Roger Payne, the most celebrated of English Bookbinders, was born in Windsor Forest, and first became initiated in the rudiments of the art of which he afterwards became so distinguished a professor, under the auspices of Mr. Pote, bookseller to Eton College. From this place he went to London, where he was first employed by Thomas Osborne, a bookseller of Holborn. Disagreeing on some little matters, he subsequently obtained employment from Thomas Payne, a bookseller of the King's Mews, who ever after proved a friend to him; he established him in business near Leicester Square, about the year 1766–1770, and the encouragement Roger received from his patron and many wealthy possessors of libraries was such that the happiest results and a long career of prosperity might have been anticipated. His talents as an artist, particularly in the finishing department, were of the first order, and such as up to his time, had not been developed by any of his countrymen. He adopted a style peculiarly his own, uniting a classical taste in the formation of his designs with much judgment in the selection of such ornament as was applicable to the nature of the work it was to embellish. Many of his tools he himself made of iron, and some are yet preserved as curiosities and specimens of the skill of the man. Be this as it may, he succeeded in executing his bindings in so superior a manner as to have no rival, and to command the admiration of the most fastidious book-lover of his time. His favourite colour was an olive, which he called Venetian, and which he decorated chiefly with corners and borders. He had full employment from the noble and wealthy, and the estimation in which his bindings are still held, is sufficient proof of the satisfaction he gave. His chef d'œuvre is an “Æschylus,” translated by the Rev. R. Potter (1795), in the possession of Earl Spencer, the ornaments and decorations of which are elegant and classical. The binding of the book cost the noble earl fifteen guineas.

Many of Roger Payne’s bills have been preserved by book-lovers: they are eccentric and thoroughly characteristic of the man. We give a reduced facsimile of one of them; and an example of the style of “finishing” he usually employed on the sides of his bindings.

That he was a singular being may be judged by what has been related of him; he thought he was learned and aspired to be a poet, and some of his verses have been preserved, but his fatal habit of drinking utterly spoiled his life.

Roger commenced business in partnership with a brother, and subsequently was in like manner connected with Richard Wier,† but did not long agree with either, so that separation speedily took place. He afterwards worked under the roof of Mr. Mackinlay, but his later efforts showed that he had lost much of that ability he had been so largely

* Chiefly reprinted from Timperly’s “Dictionary of Printers, &c.,” published in 1839.

† Wier was not a whit less dissolute than his partner. Previous to this (in 1774,) he and his wife were employed at Toulouse, in binding and repairing the books in Count Macarthy’s library. The connexion between Wier and Roger, which took place during the latter part of Payne’s career, as might be expected from both of their habits, was of short duration. They were generally quarrelling, and Wier being a man of strong muscular power, used sometimes to proceed to thrashing his less powerful coadjutor. Payne is said to have composed a sort of Memoir of the Civil War between them. After their separation, Wier went abroad, and being taken prisoner by a privateer, he is said to have threatened to demolish half the crew if they did not liberate him. Like his partner, he worked the latter part of his life with Mr. Mackinlay.

Mrs. Wier was celebrated as the most complete book-restorer that ever lived. She was for a long time employed by Roger Payne; and her skill in mending defective leaves was such, that, unless held up to the light, the renovation was imperceptible. On her return from France, she went to Edinburgh to repair the books in the Record Office in that city. Her portrait is engraved in Dibdin’s “Biographical Decameron.”
endowed with. Pressed down with poverty and disease, he breathed his last on November 20th, 1797, in Duke's Court, St. Martin's Lane. His remains were interred in the burying-ground of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, at the expense of Mr. Thomas Payne, who, as before-stated, had been his early friend, and who, for the last eight years of his life, had rendered him a regular pecuniary assistance, both for the support of his body and the performance of his work. Mr. Payne's regard did not end there; for he had a small whole length of the man at his work, in his deplorable working-room, engraved at his own expense, under which Mr. Bindley wrote the following lines:

ROGERUS PAYNE;

natus Vindesor. MDCCXXXIX; denatus Londini. MDCCCLXXXVII.

Effigiem hanc graphicam solertis Bibliopagi

Muxbounov meritis

Bibliopolae dedit. Sumptibus Thomae Payne.

Etch'd and publish'd by S. Harding, No. 127, Pall Mall, March 1, 1800.

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ONE OF ROGER PAYNE'S BILLS.

Vaneri Pradum Rusticum Parisius MDCCCLXXIV

Bound in the very best manner in the finest green Morocco

The Back lined with red Morocco.

Fine Drawing Paper, & very neat Morocco Joints inside.

Their was a few leaves stained at the foredge which is worth 0:0:6

being

The subject of the Book Rusticum I have ventured to put

The Vine Wreath on it. I hope I have not bound it in

too rich a manner for the Book; it takes up a great

del of time to do these Vine Wreaths. I guess within

Time I am certain of Measuring & working the different

& various small Tools required to fill up the Vine Wreath

that it takes very near 3 days work in finishing the

two sides only of the Book — but I hoped to do my best

for the work — and at the same time I can not ex-

pect to charge a full and proper price for the work

and hope that the price will not only be

reasonable but cheap.

---
BY ROGER PAYNE.

Bound in olive-green morocco, with bright gold toothing.