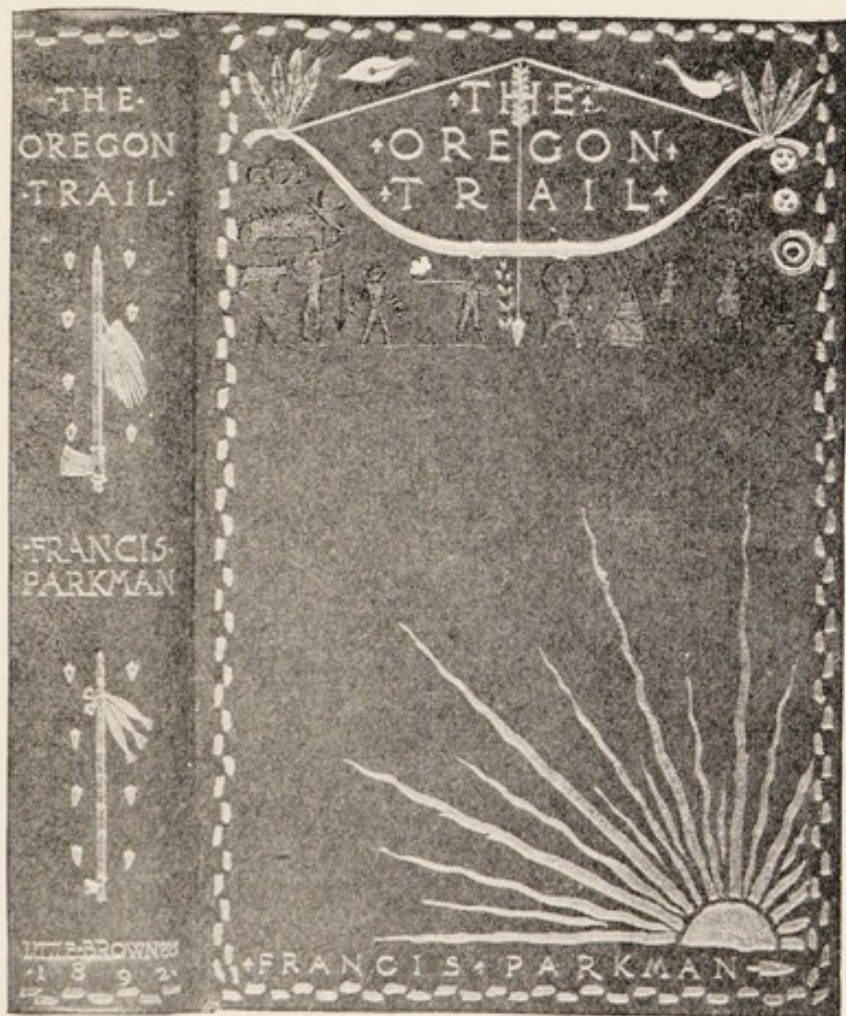


books, although they lacked something of the distinction Mr. White gave to his handiwork. For the edition of Longfellow's "Hiawatha," to the illustrating of which Mr. Frederic Remington brought his extraordinary knowledge of Indian manners and modes of thought, the publishers, Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., prepared a most appropriate cover of buckskin, and on the rough, brown-red surface of this Mrs. Whitman's side-stamp stood out brilliantly. So far as I know, buckskin had not before been used in bookbinding in America, although it seems to be a fit material to clothe the many books of frontier life: the late Édouard Fournier records that many of the old monkish bindings were of deerskin — so, as usual, the novelty turns out to be an antiquity.

Vellum, which was once a favourite material with the old bookbinders, has gone out of use almost everywhere except in Italy. It was employed in covering the "Autobiography of Joseph Jefferson," for which Mr. George Wharton Edwards designed a rich and ingen-

ious Renaissance side-stamp to be embossed on the yielding leather. Vellum was also utilized by the Grolier Club to clothe its unequalled edition of the "Philobiblon," but in this case the only decoration was the seal of the good Bishop of Bury.

HERE I come to the end of my notes on the art of commercial bookbinding, an art which, in this mechanic age, is perhaps most flourishing in this country of inventive mechanics. It is one of the most important forms of household art—of decorative art. Properly understood, and intelligently practised, it is capable of educating the taste even of the thoughtless, and of giving keen enjoyment to those who love books for their own sake. There needs no argument to prove that it is not an art to despise which has called forth the energy of M. Giacomelli and Jules Jacquemart, of Mr. William Morris and Mr. Walter Crane, of Mr. E. A. Abbey, Mr. Elihu Vedder, and Mr. Howard Pyle, of Mr. Stanford White and Mrs. Whitman.



Designed by J. A. Schweinfurth. Published by Little, Brown & Co.

"THE OREGON TRAIL," BY FRANCIS PARKMAN.



BOOKS IN PAPER-COVERS.



BOOKS IN PAPER-COVERS.



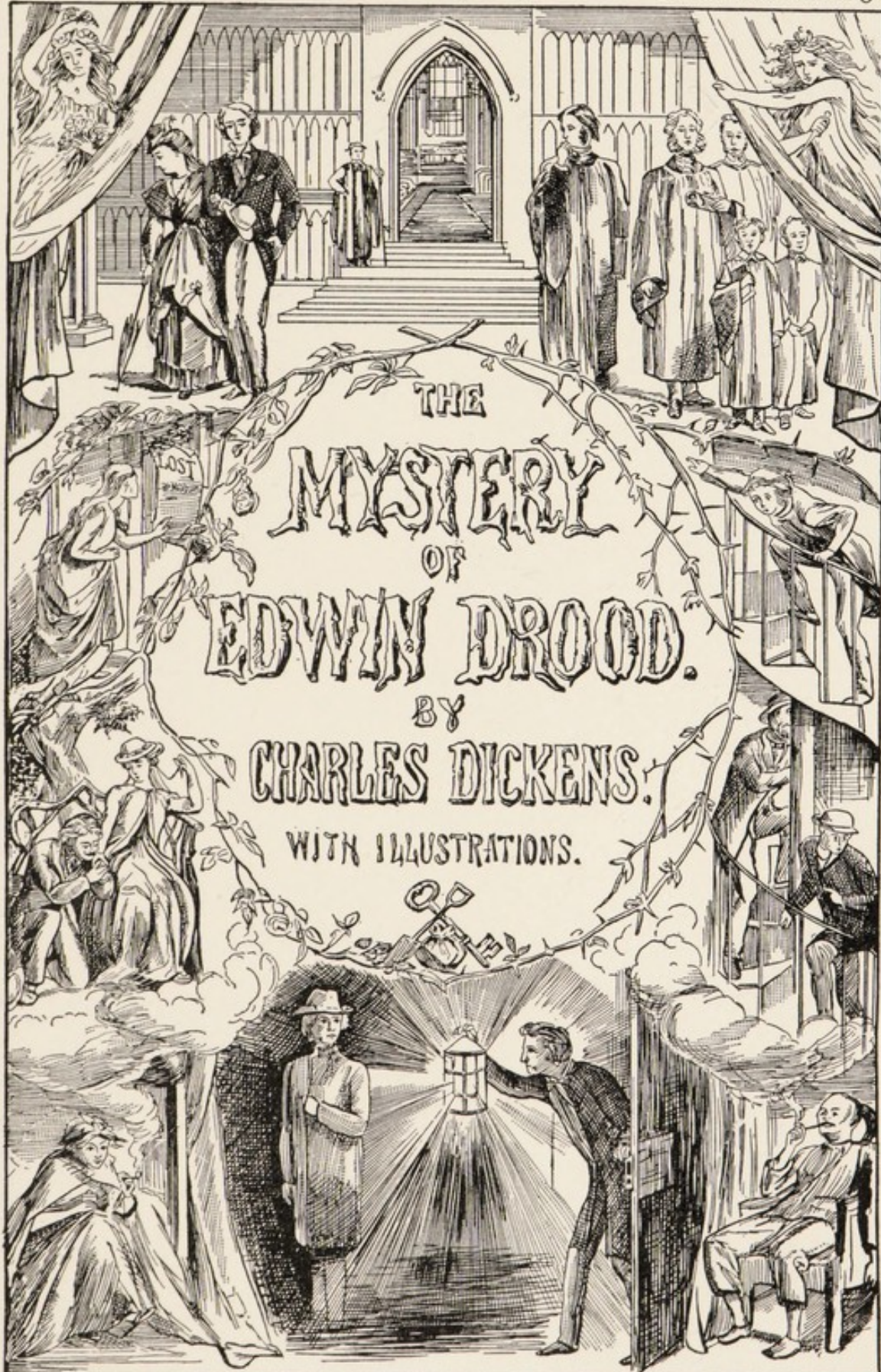
I.

THE SUMMER CLOTHES OF FICTION.

WHEN the soliloquizer in the Spanish Cloister wished to consign Brother Laurence, his soul's abhorrence, to sudden and certain damnation, he determined to place within his enemy's reach his "scrofulous French novel," to look at which is the ruin of the soul. Although the poet does not so declare it in as many words, I have always believed that this scrofulous French novel was loosely clad in a cover of yellow paper, flimsy beyond question, and as easily destroyable as the soul of Brother Laurence.

Whether it be due to the French fiction which the British bard declared to be afflicted with the king's evil, or whether it be due to our

American stories, sentimental and adventurous, of the kind familiar since the war as "dime novels," or whether it be due to some more recondite cause, there is no denying the fact that "yellow-covered literature" is not in good odour with book-lovers. Even the collector who nowadays despises nothing, be it never so humble, treats with contempt volumes stitched into paper-covers — mere *brochures*, as the French call them. So far as I know, not any book-lover is now gathering the books of all sorts which go forth to swift oblivion guarded against hard usage only by a wrapper of paper. There are collectors of book-plates, of postage-stamps, of pictorial posters, but I have never heard of a collector of paper-covers. And yet, as the paper-cover must needs be the work of a typographer or of a colour-printer, of a lithographer or of a designer in black and white, there seems to be no reason why it should be scorned when all else is cherished. The reasons for this neglect are not easy to declare when we consider the many wrappers prepared for magazines, for catalogues, for novels, and for



LONDON: CHAPMAN & HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.

Advertisements to be sent to the Publishers and ADAMS & FRANCIS, 59, Fleet Street E.C.
[The right of Translation is reserved.]



children's books, by artists like Messrs. Elihu Vedder and Stanford White, Will H. Low and Joseph Pennell, Walter Crane and Randolph Caldecott, Luc Olivier Merson, Carloz Schwabe and Jules Chéret.

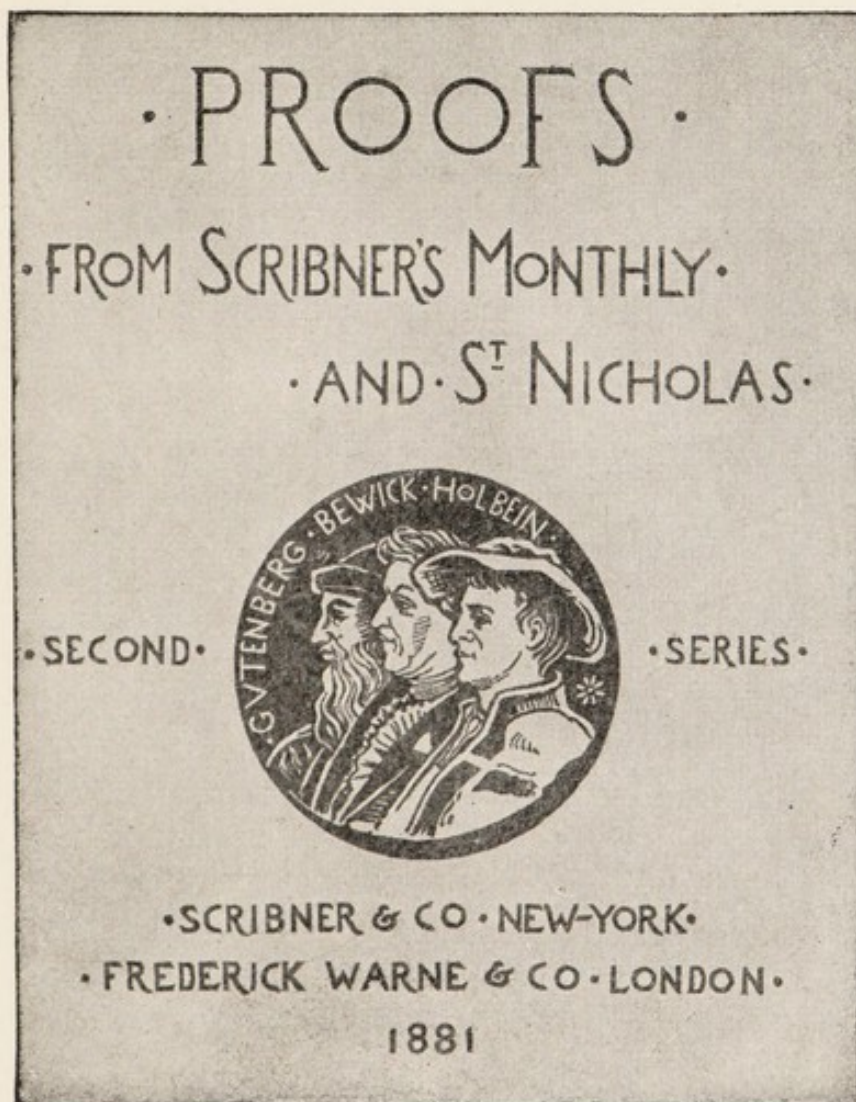
In one of the pleasantest essays of "As we were saying," Mr. Warner discusses the "Clothes of Fiction," and remarks on the summer and the winter apparel of romance. "As certainly as the birds appear comes the crop of summer novels, fluttering down upon the stalls, in procession through the railway trains, littering the drawing-room tables, in light paper-covers, ornamented attractively in colours and fanciful designs, as welcome and grateful as the girls in muslin. . . . In winter we prefer the boards and the rich, heavy binding, however light the tale may be; but in the summer, though the fiction be as grave and tragic as wandering love and bankruptcy, we would have it come to us lightly clad—out of stays, as it were." The publishers understand this desire of the public, and they send forth their summer novels in loosely fitting

garments — fancy flannel shirts, so to speak, and striped blazers.

Sometimes, it may be, the outside is adorned with an illustration taken from the inside of the book, as were Mr. Janvier's "Uncle of an Angel," made attractive by Mr. Smedley's alluring picture of Narragansett Pier, and M. Daudet's "L'Immortel," brightened by M. Rossi's pert ballet dancer. Sometimes the wrapper is treated with decorative sobriety, as was Mr. Howells's "Hazard of New Fortunes," with its sombre symbol of fate. Sometimes, indeed, the outside cover is merely an external title-page, having a chaste typographic beauty quite distinct from the pictorial and from the decorative: such, for example, is the stiff paper casing of Mr. De Vinne's "Plantin and the Plantin-Moretus Museum," as it was sent forth by the Grolier Club. But this typographic severity would seem a little austere, perhaps, if applied to a summer novel: yet it is thus that the popular Scribner yellow-covered series is attired. Akin to this, and yet not wholly similar, are the side-stamps designed

by Mr. Stanford White and by Mr. Francis Lathrop for the successive collections of proofs from the *Century* magazine.

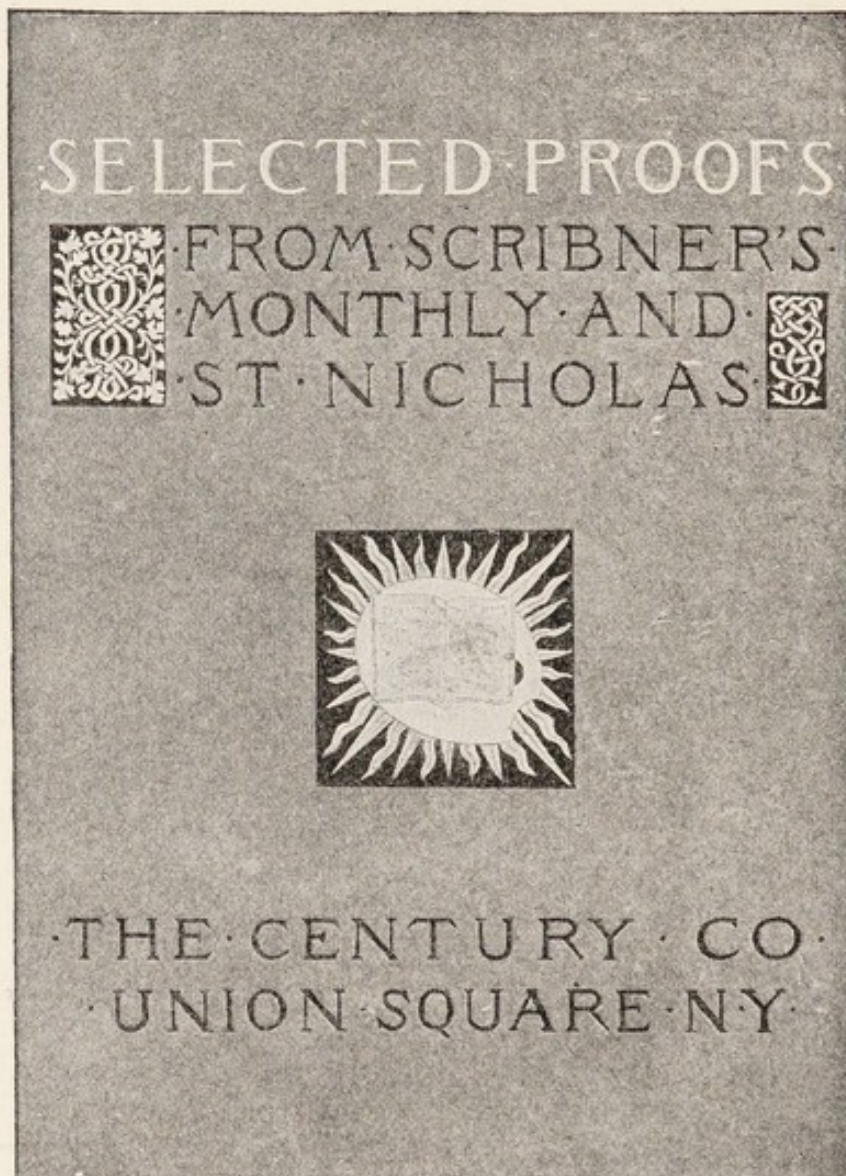
In England the railway novel is incased in boards sheathed with paper; and this cover



DESIGNED BY FRANCIS LATHROP.

is adorned more often than not with a crude and hard illustration of some scene in the story, printed in three colours generally, and wofully void of art or charm of any sort.

Mr. William Morris has reminded us that "to give people pleasure in the things they must perforce *use*, that is the one great office of decoration; to give people pleasure in the



DESIGNED BY STANFORD WHITE.

things they must perforce *make*, that is the other use of it." Possibly the man who must perforce use the ordinary British railway novels is so demoralized by them that he

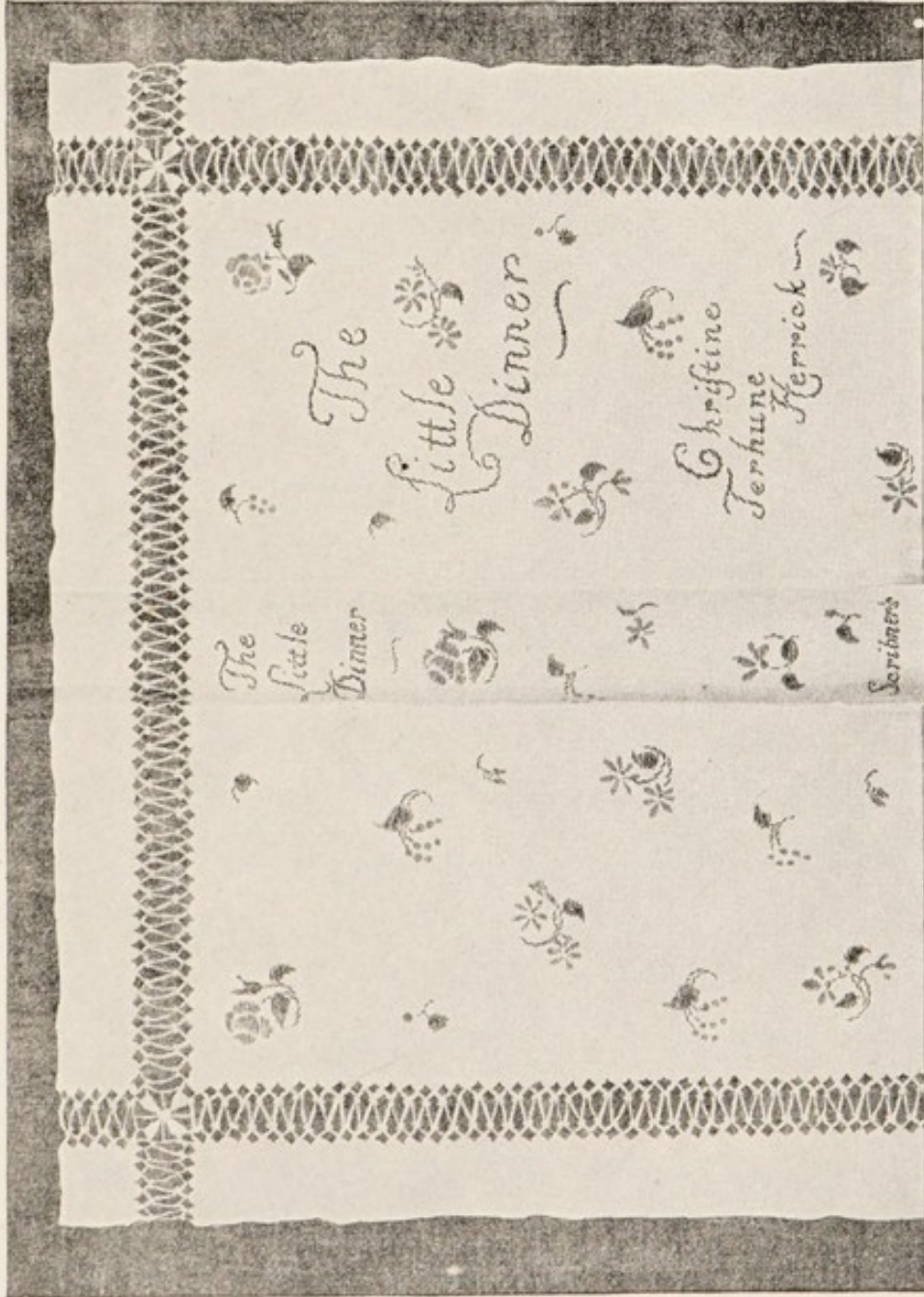
can take delight in the staring and vulgar pictures on the covers of these tales; but surely no man could have found pleasure in making anything so grotesquely inartistic.

Perhaps the reason for this stupidly violent lack of art is to be found in a blind following of a tradition established long before the recent revival of the decorative arts in Great Britain. I have "A Comic Alphabet," designed, etched, and published by George Cruikshank, No. 23 Myddleton Terrace, Pentonville, 1837, the paper-cover of which has a hint of humorous suggestion in it, perhaps, but which is emphatically empty and awkward.

To discover the immense advance made by the British in knowledge of the principles of decoration and the striking development of their skill in the application of these principles, it needs only a setting of this Cruikshank cover over against the wrapper designed by Mr. Walter Crane for the catalogue of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition held at the New Gallery in London in 1888. This is indeed a pleasure to the user, as it was obviously a pleas-

ure to the maker. (To Mr. Walter Crane's services to children, also a labour of love, I shall return again.) Another admirable wrapper made in England — although by an American this time — is the fresh and characteristic cover which Mr. Joseph Pennell devised for the cheaper British edition of Mr. Laurence Hutton's invaluable "Literary Landmarks of London." As quaint as Mr. Pennell's, and in its way as original, is Miss Armstrong's suggestion of a daintily embroidered napkin in which was wrapped Mrs. Herrick's pleasant advice as to "The Little Dinner."

These designs of Mr. Pennell's and Miss Armstrong's were printed in colours; and it is in colours that the most attractive of recent French paper-covers have been printed, sometimes by one of the more modern processes of chromotypography, and sometimes by the elder method of chromolithography. Here the paper-cover of the published book has been influenced by the extraordinary development of the pictorial poster in France. Many of the best of the coloured wrappers of recent French books



Designed by Margaret Neilson Armstrong.

New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.



have been but pictorial posters seen through the small end of the opera-glass. More than once in these cursory papers on various phases of the complex art of the bookbinder has there been occasion to dwell upon the interdependence of the arts, and upon their reflex action one on the other. And here is another instance. The French pictorial poster was developed by M. Jules Chéret and his followers and rivals just in time to be of use to the publishers who wished to send forth their books clad in paper coats of many colours. The same artists — M. Chéret, M. Grasset, M. Willette — were called upon, and the book-covers which they designed were conceived wholly in the spirit of the pictorial poster.

II.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE PICTORIAL POSTER.

IF "Post no Bills" were the universal law nowadays, those of us who have the good fortune to live in Paris or in New York would be deprived of one of the most interesting manifestations of modern decorative art. Perhaps it is not wholly unfair to suggest that this nineteenth century of ours is a day of little things, and that our silver-ware, our pottery, our tiles, our wall-paper, our woodcuts, our book-covers, each in its kind, and when it is at its best, are better than our historic painting, our heroic sculpture, or our grandiose architecture. The minor arts have their place in the hierarchy of the beautiful; and more often than we are willing to acknowledge, they have a charm of their own and a value likely to be as lasting as those of their more pretentious elder sisters. The idyls of Theocritus and the figurines from Tanagra — are these so tiny that we can afford to despise them?

We are all of us prone to underestimate the value of contemporary labour when it is bestowed on common things. Often we fail altogether to see the originality, the elegance, the freshness, — in a word, the *art*, — of the men who are making the things which encompass us roundabout. Possibly the Greek did not consider the beauty of the vase he used daily, the form of which is a pure joy to us; and probably the Oriental worker at the loom cannot guess the pleasure we shall take in his subtle commingling of colour in the wools of the rug he is weaving. So it is small wonder that the pictorial posters which adorn our blank walls pass by unperceived, and that we do not care to observe the skill which has gone to their making. Yet the recent development of the pictorial poster in France and in America is worthy of careful consideration by all who take note of the artistic currents of our time.

More than once has this or that distinguished French painter or architect stooped to design a poster for the play or for the book of some friend. But for the most part the

posters of these artists are muddled and ineffective; they lack the solid simplicity of motive which is the essential of a good advertisement; they are without the bold vigour of design which the poster demands; and they are without the compression and relief of lettering which it requires. These are qualities which the ordinary artist, not seeking, has not achieved, perhaps because he half despised his task. These are the qualities which no one could fail to find in the work of the masters of the poster in France, M. Jules Chéret, M. Willette, M. Grasset. In their advertisements we discover a perfect understanding of the conditions of this form of pictorial art.

The first of these conditions is that the poster shall attract attention at all costs; and the second is that it shall satisfy the eye at all hazards. Thus we see that the poster may be noisy, — and noisy it often is, no doubt, — but it must not be violent, just as even a brass band ought ever to play in tune. And the paper-cover is a younger sister of the pictorial poster. The conditions under which paper-covers can be

effective and accomplish their purpose are the same as those under which the pictorial poster is restrained.

Indeed, the alliance between these two forms of chromatic decoration had been close for some time. Certain of M. Chéret's boldest and most vigorous compositions were for the purpose of advertising new books or new editions — M. Robida's "Rabelais," for example, and the "Three Musketeers" of the elder Dumas.

Perhaps the point of contact is to be sought in the wrappers for sheet-music and for the scores of operas. The drawing prepared by M. Georges Clairin for M. Massenet's opera "Le Cid" had been enlarged to serve as a poster; and in like manner M. Willette's delightfully characteristic design of the old and the young Pierrots for the witty and pathetic pantomime of "L'Enfant Prodigue" did double duty.

Any one who has had the good fortune of late to spend even twenty-four hours in Italy must have observed not a few Italian posters, chiefly railroad advertisements, having a quality of their own, a national note, perhaps best to

be characterized as a broad richness of colour not unlike that to which we are accustomed in Roman scarfs and Bellagio rugs. In the brilliancy of some of these posters I have thought I detected the influence of the little group of Hispano-Roman painters; and I have noted also the decorative methods of the lithographic designers who have devised the showy but not inartistic covers for the sheet-music issued by the Milanese publisher, Signor Ricordi. M. Maindron, the first historian of the pictorial poster, has declared that Signor Simonetti, the water-colourist, is to be credited with the elaborate posters announcing the Exposition of Turin some six or seven years ago. It may be doubted whether these Italian posters are really any more effective — even the best of them — than the best of the striking and brilliant paper-covers with which Signor Ricordi adorns the music he publishes.

Fine as is not a little of the work of these Italians both in the pictorial poster and in the paper-cover, it is on the whole not equal to that of the Frenchmen, M. Jules Chéret, M. Grasset,

and M. Willette. Of these, M. Chéret is the pioneer, and although I confess a great liking for the Byzantine compositions of M. Grasset, I cannot but think that M. Chéret is still to be hailed as the master of these two branches of the decorative art.

We are all profoundly grateful to M. Chéret that he has enlivened the dull gray walls of Paris by lightly draped and merrily dancing figures, giving a suggestion of life and warmth to the wintry streets of the French capital.

These aërial bodies, with their diaphanous drapery and their swift movement, suggest the figures frescoed on the walls of Pompeii; and M. Chéret is not without his share of the Latin ease and *verve* which forever fixed these Pompeian girls as a joy to the world. He has also the bold stroke of the Japanese artist, and he has, moreover, the Japanese faculty of suppressing needless details: for there is never any niggling, any finicky cross-hatching, any uncertainty, in M. Chéret's work. He is an impressionist in one sense of the word, — an impressionist who has a masterly command of line and an absolute

control of colour, and who uses these to make you perceive what has impressed him. The figure he sketches may be as saucy as you please, but there is no slouch about the composition.

To describe his work adequately we must, as M. Henry Lavedan suggested, borrow from this decorator certain of his own colours, a lemon-yellow, and a geranium-red, and a midnight-blue; and even then we should lack the cunning of the artist so to juxtapose these as to reproduce his effects. Almost equally difficult is it to reproduce here what is most representative in M. Chéret's work; for above all else is he a colourist, and the attempt to translate his work into the monochrome of typography is little less than a betrayal. The compact and skilful composition can be shown, and the force of the drawings; but the effort to transfer the charm of the colour is foredoomed to failure.

In M. Chéret's book-covers we see the same freshness of touch, the same Japanese freedom of design, the same fantasy of invention, the same exceeding skill in the combination and contrast of simple colours, which delight us in



Designed by Auriol.



"CONTES POUR LES BIBLIOPHILES."

Paris: May & Motteroz.



his pictorial posters. We see also the same ingenuity in the adapting of the means to the end. M. Chéret's decoration, when he has been most inspired, consists of a single design covering the back and both of the sides of the wrapper, and adroitly devised so that each side has its own ornament. An excellent example of this is his cover for a sensational novel called "Pile de Pont," with its single stalwart figure of a man projected blackly within the light circle made by an arch of the bridge and its reflection in the water flowing placidly beneath, while the bridge extends its successive arches one behind the other across the back and around the other side of the wrapper. Another example is the cover of M. Lefèvre's "Scaramouche," with its Mephistophelian figure silhouetted sharply above the joyous trio of Pierrot, Columbine, and Harlequin. This wrapper is unusually effective and harmonious in colour.

Of M. Willette's cover for "L'Enfant Prodigue" I have already made mention. Of M. Grasset's cover for the "Dix Contes" of M. Jules Lemaître I have no space to speak at

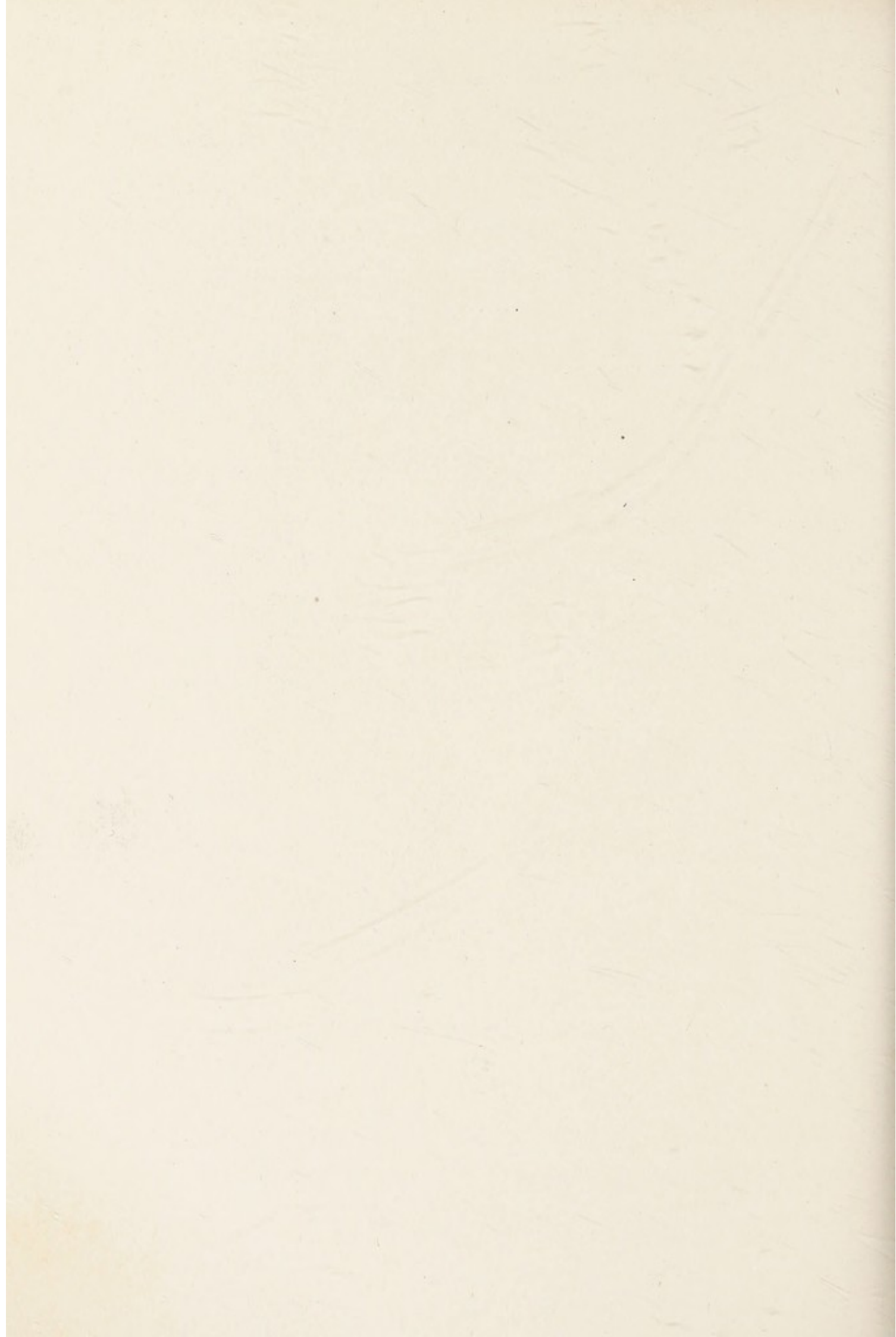
length. It is one of the most elaborate and sumptuous of French paper-covers, and, like M. Grasset's pictorial posters, it suggests the rich and solid translucency of stained glass. Modern and French as are both M. Grasset and M. Chéret, the one seems to have found his inspiration in a mediæval cathedral, and the other in a Japanese theatre. In the richly polychromatic design M. Auriol has made for M. Octave Uzanne's "Contes pour les Bibliophiles," perhaps the first thing to strike us is a certain rigidity of the reading figures who pass before us in "stained-glass attitudes." In the equally unusual and effective decoration M. Carloz Schwabe devised for M. Emile Zola's ecclesiastical tale, "Le Rêve," probably what we note before anything else is the strange complication of the design and its elaborate symbolism.

Of M. Steinlen I know no pictorial poster; but none the less is he the author of two of the most novel of recent French book-covers. One is for a book of M. Aristide Bruant's unconventional and unspeakable songs of the



DESIGNED BY WILLETTE.

257



Paris streets, "Dans la Rue." It consists of a file of sandwichmen, beginning with a weather-worn old fellow (on the front), and extending (around the back) out into the gaslit darkness of a damp and wintry boulevard. The other was made for one of M. Jules Moineaux's humorous legal year-books, "Les Tribunaux Comiques." Here the artist makes a clever and novel combination of figures coloured naturally, with solid silhouettes extending in panoramic procession around the back of the volume.

Less unexpected are two other French paper-covers herewith reproduced. Full of character is that which appears on the outside of "Bric-à-Brac," an album of comic sketches by that delightful pictorial humourist, the Franco-Russian who calls himself Caran d'Ache. Pleasantly rococo is the eighteenth century flavour of the design with which M. Louis Morin has adorned the cover of a recent illustrated edition of Gautier's "Petit Chien de la Marquise."

One of the most amusing of M. Chéret's

covers is that prepared for the illustrated catalogue of the "Exposition des Arts Incoherents," in 1886; it is as artistic and as incoherent as any of the studio jokes which may have been



Designed by Caran d'Ache.

Paris · E. Plon Nourrit & Co.

shown in the exhibition itself. Especially noteworthy is the humour with which the pictures on both the sides and the back are combined and yet kept separate. Mr. Harry Furniss con-

e. flammariou
editeur
26 rue tarine



Le rêve
par
Emile Zola





fined his design for a British pamphlet about the "Pictures of 1891" to the front of the wrapper, which had for its centre a palette with portraits of the best-known artists of London.



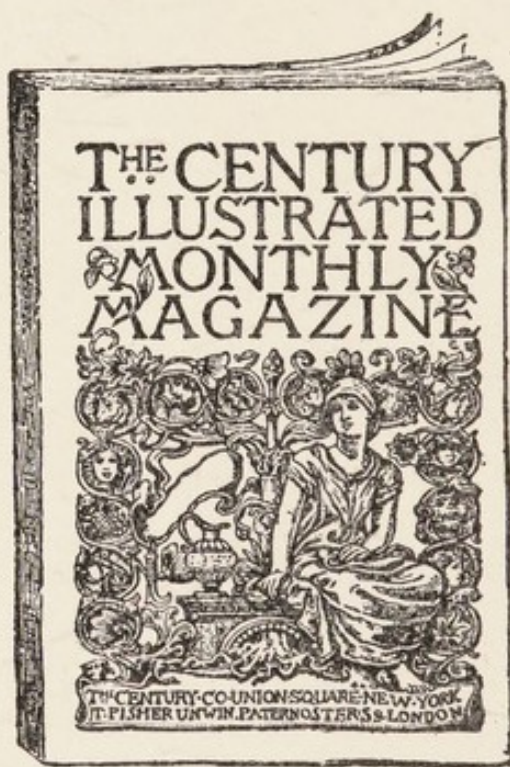
Designed by Louis Morin.

Paris: L. Conquet.

III.

BRITISH AND AMERICAN PAPER-COVERS.

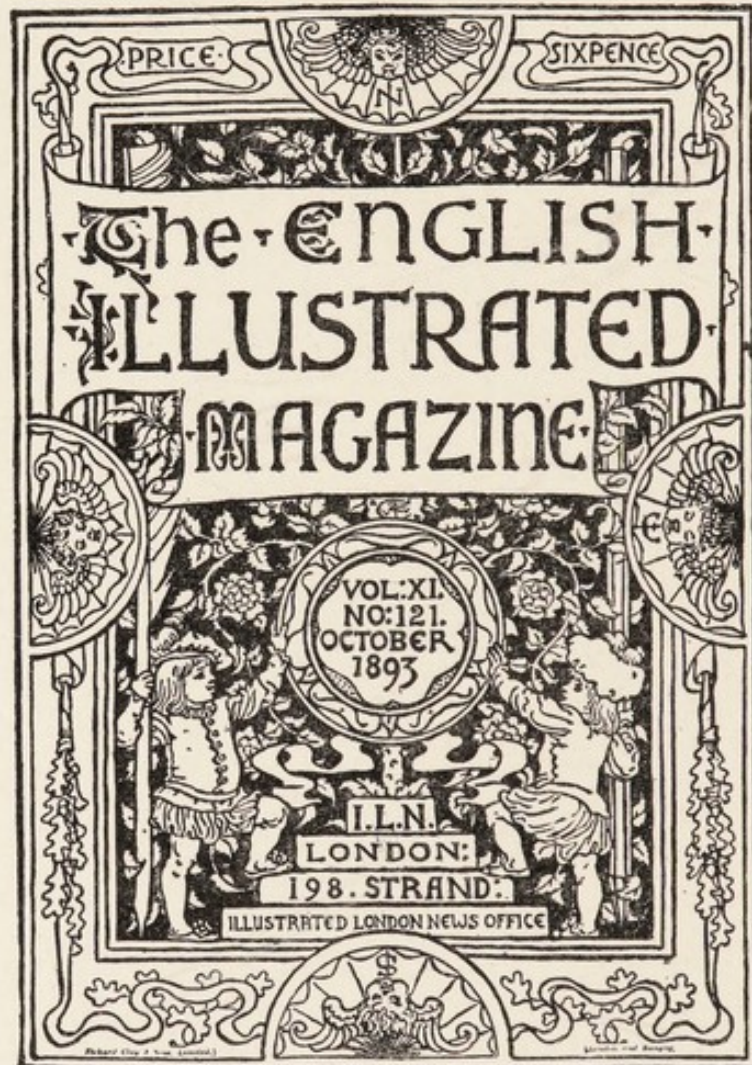
COVERS of exhibition catalogues seem closely akin to covers of magazines, except that the former may be sportive while the latter are



DESIGNED BY ELIHU VEDDER.

condemned to greater seriousness by reason of their longer permanence. Many of the leading artists of the day have designed wrappers for magazines. The former cover of *The Cen-*

Bertram Goodhue's wrapper for his quarterly *Knight Errant*, with its vague suggestion of "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came," is worthy to be compared with the *Century Guild Hobby-Horse*—also the organ of authors and




DESIGNED BY WALTER CRANE.

artists dissatisfied with their environment and with their epoch. To be noted also are certain of the covers made by Mr. W. H. Bradley for the *Chicago Inland Printer*; and not to be omitted


is the graceful and classic design by Mr. Will H. Low now seen on the *Bookbuyer*.

“That there is a character in American design which is hardening into style, I think every

ILLUSTRATED-160 PAGES-ONE SHILLING



HARPER'S
MONTHLY
MAGAZINE

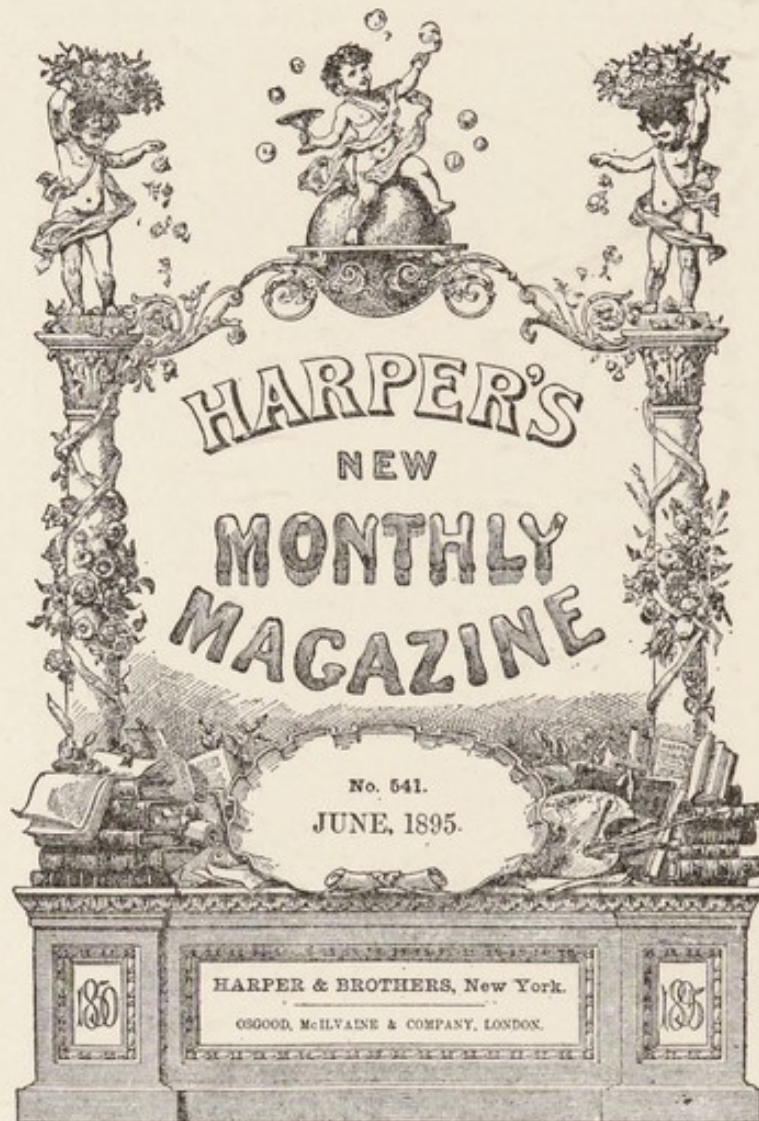


JAMES R. OSGOOD, McILVAINE & COMPANY.
45, ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON. W.
HARPER & BROTHERS, FRANKLIN SQUARE, NEW YORK.
LONDON OFFICE. 45 ALBEMARLE STREET. W.

(All Rights Reserved)

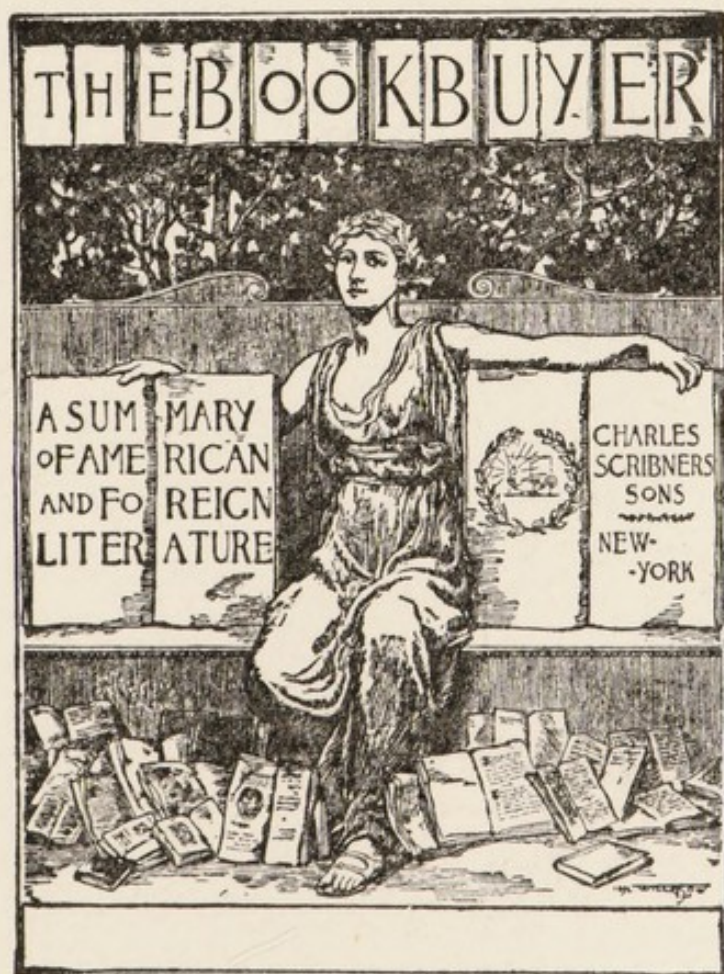
one who has had much to do with American designers will agree,” wrote the lady who is the chief of the Associated Artists, a few years ago; and Mrs. Wheeler went on to

declare that this American style seems to possess three important qualities: "First, absolute fidelity and truth, as shown in Japanese art; second, grace of line, which perhaps



comes from familiarity with the forms of the Renaissance; and third, imagination, or individuality of treatment." In its own way the American pictorial poster has felt the influ-

ence of this forward movement; and it can be called to bear witness in behalf of Mrs. Wheeler's declaration, just as her own embroideries and textiles can, or the La Farge and Tiffany stained glass, or any other latter day

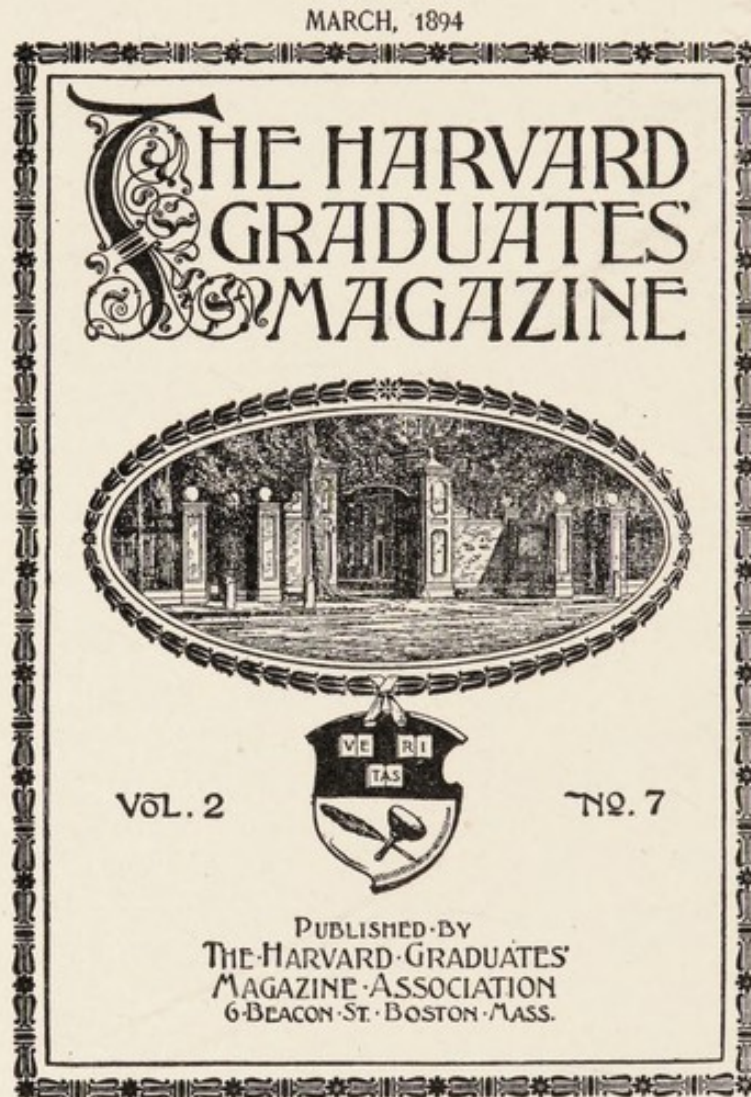


DESIGNED BY WILL H. LOW.

development of the art instinct of the American people.

A habit of the German periodical *Daheim* of changing its cover with every issue, gives the outside of this publication a certain fresh-

ness not always to be discovered on the inside. The habit has been adopted also by the French monthly *Figaro Illustré*, which reproduces polychromatically a water-colour drawing of one



or another of the brilliant French painters of the day. Perhaps the monthly change of the design allows the paper-cover to serve also as a pictorial poster to draw the attention of those who pass by the stall on which it is exposed

to the appearance of the new number. One American periodical has acquired the same habit, *The Ladies' Home Journal*, which has reproduced on its broad front page drawings by most of the leading American artists in black and white.

A former cover of *St. Nicholas*, the children's magazine, was designed by Mr. Walter Crane, to whom, for that and for other things, the gratitude of the nursery is forever due. Its present cover was drawn by Mr. Harold B. Sherwin. When Robert Louis Stevenson, in his "Child's Garden of Verses," sings of "Picture Books in Winter," he tells us that

All the pretty things put by
Wait upon the children's eye,
Sheep and shepherds, trees and crooks,
In the picture story-books.

We may see how all things are,
Seas and cities, near and far,
And the flying fairies' looks,
In the picture story-books.

But these illuminated horn-books, these tiny tomes of youthful joy, are the guerdon of the

children of the present. The children of the past knew them not. "The New England Primer" had a cover of the utmost typographic severity, as dignified and as scornful of vain delights as the "Bay Psalm Book" itself. Learning was not made alluring for the sons of the Pilgrim Fathers, nor for their grandsons. I doubt not that Jonathan Edwards would have denounced "Reading without Tears" as a pestilent and irreligious work.

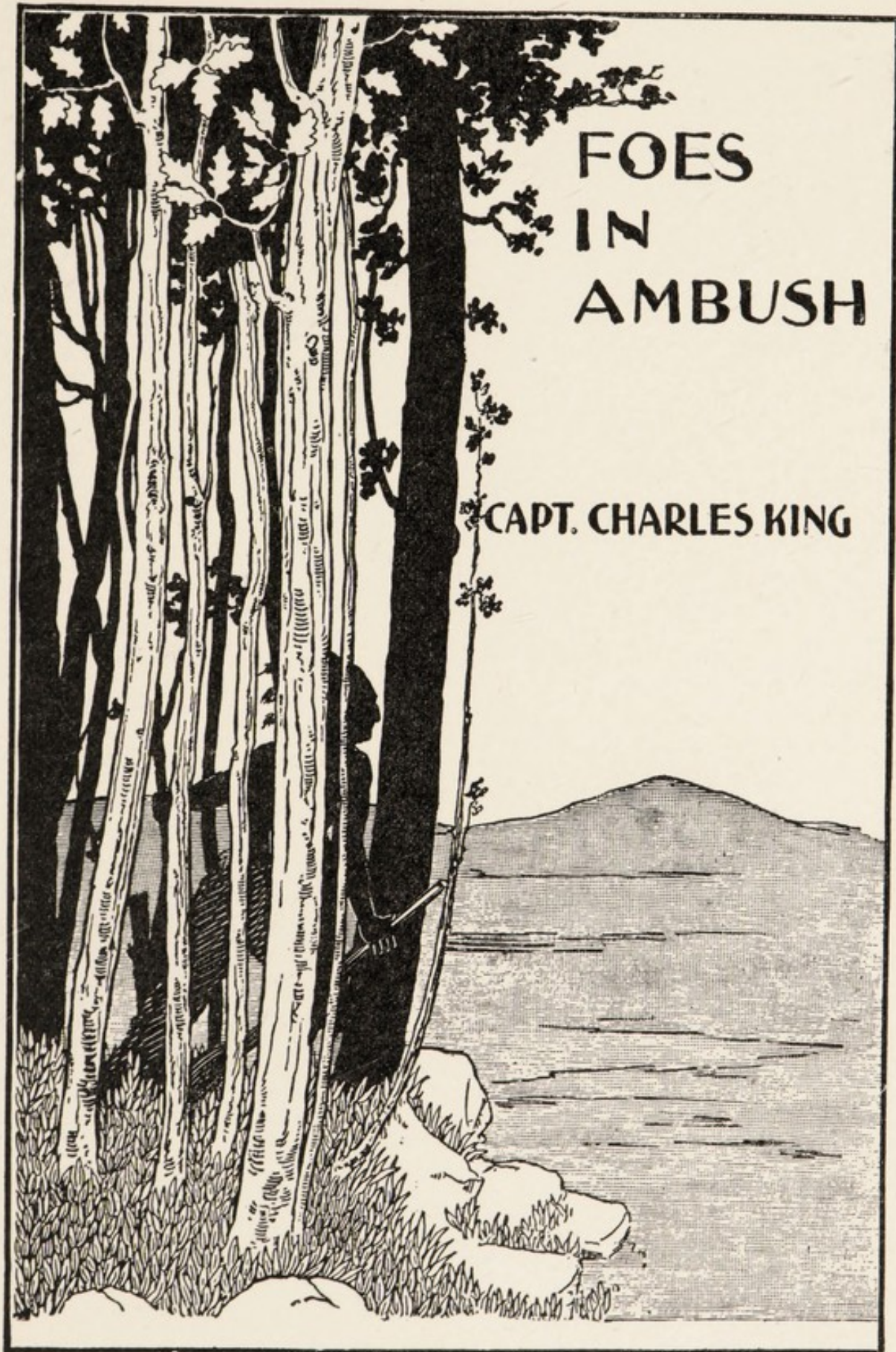
Yet a score of years before the American metaphysician was born, a French metaphysician had published a book on the "Education of Daughters," in which he advised that the young be taught to read in cheerful fairy tales, so that the labour may be lightened. Fénelon even ordered that a well-bound book be given to the child—a book with gilt edges and fine illustrations. But the treatise of the Archbishop of Cambrai had been written originally for his friends the Duke and Duchess of Beauvillier; and only in the households of the rich could the children be gratified and incited by "well-bound books with gilt edges and fine engravings."

THE
BABY'S OPERA



A BOOK OF OLD RHYMES WITH NEW DRESSES
By WALTER CRANE
THE MUSIC BY THE EARLIEST MASTERS





FOES IN AMBUSH

CAPT. CHARLES KING

Designed by R. L. M. Camden.

Published by J. B. Lippincott Co.

"FOES IN AMBUSH," BY KING.



For the most part the little volumes prepared for the use and behoof of the young were but shabby things, often little better than chap-books. The first edition of Goldsmith's "Goody Two Shoes" — if indeed it be Goldsmith's of a surety — is rudely manufactured; and so were most books for the young until within a quarter of a century ago. They were vilely illustrated; and they had coloured covers crude and violent in outline and in tint.

Then — it was in 1865 — Mr. Walter Crane began designing children's toy-books in association with Mr. Edmund Evans, engraver and colour-printer. In 1870 was published "This Little Pig went to Market," with its strong, definite outlines, and its flat, bright colours, and with its cover as seemly, as decorous, and as decorative as any baby, however fastidious, might wish. In 1875 began another series of eight larger toy-books, with a uniform wrapper; among these were "Beauty and the Beast" and an "Alphabet of Old Friends." Then, in 1876, came "The Baby's Opera," and in 1879 "The Baby's Bouquet," and in 1886 "The

Baby's Own *Æsop*," all attired in printed paper-covers mounted on pasteboard, most harmonious in colour and inventive in design. And all these books and many more were devised by Mr. Crane not for the children of the rich only, not for the daughters of the Duchess of Beauvillier, but for the children of the poor, able to pay only a sixpence, it might be, for the beginning of the baby's library.

After Mr. Crane had shown the way, Miss Kate Greenaway began to follow in his footsteps with her exquisite little books for little people; and so did the late Randolph Caldecott, with his more robust drawing. It was in 1878 that Caldecott published the first of his picture-books — "The House that Jack Built"; and in the same year came out the second "John Gilpin." Fourteen more appeared in the next seven years, ending with "The Great Panjandrum Himself," which bore the date of 1885. It was in 1879 that Miss Greenaway published the first of her picture-books, the well-known "Kate Greenaway's

ONE SHILLING.

The Diverting History

of

JOHN GILPIN

ONE OF
R. CALDECOTT'S
PICTURE BOOKS



Designed by R. Caldecott. By permission of Edmund Evans.

London: George Rutledge & Sons.



BOOK
11

EDITED BY
THOMAS J. WISE

PART
VI



WITH
ILLUSTRATIONS BY
WALTER
CRANE

CANTO
IX-XII

LONDON:
GEORGE ALLEN
RUSKIN HOUSE

PRICE
10|6

Designed by Walter Crane.

Published by George Allen.

SPENSER'S "FAERIE QUEENE."



Little Folks' Painting Book"; and in the same year came also her "Under the Window." "The Kate Greenaway Birthday-Book" bears the date of 1880, and the "Mother Goose" appeared the year after.

I am under the impression that it is to a study of Miss Greenaway's simple and quaint drawings that M. Boutet de Monvel owes his inspiration for the French picture-books for children that he has published in Paris more recently. Perhaps this is the first time any British artist has influenced a Frenchman since the Fontainebleau school rediscovered landscape in the paintings of Constable.

I have been able to give but a hasty glance over a field where there is much to be gleaned by the patient labourer; but I trust I have succeeded in suggesting that the paper-cover is not a thing to be despised, that it may be a thing of beauty, and that it may be a thing of value. One word of warning, and I have done: never destroy the paper-cover of a book, even of the least important pamphlet. The integument is an integral part of the book;

and if the book is worth keeping, so is its cover, which should be bound in always. The wrapper may contain advertisements or other



DESIGNED BY BOUTET DE MONVEL.

information, or it may have a portrait or some other illustration not contained within the book itself; and then if you remove the wrapper



your book will never be perfect. It will always be short of something; it will always be defective and incomplete, even though it should be in the binding of a Trautz-Bauzonnet or of a Cobden-Sanderson.



THE GROLIER CLUB OF
NEW YORK.



THE GROLIER CLUB OF NEW YORK.



I.

NEW YORK AND ITS CLUBS.

ONCE upon a time M. Francisque Sarcey, wishing to express his abhorrent contempt for a poor play, doubted whether it would please even the inhabitants of Carpentras or of New York. I think we New Yorkers may fairly protest against this likening of our fellow-citizens to the dwellers in the Bœotia of France, even though we do not dare to call our city the Athens of America. In the noisy and futile discussion as to the future literary capital of these United States, one agreement was clear above the din, that this country had not as yet such a focus of intellectual, political, and material activity as London was in the days

of Queen Elizabeth; and to the want of one such here Lowell attributed much of the "backwardness and provincialism of our own literature."

Although there is, very fortunately, a centrifugal tendency in our system of politics and education, aiding in the starting of little literary centres here and there throughout the land, it is clear also, I think, that there is quite as strong a centripetal tendency towards the concentration of a large portion of the intellectual, material, and political activity of the United States here in the city of New York. And it will be well for us if the intellectual activities are not pushed aside and thrust under by the overmastering stress of material or political activities.

The fact that most of the leading American publishing houses are in New York may bear witness chiefly perhaps to the material activity of the city; but the fact that most of the best magazines and reviews (weekly and monthly) issue hence, and that most of the exhibitions and sales of pictures are held here, goes to

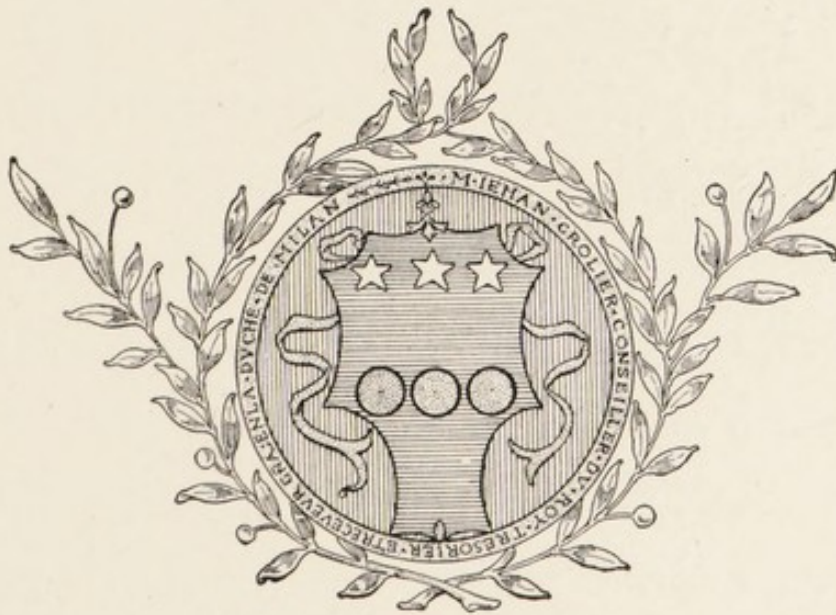
show that the intellectual movement is not sluggish. This movement is strengthened and sustained by many clubs and associations of all sorts and for all purposes, made up of little knots of men interested in one or another manifestation of literature or art. I need not refer to the Authors Club, housed for several years, oddly enough, over the Fencers' Club, and having so many members in common with it that the fighting editor was no myth and the quarrels of authors under this roof were briefer and more pointed and less acrimonious than those recorded by Disraeli. I need do no more than note the disputatious Nineteenth Century Club; the venerable Century and the revived University Clubs; the Tile Club; the kindred Salmagundi and Kit-Cat Clubs; the old Greek Club and the new Library Club; the Architectural League; the Aldine Club, composed of the men who make books; and The Players (the Garrick Club of New York), with its beautiful home in Gramercy Park and its fine gallery of histrionic portraits, both presented by Edwin Booth. A rare wealth of material will lie ready

to the hand of the Dr. Francis of the twentieth century who may write about old New York clubs; but I doubt if he shall find anywhere in his catalogue a more interesting association than the Grolier.

The Grolier Club is a gathering of those who love books for their external beauty — for the choice quality of the paper, for the graceful firmness of the type, for the even clearness of the presswork, for the harmonious elegance of the illustrations, and for the decorative skill bestowed on the binding. Its constitution declares that “its object shall be the literary study and promotion of the arts pertaining to the production of books.” That is to say, the Grolier Club is interested in books not as literature but as works of art. It is with the art and mystery of the book-maker, the printer, the engraver, and the binder, and not with the secrets of authorship, that the members of the Grolier Club concern themselves, although many of them are scholars and students of literature. They are true book-lovers, and not mere book-hoarders; they are bibliophiles, not

bibliomaniacs; they love a book for its intrinsic beauty, not for its accidental rarity; they cherish a volume because of its charming vignettes or its vigorous press-work, not because it belongs to "the good edition — the one with the two misprints":

Ah, je la tiens! — Que je suis aise!
C'est bien la bonne édition
Car violà, pages quinze et seize,
Les deux fautes d'impressoin
Qui ne sont point dans la mauvaise.



THE GROLIER ARMS.

II.

GROLIER HIMSELF.

THE Grolier Club is named after Jean Grolier de Servier, Viscount d'Aguisy, Treasurer-General of France, who was a book-lover choosing the best impressions of the best editions of the best books and having them bound by the best binders under his own supervision. Grolier was one of the earliest of the great bibliophiles of France. The French have always been first in their affection for choice tomes, and they have been foremost also in the skill and the taste of their book-making. Mr. Lang, in his delightfully easy and learned treatise on "The Library," has quoted Dante's reference to "the art that is called illuminating in Paris":

L'onor di quell' arte
Ch' allumare è chiamata in Parisi.

In the century and a half which elapsed between Dante's death and Grolier's birth printing

had been invented, and the art which is called illuminating had begun to be neglected, but without impairing the supremacy of Paris. Grolier was of Italian origin, and he served for years in Italy, at Milan first, and then at Rome. In 1534 he had been appointed French ambassador to Clement VII., and it was then that he began to collect books. After his return to his own country he held several high offices, and he was Treasurer-General of France when he died in 1565 at the age of eighty-six. His library remained intact until 1675, when it was sold and scattered.

The researches of M. Le Roux de Lincy, Grolier's erudite biographer, enable us to declare that it was the library, not of a collector of literary varieties, but of a scholar who wished to have at hand the best books of his time. Apparently there were on Grolier's shelves few or none of the books which, in M. Alphonse Daudet's sharp phrase, are "intended for external use only." Unlike many modern collectors, Grolier read the treasures he had garnered; and their contents were

worthy of the artistic casing he gave them. He was the comrade of the chief scholars of his time. Erasmus praised him; and Aldus Manutius, the great printer, dedicated a book to him. A friend of authors, editors, and publisher-printers, Grolier was always very wary in his picking of copies, and he had a provision of fine paper whereon a special impression was made for him alone where the common edition did not satisfy his fastidiousness. These chosen sheets were then clad in leather suits by the best binders of the day, who decorated them with designs full of the delightful freedom of the richest period of the Franco-Italian renaissance.

It is small wonder that a library called into being with such exceeding care and so adorned by the cunning of the most adroit workmen should have high repute, and that when it was dispersed, a hundred years and more after Grolier's death, the separate books were eagerly purchased at what in those days seemed full prices. But in the two centuries since the sale the value of these volumes has been rapidly rising,



GROLIER CLUB BOOK PLATE.

until a single tome has been sold by auction for nearly six thousand dollars — this is the noble copy of Heliodorus owned by Mr. Hoe. In Paris the National Library, and in London the British Museum, are fortunate in the possession of books bearing Grolier's philanthropic motto; and in New York others may

*Io. Grolierij Lugdunēn
et amicorum.*

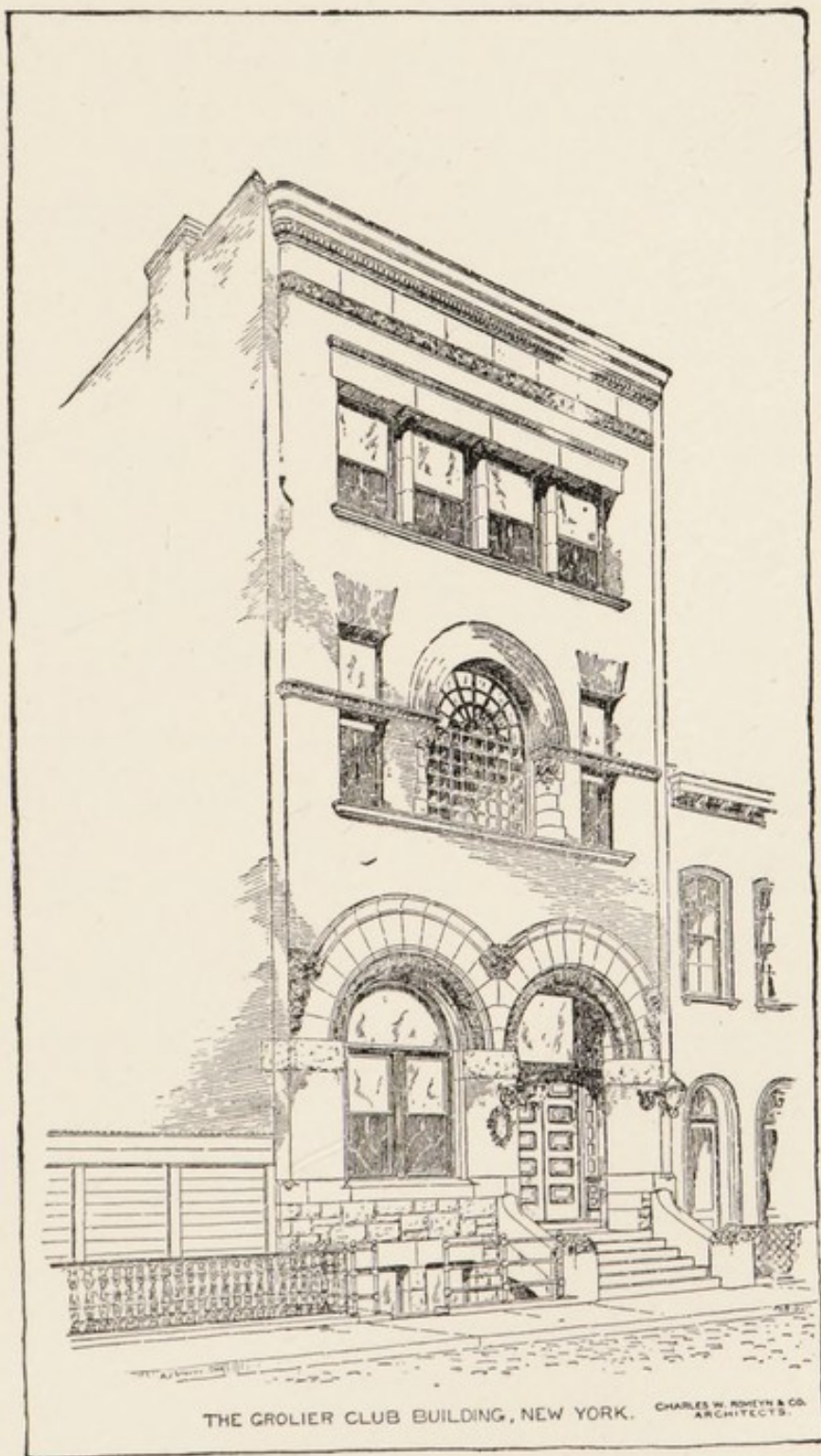
AUTOGRAPH OF GROLIER FROM CAPELLA'S "ANTHROPOLOGY."
(OWNED BY MR. SAMUEL P. AVERY.)

be seen in the library of Columbia College and in the Astor Library. Not a few which are owned by members of the Grolier Club; and engravings of some of these are given herewith; and these plates will show far better than any wandering words of mine the characteristics of the famous Grolier bindings. But although these reproductions reveal the grace and the delicacy of the design, they cannot revive the noble richness of the gildings nor the artful contrast of the colours.

III.

THE AIMS OF THE CLUB.

THE origin of the Grolier Club of New York is recorded in the first volume of its transactions. A little gathering of men interested in the arts "entering into the production of books" was held at the house of Mr. Robert Hoe, Jr., in January, 1884. They determined to organize a club, and to that end they appointed committees to present a name and to prepare a constitution. Early in February the members adopted a constitution which declares that the founders of the club are William L. Andrews, Theodore L. De Vinne, Alexander W. Drake, Albert Gallup, Robert Hoe, Jr., Brayton Ives, S. W. Marvin, Edward S. Mead, and Arthur B. Turnure; and then they elected Mr. Hoe, President, and Mr. Brayton Ives, Vice-President. A club device, including the arms of Grolier, was provided



THE GROLIER CLUB BUILDING, NEW YORK. CHARLES W. ROSEY & CO. ARCHITECTS.

THE GROLIER CLUB BUILDING, NEW YORK.

a fortnight later. Then the club, having a name, chose a local habitation at No. 64 Madison Avenue, where the council first met about the middle of April—less than three brief months after the first conference. There, in rooms simply and most tastefully decorated and furnished, the Grolier Club made its home for a brief season; there it took root and flourished and brought forth fruit; there its members listened to a series of lectures as instructive as they were interesting; and there they held separate exhibitions of etchings, of manuscripts, of original designs for book illustration, of bindings, and of early printed books.

Then in 1886 the club moved into a house of its own, No. 29 East 32d Street, where it had more ample accommodation for its many new members. The architect, Mr. Charles W. Romeyn, carefully considered the special needs of an association of this sort: that he succeeded in giving the club-house a dignified and characteristic physiognomy of its own, the accompanying sketch shows plainly enough. And in this dignified and spacious dwelling

the Grolier Club has continued to prosper ever since. Mr. Hoe was succeeded in the presidency by Mr. William Loring Andrews; and in due season Mr. Andrews was followed by Mr. Beverly Chew.

Of the founders of the club, some were merely book-lovers from taste and some were book-



Thursday Evening

A CARD OF INVITATION FOR WHIST.

lovers by trade — printers and publishers; and thus the club began with a novel and fertile alliance of the dilettante and the professional, an alliance likely to be of lasting benefit to both. The object of the club was in reality twofold — to bring together those interested in the arts of

book-making, that there might be a stimulating interchange of suggestions and experiences; and also to further these arts in the United States.

Although there are an increasing few in America who know a beautiful book when they see it, there are also, alas! not a few who dwell in outer darkness, and in whose eyes the simple typographic beauty of the American edition of Lowell's "Democracy," or of the British edition of Mr. Lang's "Letters to Dead Authors," is no better than the ill-made tawdriness of the American edition of Mr. Locker's "Lyra Elegantiarum"—a most feeble attempt at bespangled splendour. There are not a few, I fear me greatly, who know not the proper proportions of a printed page, and who do not exact that the cruel knife of the reckless and mercenary binder shall never shear a hair's-breadth from width or height; who do not consider whether the fair white space of the outer and lower margins shall be precisely twice as full as the inner and upper margins; and who take no care that the width of the page of

type shall be strictly one-half of the length of the diagonal of the page. There are not a few to whom these niceties are unknown — not a few in the United States and not a few in Great Britain.

So far as I know, the Grolier Club is the first society founded to unite book-lovers and book-makers and to gratify the needs and wishes of both classes of its members by collecting and exhibiting the best works of the great artists of the past and by producing new books which may serve as types of the best that modern skill and taste may do. This double function of the Grolier Club I do not find in any earlier organization either in America or in Europe. Neither in England nor in France is there any society exactly equivalent to this New York club.

In London, that useful body the Burlington Fine Arts Club was formed "to bring together amateurs, collectors, and others interested in art; to afford ready means for consultation between persons of special knowledge and experience in matters relating to the fine

arts; and to provide accommodation for showing and comparing rare works in the possession of the members and their friends"; and during the past twenty years it has held nearly forty special exhibitions of works of art, and perhaps ten of these special exhibitions have been akin in subject to those held at the rooms of the Grolier Club. But the Burlington Fine Arts Club extends its interest over all the fine arts, and it is as likely to gather and display bronzes or ivories, porcelains or paintings, as it is to show woodcuts, etchings, or illuminated manuscripts; while the Grolier Club confines its attention solely to arts pertaining to the production of books.

In Paris the Société des Amis des Livres declares that its aim is "to publish books, with or without illustration, which by their typographic execution, or by their artistic selection, shall be an encouragement to the painters and to the engravers as well as a motive of emulation to the French printers," and also, "to create a friendly feeling among all bibliophiles by means of frequent reunions." The Society

of the Friends of Books is limited to a membership of fifty with an addition of twenty-five corresponding members non-resident in Paris. Ladies are eligible for membership, and the first name on the list in alphabetical order is that of Madame Adam. Among the other members are the Duke d'Aumale, M. Henri Beraldi, M. Henri Houssaye, M. Auguste Laugel, M. Eugène Paillet, Baron Roger Portalis, and M. Octave Uzanne. The sumptuous tomes prepared with loving care and untiring toil by the Society of the Friends of Books are known to all bibliophiles through the world as examples of the highest endeavour of the art of book-making in France to-day.

The Burlington Fine Arts Club does not publish books, and only a few of its valuable exhibitions are devoted to the arts pertaining to the making of books. The Société des Amis des Livres publishes books and holds no exhibitions. The Grolier Club unites the three qualities to be found in differing degrees in one or the other of these European clubs: it has frequent meetings at which its members

may talk shop and free their souls; it gives exhibitions; and it prints books. (I open a parenthesis here to note that there was once an unpretending little Book Fellows' Club here in New York which printed a tiny tome now and again; and to record that there is a dining club in London called the Sette of Odde Volumes, for whom a few pretty books—mostly of a personal interest and of varying value—have already been printed. But neither of these can fairly be called a rival of the Grolier Club.)

I am forced to consider the meetings of the Grolier Club before discussing the books it has published, because certain of its publications have had a previous existence as lectures delivered before the members. During the winter of 1884-85, the first whole season that the club was in full possession of its rooms, Mr. Theodore L. De Vinne lectured on "Historic Printing-Types," Mr. Hoe on "Bookbinding Artistically Considered," and Mr. William Matthews on "Practical Bookbinding." In 1885-86 Professor Chandler lectured on

“Photo-Mechanical Processes,” Mr. Elbridge Kingsley on “Modern Wood-Engraving,” and Professor Knapp on “Thierry Martens and the early Spanish Press.” In 1886–87 Mr. W. J. Linton spoke on the “Wood-Engravers of the XVth and XVIth Centuries,” Professor R. R. Rice on “The Etchings of Storm van’s Grave-sande,” Mr. Brayton Ives on “Early Printed Books,” and Mr. Heromich Shugio on “Oriental Books.” In 1887–88 Professor West discussed the “Philobiblon,” Professor Russell Sturgis analyzed “Turner’s ‘Liber Studiorum,’” and Mr. W. Lewis Fraser considered “Nearly Two Hundred Years of Book-illustrating in America.” In 1888–89 Mr. George Hannah lectured on “Early Printed Books relating to America,” and Mr. H. Mansfield on “The Etched Work of Alphonse Legros.” In 1890 Mr. W. C. Prime lectured on “Dürer and his Contemporaries”; and in 1891 Mr. H. Carrington Bolton discoursed upon a collection of books on alchemy and kindred subjects. In 1892 Mr. Frederick Keppel delivered an address on “Some Masterpieces of Engraving”; and in

1893 Mr. Charles R. Hildeburn considered the career of "William Bradford, first printer in the Middle Colonies." And in 1894 Mr. J. Wells Champney read a paper on "Pastels and Pastellists."

The most of these lectures accompanied or preceded special exhibitions of the objects under discussion or of the works of the master eulogized. There were any number of other exhibitions in connection with which no addresses were delivered; indeed these special exhibitions of prints, of portraits, of drawings, of fans, of early printed books, of pictorial posters, of pastels, of etchings and bookbindings old and new are too many to be here catalogued in detail as they deserve.

IV.

THE PUBLICATIONS OF THE GROLIER CLUB.

THE first publication was aptly chosen ; it was a reprint of " A Decree of Starre-Chamber, concerning printing, made the eleventh day of July last past. 1637." By declaring it unlawful, without special authorization, to make, buy, or keep types or presses, or to practise the trade of a printer, publisher, or bookseller, the men who were misruling England sought to render printing too full of risk to be profitable, and they hoped thus to prevent the expression of the discontent with which the people were boiling. As it is neatly put in Mr. De Vinne's vigorous and lucid preface to this reprint: " Annoyed by a little hissing of steam, they closed all the valves and outlets, but did not draw or deaden the fires which made the steam. They sat down in peace, gratified with their work, just before the explosion which destroyed them and their privileges."

A
D E C R E E
O F
Starre-Chamber,
C O N C E R N I N G

P R I N T I N G,

*Made the eleventh day of July
last past. 1637.*



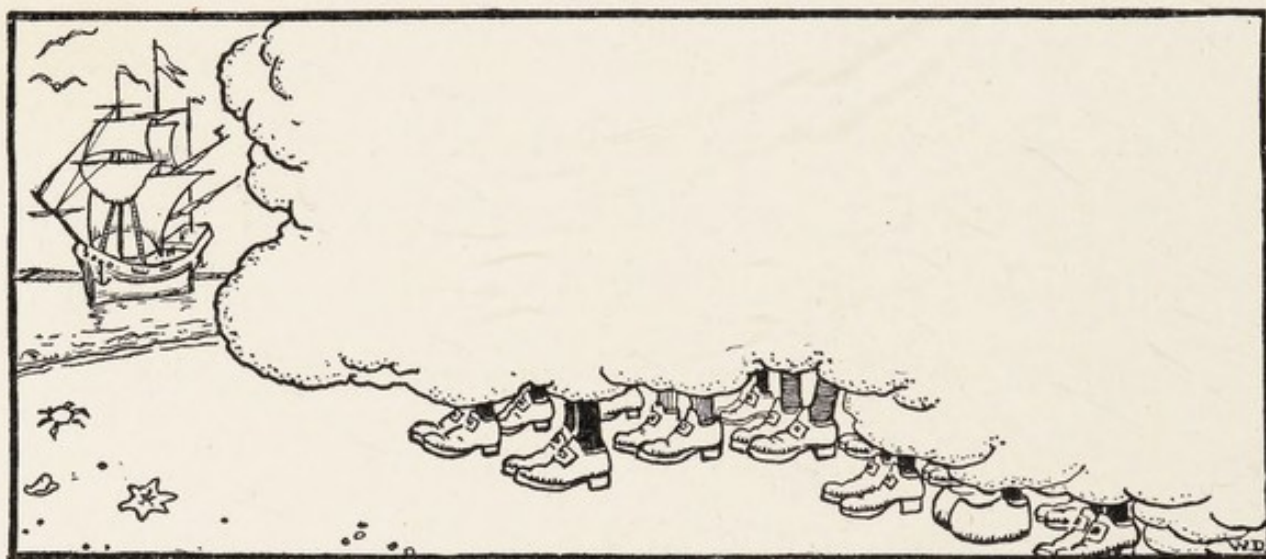
¶ Imprinted at London by *Robert Barker,*
Printer to the Kings most Excellent
Maiestie: And by the Assignes
of *Iohn Bill.* 1637.

REDUCED FACSIMILE OF TITLE-PAGE OF GROLIER CLUB EDITION
OF "A DECREE OF STARRE-CHAMBER, CONCERNING PRINTING."

This decree was issued in 1637; four years later the Court of Star Chamber was abolished; and in 1649 King Charles was beheaded. The reprinted decree is an admirable piece of book-making. The type is an old style great primer, with Dutch capitals for the italic letter. The paper is Dutch also, as becomes the first publication of the organized bibliophiles of the city which was once New Amsterdam. The cover is of Japanese paper, folded in the style made popular in Paris by M. Jouaust, and having imprinted on it in gold a facsimile of a book-cover designed by Roger Payne.

The second publication is less interesting because the reason of its choice is not apparent. It is a reprint of Edward Fitzgerald's "Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam." It is not unlike the "Decree of Starre-Chamber" in make-up, differing chiefly in that it is on Japanese paper and adorned with head-bands printed in colours from Persian designs. The cover, also from an Oriental model, was also printed in colours. Beautiful as this book is, it is less satisfactory than its predecessor, because there was no imperative

need for it. Although Oriental art in verse and decoration is profoundly suggestive, the issuing of yet another new edition of the "Rubaiyat," however worthy it may be of the noblest setting, might seem rather the task of a British Burlington Fine Arts Club than of an American



MIRACULOUS ESCAPE OF A GREAT METROPOLIS IN A FOG — HEAD-PIECE FROM GROLIER CLUB EDITION OF "KNICKERBOCKER'S 'HISTORY OF NEW YORK.'" (DRAWN BY W. H. DRAKE.)

Grolier Club. The French Society of the Friends of Books confines its labours to the reproduction and adornment of French books, and there is no apparent wisdom in the departure of the American Grolier Club from a like rule to reprint chiefly those books of American authors which lend themselves best to appropriate decoration.

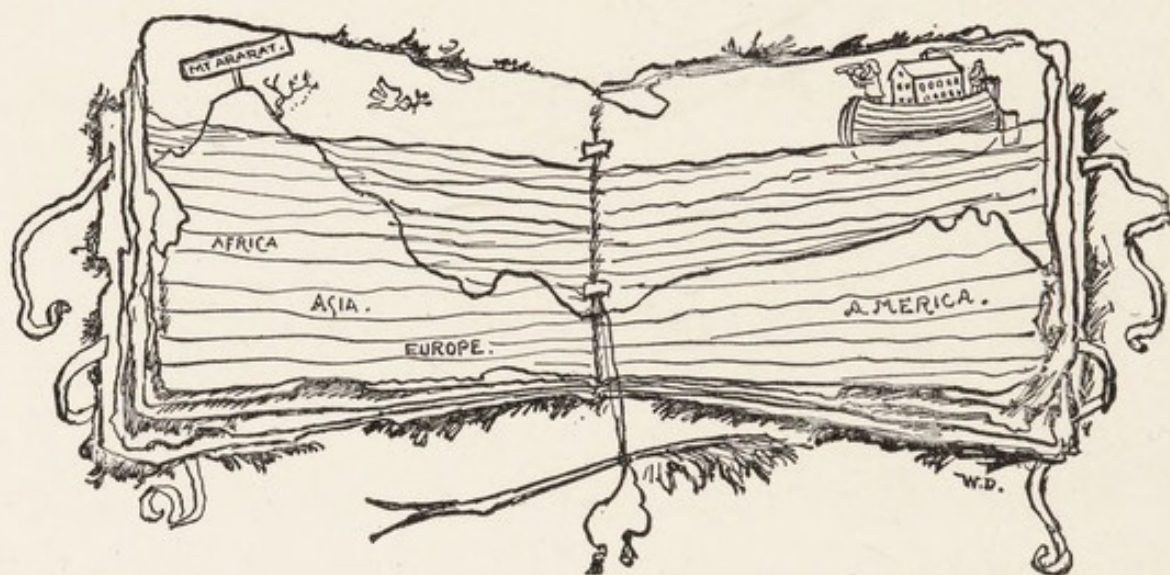
No better choice could the Grolier Club have made than the work selected as its third publication. This is Washington Irving's "History of New York, from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty, by Diedrich Knickerbocker." Here was a most happy solution of the claims of locality and the claims of literature. Most fitly could the



HEAD-PIECE FROM GROLIER CLUB EDITION OF "KNICKERBOCKER'S 'HISTORY OF NEW YORK.'" (DRAWN BY HOWARD PYLE.)

Grolier Club bend its energies to the preparation and production of a rich and worthy edition of a book about New York by the greatest of New York authors. By good fortune the humorous chronicle of the learned and gentle Dutch antiquary lends itself easily to abundant illustration and decoration; and of the opportunities offered by the late Died-

rich Knickerbocker the present Grolier Club has been swift to avail itself. No better piece of book-making has ever been sent forth by an American publisher. It seems to me that this cheerful issue of "Knickerbocker's 'History of New York'" is worthy to stand beside M. Conquet's noble editions of Stendhal's two



NOAH'S LOG-BOOK—HEAD-PIECE FROM GROLIER CLUB EDITION OF "KNICKERBOCKER'S 'HISTORY OF NEW YORK.'" (DRAWN BY W. H. DRAKE.)

great novels, "Le Rouge et le Noir" and "La Chartreuse de Parme"—the models of modern book-making, and altogether the best that French taste and French skill can accomplish in this difficult art. I do not say that the American volumes are quite equal to the French; they lack, for one thing, the tender

and brilliant etchings which serve as head-pieces for every chapter of Stendhal's stories; and again, they are without the final refinement of the recurring title water-marked in the lower margins of the page. Perhaps the American books have not all the soft richness and easy grace of M. Conquet's masterpieces, but yet they brave the comparison boldly.

From cover to core there is a delightfully Dutch flavour in these two comely tomes. The boards in which they are bound are clad in orange, as befits the garb of the only true account of the decline and fall of Dutch rule in America. The paper within is Dutch; and Dutch, too, are the types, facsimile of those used by Elzevir at Leyden in 1659 — only five years before New Amsterdam experienced a change of heart and became New York, after Colonel Nichols, taking Peter Stuyvesant by surprise, had captured the city. The frontispieces to the two volumes are etchings from drawings of "The Battery in 1670," and "The Governor's Representative," by Mr. George H. Boughton, who was once a school boy in the

Aurania of the Dutch. The other two etchings are views of "Fort New Amsterdam, 1651," and of "New Amsterdam in 1656," this last being a reproduction of the earliest known print of New York. The half-titles, head-bands, tail-pieces and initial letters are some of them from Dutch models, and all of them are most pleasantly Dutch in spirit; two of them were designed by Mr. Howard Pyle, and the rest were drawn by Mr. Will H. Drake. It remains only to note that the original manuscript of Irving's careful and elaborate revision of "Knickerbocker's 'History of New York'" is now owned by a member of the Grolier Club, and that advantage was taken of this to indicate in an appendix the minor and yet always interesting changes and suppressions of the author.

Except a useful pamphlet of "Transactions" the "Knickerbocker's 'History of New York'" was the only publication of the Grolier Club during the season of 1885-86; and during the next winter the club confined itself to the printing of certain of the lectures delivered

before it. The first of these had been by the President, Mr. Robert Hoe, on "Book-binding as a Fine Art," and it was the first to appear as a book. When Mr. Hoe spoke before the club, he illustrated his remarks by specimens of the work of many of the most noted binders, all selected from his own library, photographs of which were thrown on a screen by the stereopticon; and the published lecture is made more valuable by sixty-three "Bierstadt artotypes" of these bindings of Mr. Hoe's. Although the plates reveal the extraordinary richness of the lecturer's collection, not all the examples were worthy of reproduction; and, no doubt, more characteristic illustrations might have been procured had a call been made for the best specimens obtainable from other members of the club.

The second lecture was on "Historic Printing-Types," by Mr. Theodore L. De Vinne. Delivered in January, 1885, it was published by the Grolier Club with additions and with new illustrations. As all know who have read Mr. De Vinne's "Invention of Printing," he

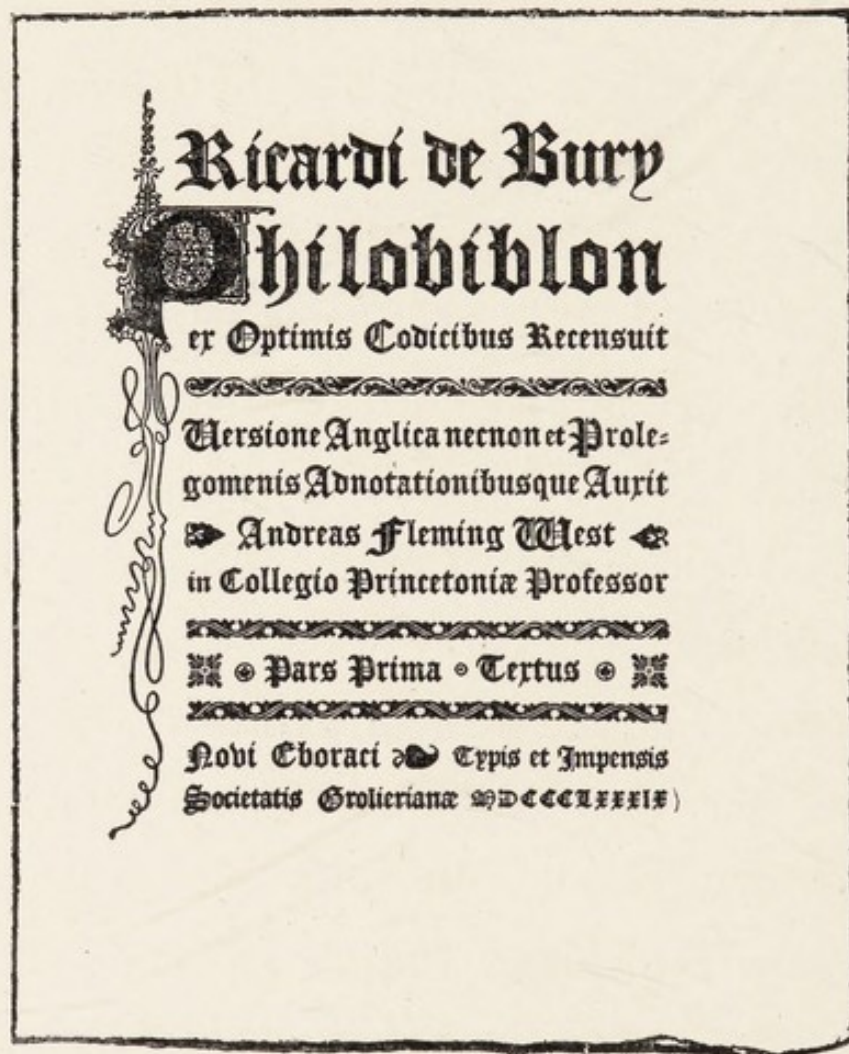
is a master not only of his own craft, but also of the more arduous art and mystery of authorship. Mr. De Vinne's style as a writer is as clear and as simple, as firm and as vigorous, as is his press-work as a printer. His wide and deep knowledge of the subject has been so thoroughly digested and it is so pleasantly presented, that I think a merely casual reader, having a Gallio-like indifference to type-setting and type-founding, would find his interest aroused at the beginning of Mr. De Vinne's essay.

It is the more fortunate that the subject should have fallen into hands so accomplished, as there is, so we read in the introduction, "no popular treatise about book-types; nothing that gives us in succinct and connected form information about their designers and makers, and that tells us why styles once popular are now obsolete." It is the want of such a treatise that Mr. De Vinne has filled, all too brief as his paper is. As the author is his own printer, it is needless to say that the book in which the lecture appears is a masterpiece of American book-making, a mar-

vel of the most admirable simplicity. The paper, the type, the press-work, the size and the shape of the page, the adroit arrangement of the marginal notes, the due subordination of the foot-notes, the ample and properly proportioned margins, even the novel and dignified binding — all these testify to the guiding touch of a master of the craft.

In 1888 the club published, “as a sort of New Year book,” so a report calls it, a dainty edition of the late Charles Reade’s histrionic tale, “Peg Woffington,” suggesting in its mechanical execution the book-making of the century when the lovely Mistress Margaret flourished. The two little tomes were pretty enough, but one wonders exactly why this British story should be chosen for reproduction by an American club. In 1889 the first book of the year was far more appropriate; it was Mr. De Vinne’s delightful account of the Plantin printing-house, reprinted from the *Century* magazine with additions and notes, all Mr. Pennell’s picturesque sketches being printed in varying tints.

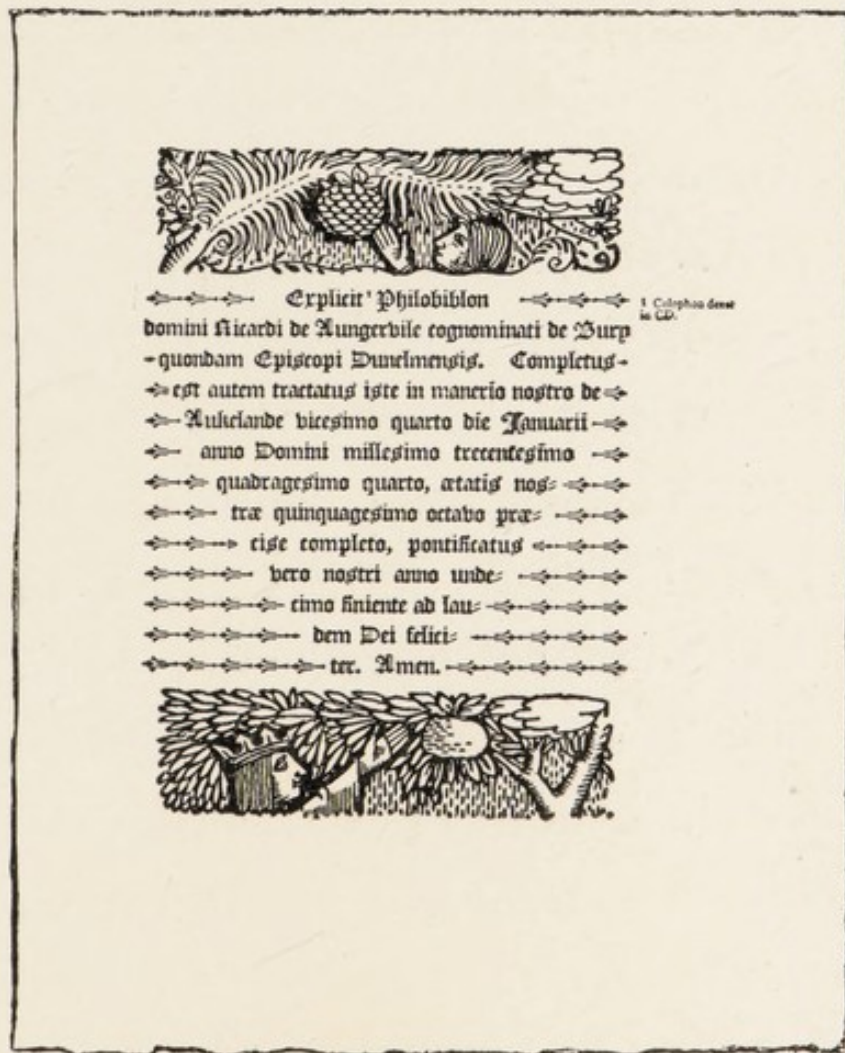
The most important publication of the club, even more important than the "Knickerbocker," is the "Philobiblon" of Richard de Bury. The good Bishop of Durham holds perhaps the foremost place among all British



REDUCED FACSIMILE OF TITLE-PAGE OF GROLIER CLUB LATIN EDITION OF "PHILOBIBLON."

book-lovers, just as Grolier holds the foremost place among all French book-lovers; and it was most fit and appropriate that a company of American book-lovers named for the French-

man should choose for reverent reproduction the masterpiece of the Englishman. The task was honourable but laborious; and it was undertaken not lightly or in a spirit of levity, but with courage, determination, and fore-



REDUCED FACSIMILE OF LAST PAGE OF GROLIER CLUB LATIN EDITION OF "PHILOBIBLON."

thought. The mechanical execution was confided to Mr. De Vinne, than whom no one was worthier. The literary labour was undertaken by Professor Andrew Fleming West

of Princeton, who had already lectured before the club upon the book he was to edit. Professor West shrunk not from the toil of a dutiful comparison of manuscripts and early editions that a proper text might be established; and this proper text, most devoutly amended and revised, the club sent forth as the first volume. In the second was contained Professor West's sturdy and precise rendering of the original Latin into our later English. These two volumes, long delayed by the ardent and arduous labours of the editor, were followed by a third volume in which was to be found an introduction, an account of the author, and such notes as were needful for the elucidation of the work.

The edition was limited to two hundred and ninety-seven copies on paper and three on vellum, one of which latter is properly reserved for the library of the club. The volumes are clad in pure vellum covers, stamped with the gold seal of the good bishop, while within there is a novel lining-paper, rich in colour and congruent in design. The form is a small

quarto, with a page six inches wide and a little less than eight inches long. The paper, a so-called "white antique," is American hand-made by the Brown Company, and Mr. De Vinne regards it as whiter, clearer, and better than any English, Dutch, or Italian printing paper.

The typography is not merely decent and seemly; it is as exact and as beautiful as the utmost skill and loving care could make it. The type of the first volume, which contains the Latin text, is a pica black-letter; the second volume, which contains the English translation, being set in modern Roman (not old style) small pica. The black-letter types were got out of the vaults of Sir Charles Reed's Sons for Mr. De Vinne by Mr. Talbot Baines Reed, and they are drives of punches believed to have been cut in France in the first half of the sixteenth century. There are rubricated initials, of a full-bodied vermilion not often seen nowadays. There are head-pieces and tail-pieces, some of them, and the more ingenious, having been devised by

Mr. G. W. Edwards. There is a page of fair proportion (as we have seen), and there is a type rightly adjusted thereto; and there is the very perfection of press-work, alike impeccable in impression and in register. Herein indeed we see the final superiority of the best modern printing by improved machines when guided by a fine artistic sense; such registry as this would be absolutely accidental, not to say impossible, on the hand-presses of the early printers.

In the manufacture of this edition of the "Philobiblon" there was the full harmony which comes from a union of knowledge, skill, and taste. It is a delight to the eye, to the hand, and to the mind. At last the book of Richard de Bury had a goodly outside, as becomes the words of wisdom within. To love books and to own a book like this is to have a foretaste of the book-lover's heaven. To study a book like this in an edition like this leads away from vice and conduces to virtue. Indeed we read therein (cap. xv.) that "no man can serve both books and mammon."

In 1889 in an edition of three hundred copies there was published the lecture on "Modern Bookbinding Practically Considered" which Mr. William Matthews had delivered before the club four years before and from which more than one quotation has been taken to enlighten the preceding pages of the present volume. Externally this volume ranged with the published lectures of Mr. Hoe and Mr. De Vinne; and internally it was illustrated as Mr. Hoe's had been with abundant photogravures.

In 1890 one of the most artistic of the club's publications was issued,—artistic largely because of its seemly simplicity. This was an edition of three hundred and twenty-five copies of the "Areopagitica, a speech of Mr. John Milton, for the liberty of unlicensed printing." For this Lowell wrote an introduction, characteristically commingled of wisdom and of wit: it is now to be found in the latest edition of his complete works.

In 1891 the chief publication was the address on "Washington Irving" which George Will-

iam Curtis had delivered at Ashfield two years before and which has since been included in the posthumous volume of his "Literary and Social Essays." This was fitly illustrated, and the edition was limited to three hundred and forty-four copies. As the club increased its membership, the size of its editions had also to increase.

Hitherto the publications of the Grolier Club had been of two kinds: either they were lectures delivered before the members or they were independent works which the club wished to honour. Now there began to appear a third class, being the catalogues of the exhibitions held at the club-house. In 1891 there was published a catalogue of engraved portraits of the most famous English writers, from Chaucer to Johnson; followed in 1892 by a catalogue of illuminated and painted manuscripts; and in 1893 by a catalogue of original and early editions of some of the poetical and prose works of English writers from Langland to Wither. In 1894 there was printed a classified list of early American book-plates; and in 1895

a catalogue of books from the libraries or collections of celebrated bibliophiles and illustrious persons of the past, with arms or devices upon the bindings. Most of these lists were set off and enriched with facsimiles; and all were models of the typographic art. And akin to these records of special exhibitions held within the club-house, was a volume of "Transactions" published toward the end of 1894 and containing the history of the club to the end of its first decade.

In this summary list of these several catalogues, I could not of course refer to two other publications made in the past five years. One of them was an original essay by Mr. Moncure D. Conway on "The Barons of the Potomack and the Rappahannock," of which three hundred and sixty copies were printed in 1892. The other was a facsimile of Bradford's "Laws and Acts of the General Assembly for their Majesties Province of New York. Originally printed in 1694, it was reprinted by the club in an edition of three hundred and twelve copies just two centuries after the laws had been enacted.

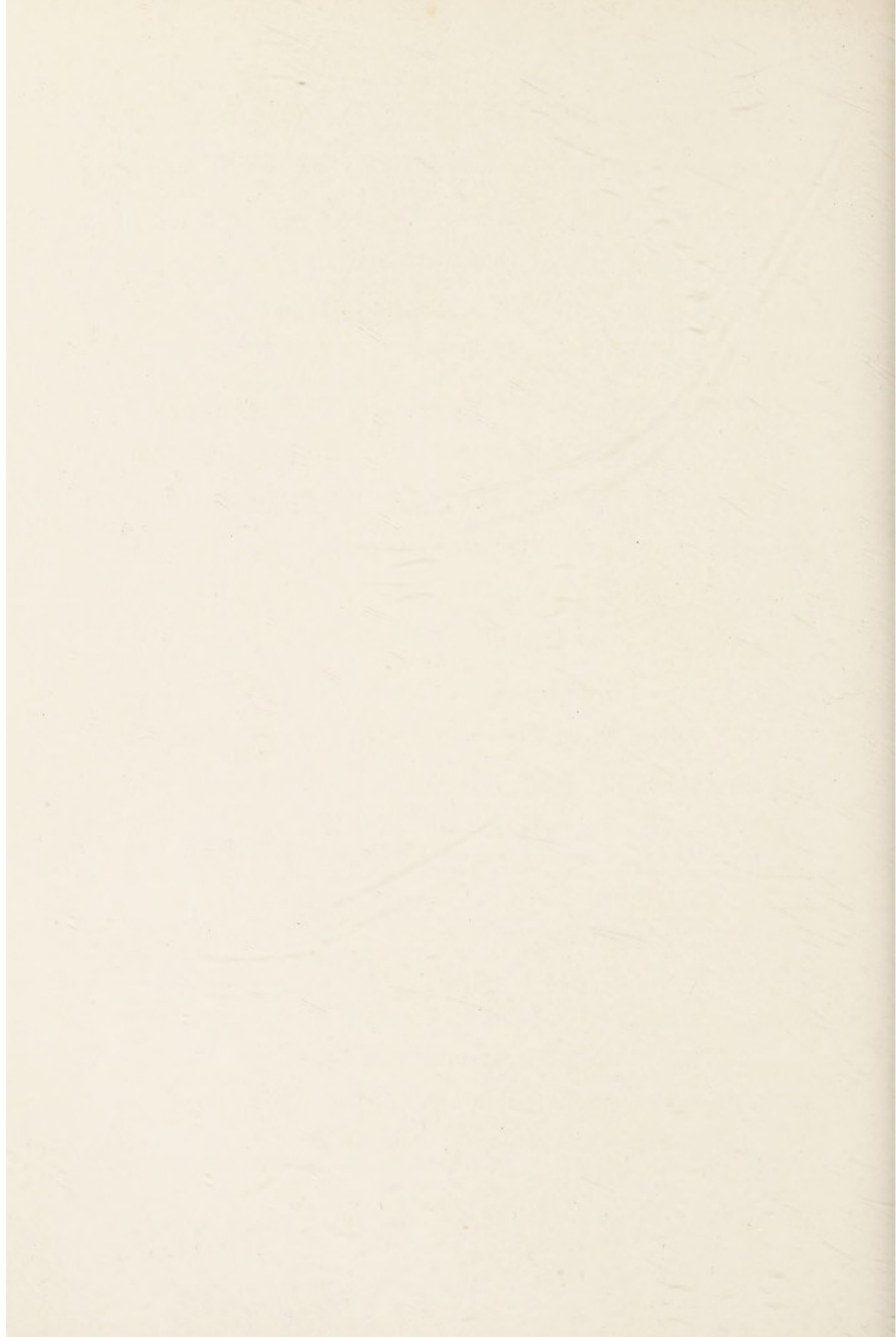
Two other of the publications of the Grolier Club must be mentioned here,—if publications they can fairly be called. The first was a bronze medallion portrait of Nathaniel Hawthorne, made for the club by M. Ringel d'Illzach in 1892; and the second was an etching by M. François Flameng of the picture of "Aldus in his Printing Establishment at Venice, showing Grolier some Bookbindings," the original having been painted by M. François Flameng and presented to the club by Mr. S. P. Avery—to whom, indeed, the library of the Grolier (like that of the Players) is indebted for many benefactions.

The membership of the Grolier Club was at first limited to one hundred (it has now been enlarged to allow of two hundred and fifty resident members), but the editions of its publications have generally somewhat exceeded the smaller number, and the unfortunate outsider has sometimes been able to acquire these treasures by the aid of a friend at court. This liberality is in proper accord with the spirit of the inscription stamped

on Grolier's own books, — *Io. Grolierii et amicorum*, — setting forth that they belonged to Grolier and his friends. Surely an altruism like this is as rare as the selfishness of Scaliger, who bade his friends buy books for themselves.

To grant or to withhold, the question is equally difficult — *æque difficulter*. When all book-owners shall freely lend and send their most precious tomes with ungrudging speed, then will be the book-lover's millennium, which the founding of the Grolier Club here in New York may haply help to bring to pass. And in the meanwhile its members may pine for that book-man's Paradise:

There treasures bound for Longepierre
Keep brilliant their morocco blue,
There Hookes' "Amanda" is not rare,
Nor early tracts upon Peru!
Racine is common as Rotrou,
No Shakspeare Quarto search defies,
And Caxtons grew as blossoms grew,
Within that Book-man's Paradise.



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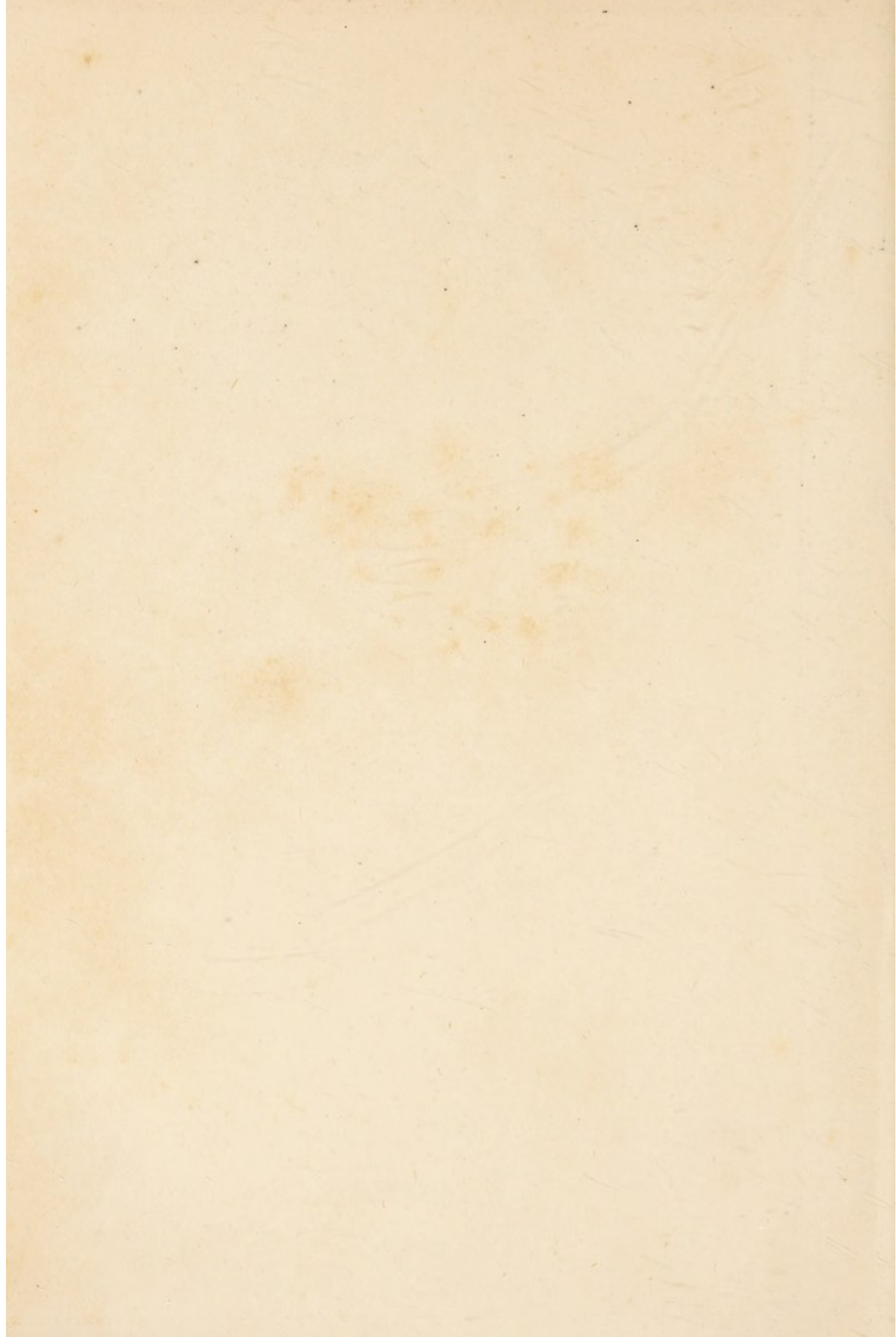
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