Jean Grolier.

Jean Grolier de Servin, Vicomte d'Aiguisy, the founder of the French school of ornamental binding, and one of the most eminent bibliophiles of his own, or indeed any age, was born at Lyons in 1479. He was descended from an Italian family, and his artistic inclinations were matured by a long residence in Italy, where he cultivated the acquaintance of the celebrated printer, Aldus, as well as the learned Budé, Rhodiginus, and Erasmus. Louis XII. sent him to Milan as financial administrator, and war treasurer, and there he remained for some time under François I. as military commander. Thence he went as ambassador to Rome, and upon his return to France, in 1535, was made one of the four treasurers of the government—an office which he continued to hold during the successive reigns of François I., Henri II., François II., and Charles IX. He died in Paris on the 22nd of October, 1565, aged eighty-six. His epitaph at Saint Germain des Prés says less of his honours than of his love and encouragement of letters.

The principal occupation of Grolier's life was the collection of fine books, and the large number of contemporary works that were dedicated to him by both Italian and French authors show the value that was set upon his approval. Gassori offered to him his work on Music, printed at Milan in 1518, and terms him "Eminens musarum cultor," and the poet Jean Vouteté, whose strictures on all authors were severe, and who condemned even Rabelais, had only praise to give to Grolier.

Although he knew that good printers were to be had in France, Grolier found still better in Italy; his employment of Italian binders was reasonable enough, as at that time the art of binding had not attained to anything like perfection in France. He engaged men of his own selection; they worked under his own careful supervision, and his fame has so overshadowed theirs that even their names have not come down to us. We are left in the same ignorance in regard to the artists who designed bindings for Maioli. Grolier probably at times prepared his own designs for, in a copy of the Adagia of Erasmus (see illustration) a medallion drawn by him on the reverse of page 112, sold for four hundred francs. This drawing proves that he could use the pencil freely, and that it was easy for him to trace the fine lines which meander in gold over the rich binding of his books.

After his return to France, he may also have owed much to the celebrated goldsmith and engraver, Estienne de Laulne, with whom he was on terms of constant intercourse. At this time his bindings displayed more florid ornament (see illustration, Pliny's Natural History), and it is supposed that some of them were afterwards copied by Jean and Pierre Gascon, as a French poet, Lesné, in a foot-note, says that these binders worked for Henry II., Diana of Poitiers, and "Grolier." But in talking of Grolier bindings, it must be remembered that the number of styles introduced by this celebrated collector is really legion. First, there are the somewhat stiff geometrical patterns, then the more easily linked ones, and, lastly, those in which some flowery ornament is added; and often, he adopted a kind of mosaic binding, with inlaid leathers of various colours. Grolier was always seeking to improve upon his patterns, and the results, in some cases, were hardly satisfactory.

Grolier was one of the first to letter the title upon the back of the book, as we do now; an evidence, probably, that it had become the fashion to arrange books upon the shelves in the modern style. It was some time before the plan of placing the title anywhere but on the side of the volume was generally followed in French libraries.
THE "ADAGES" OF ERASMUS.

Bouma in Italy for Jean Grolier. In the Dutuit collection.
In all the books printed and bound under Grolier's direction the finest vellum and the most carefully-prepared paper were employed; whilst, for their exterior decoration, nothing appeared too valuable in the way of embellishment. He provided his work-people with the finest morocco from the Levant, or from Africa, which reached him through the rich merchant Jehan Colombel, of Avignon. The most usual colour is dark brown, with a not over profuse gold tooling, the border and interlaced geometrical pattern being often of inlaid leather and, in the centre of the book, the title in roman letters in gold.

In March, 1856, a copy of Catullus was sold at M. Hebbelinck's sale for 2,500 francs. It is bound in morocco, and is so fresh that it appears as if it had never been drawn from its case. At the Giraud sale in the same year, a Virgil in 8vo., bound in black morocco, was one of the gems of the collection. Both of these volumes have the initial letters illuminated. Grolier himself was so delighted with the copy of Virgil—which was printed at the Aldine Press—that he ordered several copies to be differently bound. One of these, which sold for 1,500 francs, was in lemon-coloured morocco.

From existing examples we know that it was Grolier's habit to place a motto upon all the books in his collection, and this motto varies at different periods of his life. Upon the earlier works, as upon the Lucretius of 1501, it is complicated by an emblem; a hand issuing out of a cloud snatches an iron nail driven into the summit of a hillock, and upon the garter which surmounts the emblem we read "Aequus difficilior."

Later, when success had overcome the troubles of his earlier life, he adopted the words of the Psalmist, placing them in this form upon his bindings—

PORTIO MEA DO
MINE SAT IN
TERRA VI
VENTI
VM.
And in the more generally known works of his library we find that charming inscription, *Grolierii et amicorum* (perhaps imitated from Maioli), intimating that his books were for himself and his friends. Sometimes this is found at the bottom of one of the covers, sometimes written in his own hand upon one of the pages. Occasionally his coat of arms is found inside the cover of a book—azure with three bezants or, each surmounted by three stars of the same, or his crest (*devisa parlante*), a gooseberry-bush with the motto, *Nec herba nec arbor*.

At his death he left a library of more than 3,000 volumes, which was not dispersed till some years afterwards. M. Le Roux de Lincy, in his *Recherches sur Jean Grolier sur sa Vie et sa Bibliothèque*, gives a catalogue of 349 books, principally Greek and Latin Classics, which belonged to Grolier's library—most of which were printed by Aldus or his successors in Venice.

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**Bookbinders' Lending Library.**

To the Editor of The Bookbinder.

SIR,—There are a number of valuable works on the art of bookbinding advertised in your excellent and interesting magazine, but their prices put them beyond the reach of a great many tradesmen to whom they would be valuable. Now, is it not possible that they could be given out on loan to binders, say for 1s. each? There are many who would, doubtless, avail themselves of the method of getting a reading of these high-priced volumes. I, myself, purchased "The Whole Art of Marbling," 10s. 6d., but I would gladly exchange this book for Nicholson's "Manual," or for Zehnhsorf's "Art of Bookbinding." Perhaps you will call attention to the above in your next number, and suggest some practical and easy way whereby the books would be brought within the reach of binders who cannot buy them.

Your magazine will prove very serviceable to country binders, informing them as it does how their trade is progressing, and giving them help in their difficulties by recipes, &c. The city tradesman has no idea of the work his country brethren have to do. Many of them "forward" and "finish" both "letterpress" books and "stationery;" gild, marble, also do ruling, and many other things besides; and that with very few appliances in the shape of machines. He spends his life removed from the big town, and if he visits it for the purpose of seeing a bindery, the machinery and the wonderful improvements introduced into his trade falls on him like a revelation. The very advertisements of your magazine contain much valuable information, for it often happens that the country binder does not know where to get certain materials. Altogether *The Bookbinder* should be taken in by every one of the trade, and it will supply a felt want.—Yours, &c.,

A COUNTRY BINDER.

Wick, N.B., Oct. 1887.

[We shall be glad to hear from country binders how far they approve of this suggestion.—Ed.]