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 gigantic and primitive designs of Albert Dürer to the graceful and artistic examples of Abbey or Bracquemond; from the elaborate quarterings of a hundred 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 uninstructed. 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 Gulielmie Stubbii is unquestionably the parent of "Bill Stubbs, One of His Books."

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 Laurens Johns Coster, of Haelen, 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 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).
The strange absence of these designating marks in England during the many years they are known to have been so common in other countries, is attributed to the fact that a great number of the more richly bound volumes in English libraries contained their owners' crests, stamped on the outside of the leather binding. The earliest English examples of these marks, whether within or without the covers, were simply coats-of-arms, with no mottoes or names. Only nobles, wealthy persons, or corporations could own books at that time, and armorial bearings were considered sufficient. They were, of course, familiar to all brother collectors; and were more easily recognised and deciphered by the lower orders, who could not read written or printed words. These heraldic devices in a great many instances have been followed by later British bibliophiles. In France, on the other hand, we find bright and fantastic designs, plays upon proper

Olivers of Massachusetts; the Carrolls and Magills of Maryland, and the Morrises, the Clintons, and the Livingstons of New York.

The most interesting American book-plate to an American is that of the Father of his Country. John and Andrew Washington arrived in Virginia in 1657 during the Protectorate, bringing with them, besides their principles and their integrity, the heraldic symbols of their family. Their crest gave us a national shield, and suggested our flag, while it has marked their books during several generations of Washingtons in both the Colonies and the States. Some ten years ago a number of volumes were advertised for sale, and were sold in Philadelphia, which purported to have belonged to the private library of General Washington at Mount Vernon; they all contained book-plates, but it is believed that neither the book-plates nor the books were genuine. They certainly did not possess the authenticated pedigree of those in the Library of the Boston Athenæum.

Harry Beverley

From the collection of Edward W. Noah, Esq., New York.

names, ingenious monograms, drawings characteristic, in some way, of their owner's profession or position in life—all of them unconventional and imaginative; the French differing as greatly from their neighbours over the Channel in their book-plates as in their art generally, or their literature itself.

The earliest examples of American Ex Libris, naturally, like the English, are heraldic in style; but they are no more American than is the King James' Bible, or the folio Beaumont and Fletcher, in which they found their way to New England or the Carolinas from the Mother Country. Many of these, nevertheless, are of great interest now, and are as valuable, in their way, as are Knickerbocker knick-knacks or colonial chairs, because of their association with the famous families who made our early history for us, or the fathers of the Republic who fought for our rights to design our own book-plates, and to pirate the British books of to-day in which we put them. Among the colonial book-plates in possession of the collectors are those of the Washingtons, the Beverleys, the Lees, and the Byrds of Virginia; the Penns and Hopkinsons of Pennsylvania; the Vaughans and Pepperills of Maine; the Quineys, the Royals, the

Josiah Quincy

From the collection of Edward W. Noah, Esq., New York.

That John Franklin, brother of Benjamin, and son of a nonconformist tradesman in England, was entitled to bear the arms he put in his books, is very doubtful; but there can be no question that the owners of the specimens of book-plates herein reproduced had every right, by gentle birth, to the crests they used.

Laurence Hutton.

A Strange Name for it.

Jean Paul Richter, the poet and author, while travelling through Germany came to a small town, at the gate of which he was required to give an account of himself.

"What is your name?"
"Richter."
"What trade do you follow?"
"I am an author."
"An author! What's that?"
"That means I make books."
"Oh, yes, I understand," replied the official, "what you mean to say, but what new-fangled names they have for everything nowadays. Here, we call a man who makes books a bookbinder."