

Some American Book-Plates.



THE making of book-plates is almost as old as the making of books, and at one time was nearly as unlimited as the manufacture of the volumes they marked. They are the engraved or printed labels, of any form or design, which, pasted in the inside of the front covers of books, have

served to denote their ownership for upwards of three centuries and a half. They vary greatly in style, according to the period to which they belong, or the taste or social position of their possessor; from the fantastic and primitive designs of Albert Dürer to the graceful and artistic examples of Abbey or Bracquemond; from the elaborate quarterings of a hundred

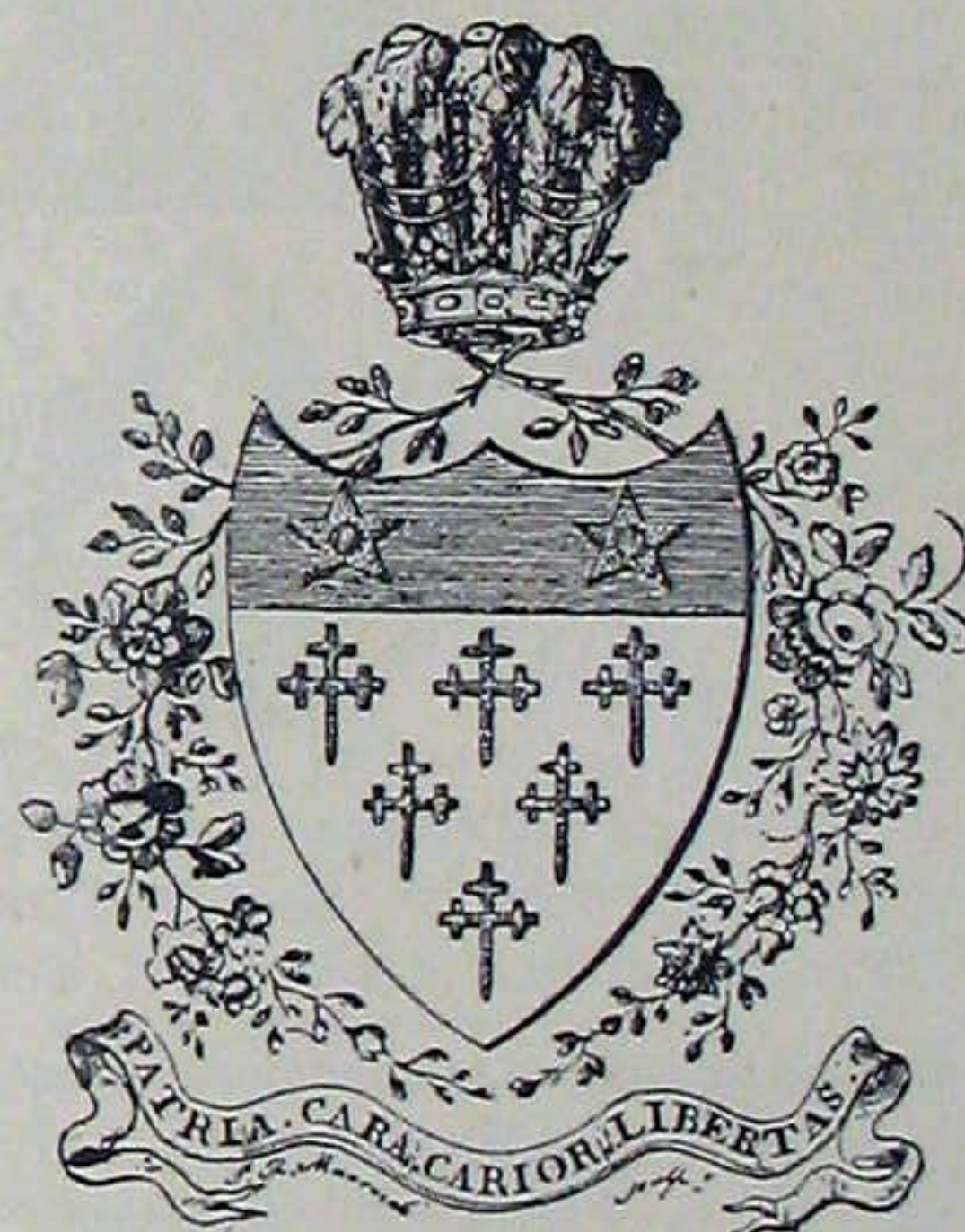
Upon the Continent of Europe book-plates were almost contemporary with the discovery of printing and the introduction of engraving, and they were usually coeval with the books that contained them, or the original binding on which they were placed. The most eminent masters drew and cut them, and the interest they excite now in the minds of antiquarians and collectors is not to be wondered at. The first printed book came from the press of Laurence John Coster, of Haerlem, about 1438; Gutenberg first used cut metal type in 1444; the first book printed from cast-metal type appeared in 1459. The earliest engraving on wood bears date 1423; and prints from engraved copper-plates made their appearance in Germany about 1450. The earliest book-plate known to collectors is German, and is believed to belong to the latter years of the fifteenth century; the oldest *dated* book-plate, also German, contains the figures 1516; while a number of highly prized specimens bear the well-known



From the collection of
CHARLES C. MOREAU, Esq., New York.



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coats-of-arms in the volumes of Vere de Vere, to the simple John Fiske in the tomes of the author of "The Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy."

The term book-plate is awkward, and confusing to the uninitiated. It originated in England in the middle of the eighteenth century, and has since been used generally by English-speaking people. The Latin *Ex Libris* (from the books of), still employed by the French and other Latin races of the Continent, is much more happy. Etymologists and linguists may perhaps find traces of it in the literal translation so often to be seen in the limited private educational libraries of both sides the Atlantic at the present day. *Ex Libris Gulielmi Stubbsi* is unquestionably the parent of "Bill Stubbs, One of His Books."

initials "A. D.," but, unfortunately, no date, and were designed, although, as it is believed, not etched or engraved, by Albert Dürer (1471-1528), who is called "The Father of Book-plates."

But few English book-plates are said to exist which are earlier than the Restoration. The oldest known example bearing an engraved date is of the year 1574; and William Marshall, so prolific in frontispieces of English books during a great part of the seventeenth century, is the first English artist who is known to have signed a book-plate, and that in 1662. Other specimens of early English book-plates contain the superscriptions of such well-known artists as George Vertue (1684-1756), Hogarth (1697-1764), Bartolozzi (1730-1813), and Thomas Bewick (1753-1828).

