

COMMERCIAL BOOKBINDING.

NOTES OF A BOOK-LOVER.



DESIGNED BY D. S. MACCOLL. PUBLISHED BY T. FISHER UNWIN, LONDON.
"GREEK VASE PAINTINGS,"
BY D. S. MACCOLL AND J. E. HARRISON.

I.

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 dishonor myself by binding a modern book."

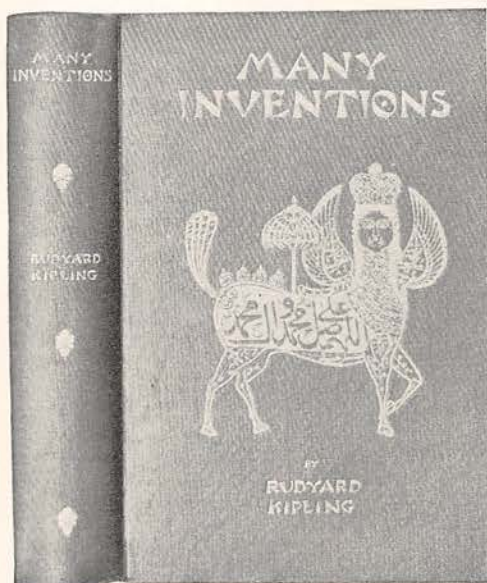
This craftsman's pride it was, no doubt, to clothe the stately Aldine and the pigmy Elzevir in fit robes of crushed morocco, decorating them with delicate gold traceries tooled bit by bit, and lingered over lovingly. To him it would have been a sad shock, had he been told suddenly that, in the eyes of 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 machine-work from that done by hand — a difference wide enough, and deep enough, to admit of no denial. But the volumes 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.

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 contemporary art, natural outgrowths of modern conditions, in our persistent seeking for some great manifestation which we fail to find. Great manifestations of art are hopelessly rare ; and

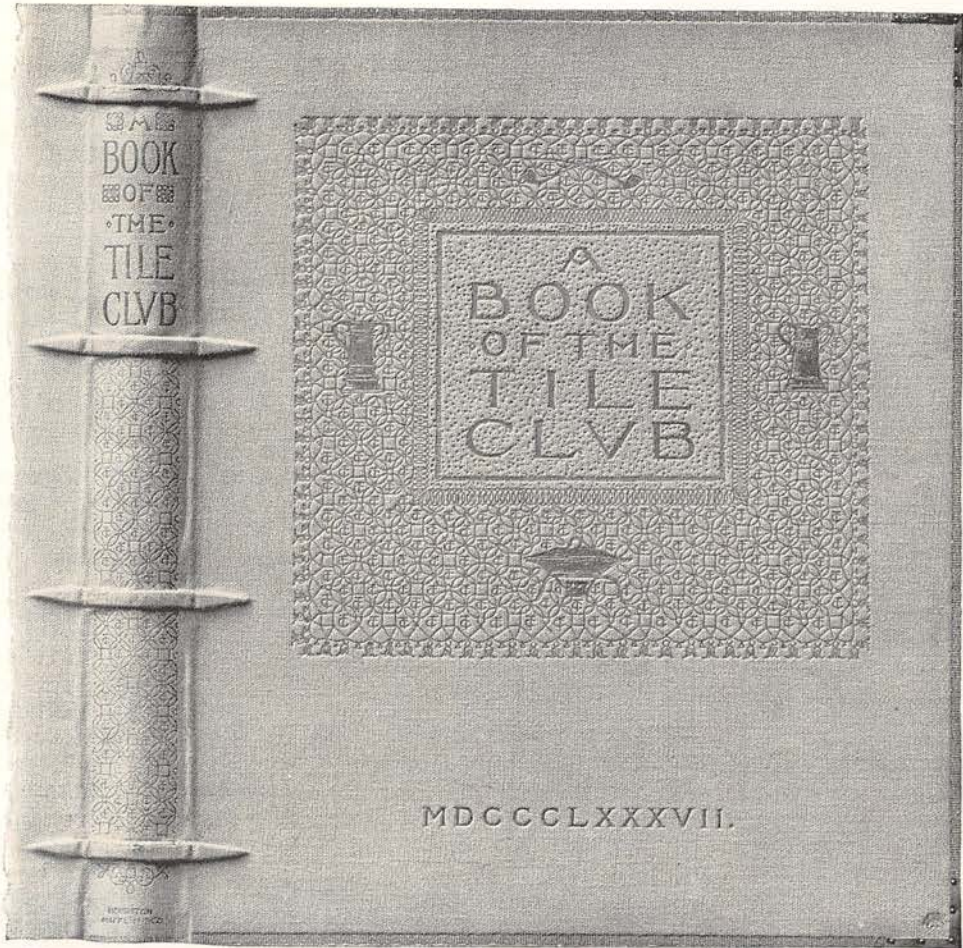


DESIGNED BY HAROLD B. SHERWIN (THE FIGURE BY J. L. KIPLING).
PUBLISHED BY D. APPLETON & CO.

"MANY INVENTIONS," BY RUDYARD KIPLING.

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 "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

ing is entirely an English invention." Just as the fine-art of bookbinding began in Italy during 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



DESIGNED BY STANFORD WHITE.

"A BOOK OF THE TILE CLUB."

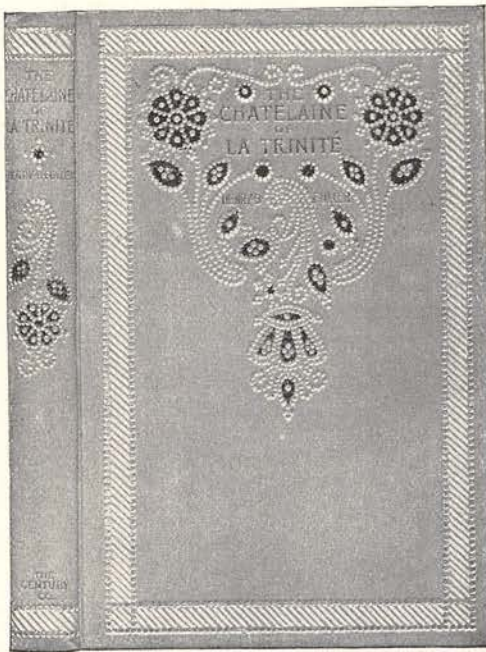
PUBLISHED BY HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & CO.

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-bind-

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



DESIGNED BY ALICE E. MORSE. PUBLISHED BY THE CENTURY CO.
 "THE CHÂTELAINE OF LA TRINITÉ," BY HENRY B. FULLER.

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. The roulette 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 labor-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, center-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 complete; it was intended to spare the time and trouble needed to adorn a 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.

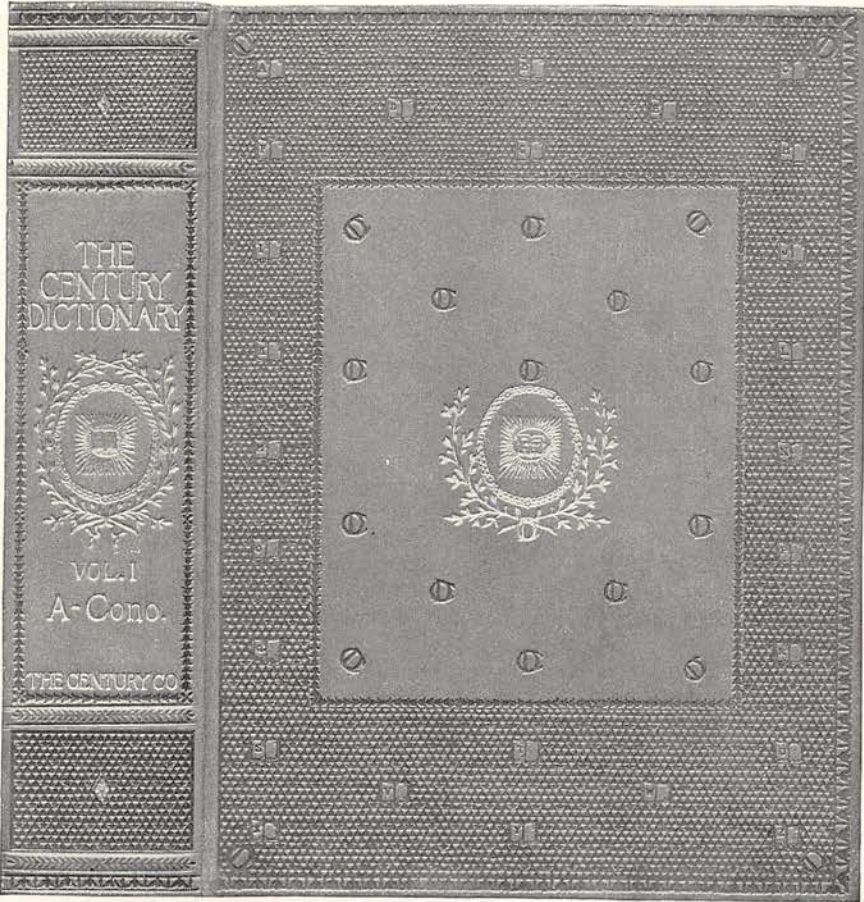
These three devices, the roll, the combination of blocks, and the plate complete or incomplete, mark different stages of the development of wholesale binding; and they existed simultaneously for centuries. M. Marius Michel declares that out of every hundred of the smaller sized volumes sent forth by the printer-publishers of the sixteenth century, eighty have their sides stamped by a plate simulating hand-work. The original editions of Rabelais of



DESIGNED BY GEORGE WHARTON EDWARDS. PUBLISHED BY THE CENTURY CO.
 "THUMB-NAIL SKETCHES," BY GEORGE WHARTON EDWARDS.

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

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 book-binding has a fair chance of developing accord-



DESIGNED BY STANFORD WHITE.

"THE CENTURY DICTIONARY."

PUBLISHED BY THE CENTURY CO.

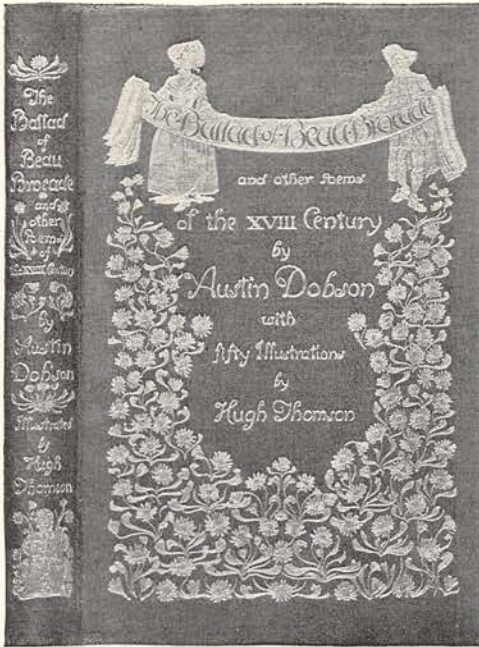
there was no hand-tooling at all, save perhaps a monogram or a coat-of-arms here and there; it is formed by combining corners and border-pieces, and it was stamped in a press.

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

ing 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.

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 savorless 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 Ferrier sang:



DESIGNED BY HUGH THOMSON.

PUBLISHED BY KEGAN PAUL, FRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO., LONDON.

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

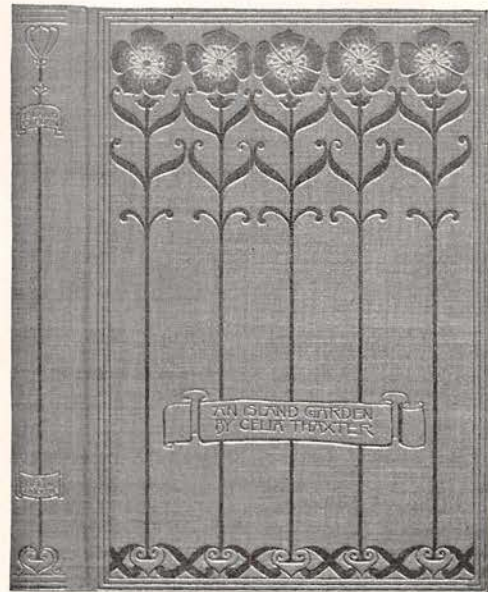
The folio Aldus loads your happy shelves,
And dapper Elzevirs, like fairy elves,
Shew their light forms amidst the well-gilt
twelves.

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 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 omitted altogether the leather, and covered both the sides and the back with paper. 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 Honorable 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, is 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.

Stamping was probably done by a hand-press, 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



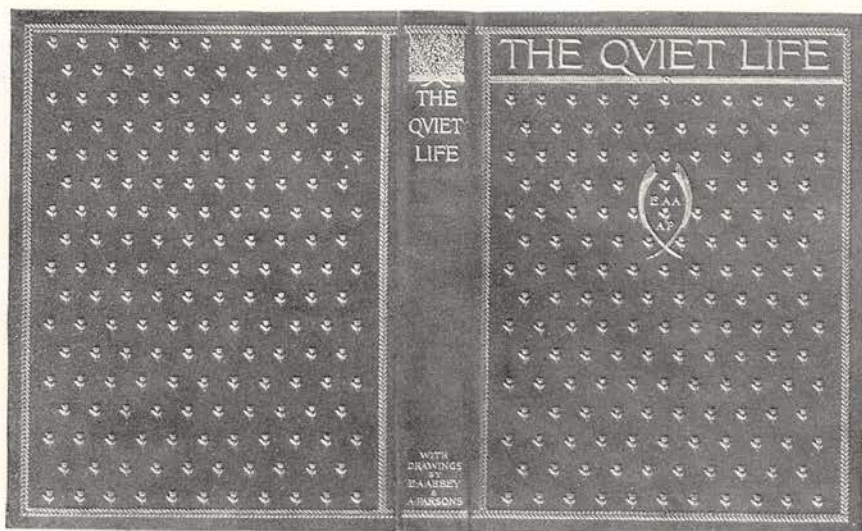
DESIGNED BY MRS. HENRY WHITMAN. PUBLISHED BY HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & CO.

"AN ISLAND GARDEN," BY CELIA THAXTER.

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 the cloth, which was then stamped.

Thereafter the art speedily improved. The cloth was dyed to any desired color; 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

to invent ornament for the outside of cloth-bound books were free from the disadvantages under which their fellow-laborers in France were placed. In France there still lingered the dominating influence of the traditions of the great biblioepic 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



DESIGNED BY EDWIN A. ABBEY AND ALFRED PARSONS.

"THE QUIET LIFE."

PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROS.

imprinted on the side and back of the book in as many colors as an artist 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 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 the books demanded by our modern and democratic civilization.

In Great Britain those who were called upon

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 endeavor 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.

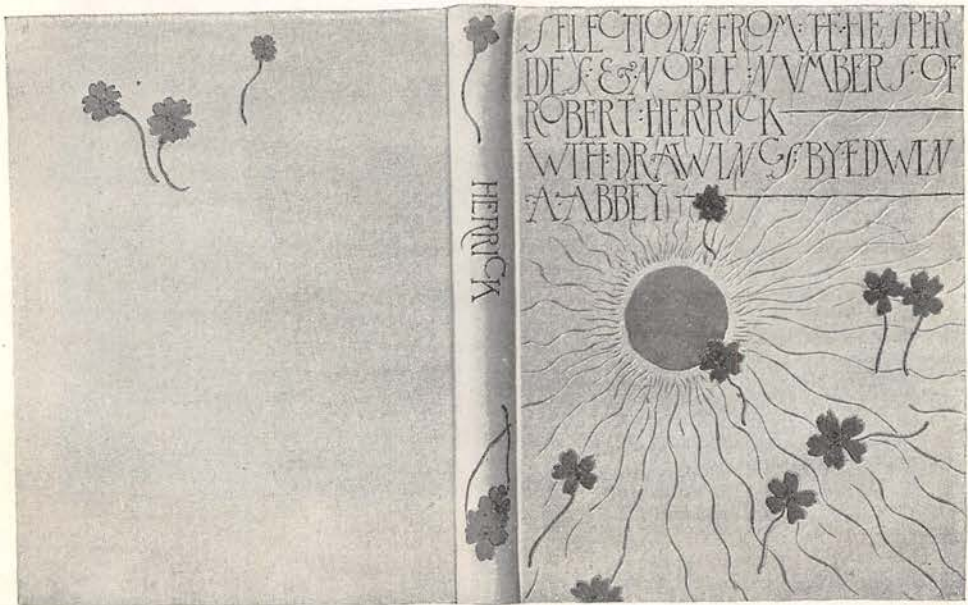
Of course there have been countless millions of tomes disfigured by hideous covers; and of course every one of us can recall cloth cases which were the epitome of everything they should not be. But a selection of machine-made covers most pleasing to the trained taste is equally easy. When Thoreau bought back the many unsold copies of his first book, "A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers,"

remarking with characteristic humor 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 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 the golden anchor of Aldus — a hopeful emblem of good books yet to come.

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,"



DESIGNED BY EDWIN A. ABBEY.

"SELECTIONS FROM ROBERT HERRICK."

PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROS.

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. 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 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

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



DESIGNED BY HAROLD B. SHERWIN. PUBLISHED BY THE CENTURY CO.
 PANEL FROM BACK AND COVER OF "OLD ITALIAN MASTERS."

myrtle wreath designed by Mrs. Whitman. To Mrs. Whitman also is due the credit for the tealeaf border of Dr. Holmes's "Over the Teacups," with its vigorous lettering, and its subordinate teapot of a fashion now gone by. None of Mrs. Whitman's book-covers is 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 color 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 perceive technical possibilities, and shall be in sympathy with the material 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

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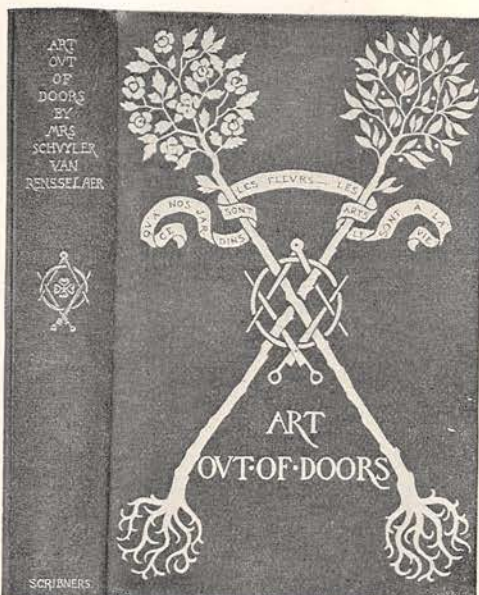
go without ornament altogether. Out of the struggle comes strength.

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 beautiful, if the resources of modern color-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 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 color. 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 biblioquery.

III.

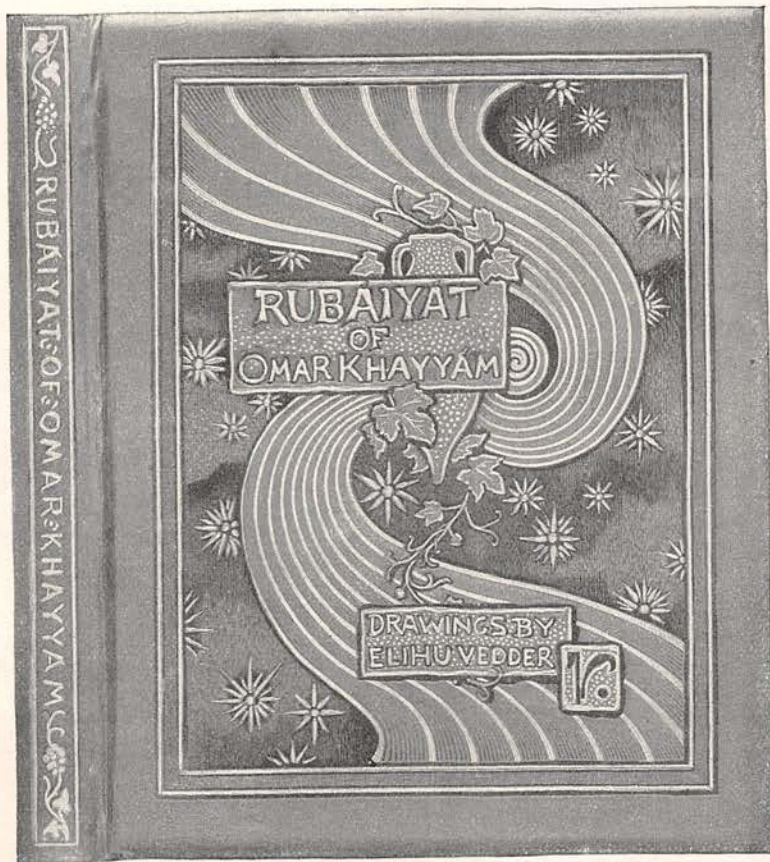
MORE fertile is the effort to find special cloths for special books, to enlarge the number of fab-



DESIGNED BY MARGARET N. ARMSTRONG. PUBLISHED BY CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS.
 "ART OUT-OF-DOORS," BY MRS. SCHUYLER VAN RENSSELAER.

rics 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

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 laborer'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



DESIGNED BY ELIHU VEDDER.

PUBLISHED BY HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & CO.

"RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM."

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

esthetic 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 color 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 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



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.

(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, every one with 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 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 Chicago 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-colors 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-colors under the gilt of the fore-edge are the work of Mr. G. H. Boughton. But this is an excursion. There are so many byways of booklore that the book-lover can hardly help digressing occasionally.

IV.

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 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 books he truly loves:



DESIGNED BY J. A. SCHWEINFURTH.

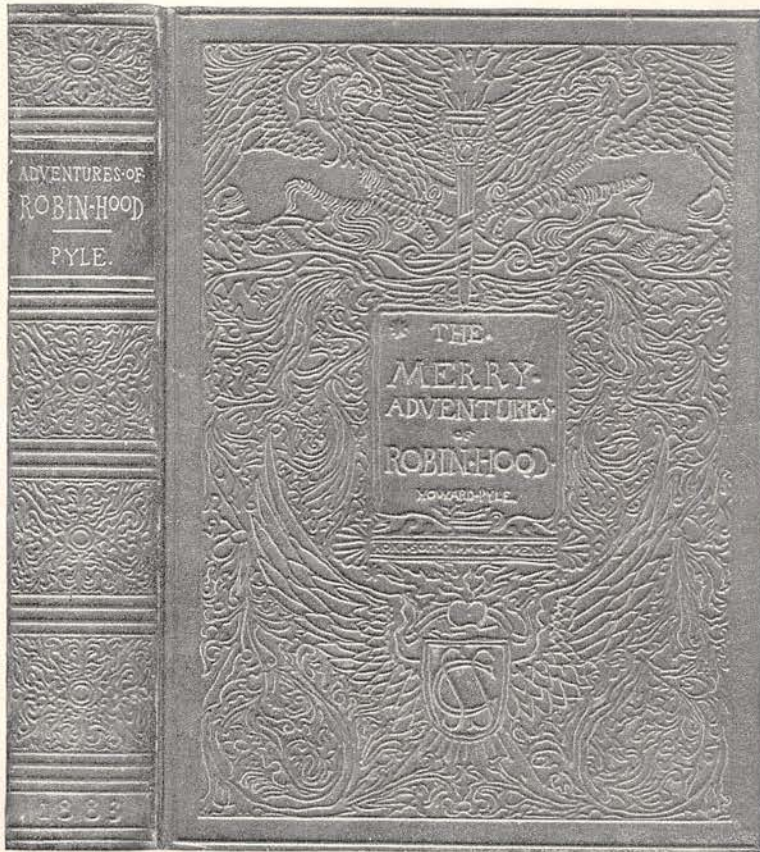
PUBLISHED BY LITTLE, BROWN & CO.

"THE OREGON TRAIL," BY FRANCIS PARKMAN.

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

tooled side, and not an original design of a nature appropriate to the individual book. It is the 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



DESIGNED BY HOWARD PYLE.

PUBLISHED BY CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS.

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

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-

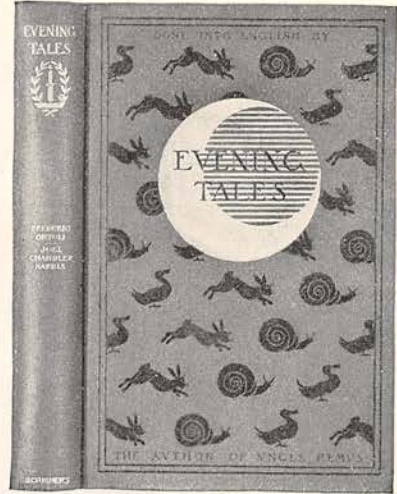
White designed for the "Century Dictionary," and note how different it is in its vigorous firmness from even the most elaborate hand-tooling. Technically, this dictionary cover is most interesting, for the design is impressed on damp sheepskin by a heated plate, which changes the tone of the leather,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

resetting of "Robin Hood" was issued by Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons 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 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 favorite skin with the old bookbinders, has gone out of use al-



DESIGNED BY MARGARET N. ARMSTRONG.
PUBLISHED BY CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS.
"EVENING TALES," BY JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS.

most everywhere except in Italy. It was employed in covering the "Autobiography of Joseph Jefferson," for which Mr. George Wharton Edwards designed a rich and ingenious 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.

V.

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.

Brander Matthews.