English Bookbinding in the Reigns of Henry VIII. and VJII.

By W. H. James Weale.*

Bookbinding had nowhere attained to so high a degree of perfection at the end of the 12th century as in England. The leather and other materials employed, and the binding itself, were excellent; the stamps used for the ornamentation of the covers have never been surpassed for beauty of design and execution. But of course a book may be covered with the best of materials, and the work may be solidly executed; the tools employed to stamp the covers may even be beautiful, and yet the binding may be without any claim to be considered artistic. What raises binding to the rank of an art is (first) the planning, and (secondly) the execution of the ornamentation; much depends even on the number of the bands, their diameter, and arrangement. The shape of the space to be adorned by the binder in early times was even more uniform than now; it varied merely in size. Our English binders systematically adopted the plan of dividing the parallelogram into compartments by plain narrow bands, ornamented at intervals with small rosettes; yet their fertility of

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invention was so great, that of the thirty-nine examples which I have as yet discovered no two are alike; indeed, I doubt whether so great a variety of design is to be found in the bookbindings of any other period. For some reason, probably owing to the spread of the fashion of covering books with metal plaques, or with silk or velvet, the art of ornamental leather binding died out in this country in the 13th century.

In Germany and the Netherlands it developed more slowly, but it continued to progress during the 14th and 15th centuries. The invention of printing led to a great increase in the number of books produced, and as a consequence stimulated the development of the art of bookbinding, which retained a distinctive character in both countries. The printers who migrated from Germany and the Netherlands, were either themselves binders or were accompanied by binders. In Italy there was no national style of binding; what little there was of ornamental leather binding being a mere imitation of Arabian work. The influence of German, especially Suabian binders, made itself felt there until well into the first quarter of the 16th century, when Oriental designs again prevailed. Into Spain the Germans introduced their system of ornamentation which, however, was quickly modified by the adoption of Moorish details. In France the art was influenced to a very great extent by both Germans and Netherlanders, but in no country was it more completely denationalized than in England, and this is hardly astonishing. From the reign of Richard III., 1483, there had been a constantly increasing influx of stationers into this country from the Low countries, the Rhenish towns, Normandy and Paris. These stationers, who combined the craft of bookbinding with the trade of bookselling, at first paid merely periodical visits to London, Oxford, Cambridge, Lincoln, York, and other towns of importance, but soon seeing that business prospects were good, they took up their abode here. These men brought with them each his own stamps, and followed the traditions of the gild in which they had learned their craft. There were no such gilds of binders in this country as on the continent, and, consequently, there were no strong art traditions. The minor decorative arts cannot flourish except side by side with the higher arts, whose lead they follow. The continental binder had not only the advantage of a proper training, but was in constant communication with other art craftsmen, and this naturally tended to improve his taste, and raise the standard of his work.

Books bound during the reign of Henry VII., and the earlier part of Henry VIII.'s are decorated according to the German, Netherlandish, or Norman fashion. In the later years of Henry VIII., imitation of French and mixed French and Italian designs became the fashion for the more expensive bindings, but the German and Netherlandish systems of decoration were more generally followed. Many foreign stamps seem to have been bought after the death of their original owner, and brought over to this country; others were probably engraved abroad for English binders or for foreigners producing and binding books for the English market.

Before you is an example from a Durham book, Fig. 1, showing the old English system of planning the decoration of a book-cover. (For an example of early London binding, see vol. i., p. 3.) The Netherlandish binders, Fig. 3, generally impressed the sides with one or more panel stamps, the space between these and the edges of the cover being either adorned with ruled lines or relieved with small ornaments. The French plan was to adorn the field with vertical rows of ornaments, or with powdering enclosed within one, three, or more borders. (For an example of French modification of Netherlandish style, see vol. ii., p. 105.) The prevailing German
plan of design, Fig. 2, was a framework of intersecting vertical and horizontal bands adorned with stamps, the field within being divided by ruled diagonal lines into lozenge-shaped compartments; these, and oftentimes the spaces between the framework and the edges of the cover, were impressed with stamps. Many English binders adopted the German style of frame but divided the field within into four triangular compartments, Fig. 4, sometimes left plain, sometimes adorned with small stamps.
To William Caxton belongs the honour of having introduced the art of printing into this country. Unfortunately, almost all the copies of the books issued from his press (1477-91) which have come down to our times have lost their original covers. I have here rubbings from the original cover of a copy of the second edition of the Festiall, and from that of the small Black Book of the Exchequer. It is interesting to note that the border of dragons in triangular compartments closely resembles a stamp used by a contemporary binder at Bruges; the lozenge-shaped stamp with the gryphon on the other is quite German in character, as is also the general design.

To John Lettou and William de Machlinia I cannot at present assign any binding with certainty. Wyakyn de Worde, a native of the Duchy of Lorraine, had been in Caxton's employment, and at his death commenced business on his own account, first in Caxton's house at Westminster, whence, at the end of 1499, he removed to Fleet-street. He died at latest in the beginning of January, 1535; his will was proved on the 19th of that month. By it he left to Nowell, the bookbinder in Shoe-lane, xxs. in books; and to Alard, bookbinder, "my servant, vjl. xiijs. uijd."

Richard Pynson, a native of Normandy, was also for some time in Caxton's employment. In 1493 he was established without Temple Bar; in 1503 he had removed to the sign of "St. George," beside St. Dunstan's Church in Fleet Street. He died, or at least retired from business, in 1529. A good many specimens of his binding have come down to our time. The stamps he used came no doubt from Rouen.

Julian Notary, a Frenchman, was already established in King Street, Westminster, in 1498. Some time before 16th February, 1503, he removed to the sign of the "3 Kings," without Temple Bar. In 1515, he was settled in St. Paul's Churchyard, by the west door. His trade-mark (see vol. I, p. 146), the details of which vary in form on different stamps, has more the appearance of a notary's than of a merchant's mark, and it is quite possible he may have been a notary as well as a stationer.

Theodore Rood, of Cologne, settled in Oxford in 1478, and went into partnership with Thomas Hunt, a stationer. The stamps used by them appear for the most part to have been brought from Cologne, or perhaps from Brabant; but the general plan of the ornamentation of their bindings is decidedly English; the various rows of stamps being separated from one another by plain vertical and horizontal bands.

Besides these there were a good many other binders, both English and foreign, exercising their craft in England during the reign of Henry VII., specimens of whose work are still preserved. A deed of foundation of masses by Henry VII., in the abbey church of Hyde, now in the town library of Bremen, preserves its original stamped binding, with a finely designed panel, of which the Tudor rose is the principal ornament. There are three imitations of this panel, one of which we reproduce here; another bears the trade-mark of the stationer who used it. He was probably a York stationer.

During the reign of Henry VII., several binders made use of two panels to adorn the sides of their book-covers, the one showing a shield bearing quarterly France and England, supported by a dragon and a greyhound, and ensigned with a royal crown; the other, the Tudor rose between two scrolls, supported by angels and bearing the distich—

"Haece rosa virtutis de caelo missa sereno,
Aeternum florens regia sceptr. feret."

[To be continued.]
These panel-stamps must all date from between the accession of Henry VII., in 1485, and 1528, in which year Henry VIII., discarding the greyhound, placed the dragon on the sinister side, and took the lion for the dexter supporter of his arms. The space around was variously adorned with flowers, tufts of herbage, the sun, moon and stars, small shields charged with the cross of S. George, and, if the binder was a citizen, with the arms of the City of London, the last being, as a rule, placed in the upper sinister corner of the panel. The binder’s initials are generally beneath the royal arms, and his trade-mark beneath the rose. The earliest example of a pair of panel-stamps with these designs bears the initials H.N.; this binder also used a lozenge-shaped stamp with the Tudor rose surrounded by branch-work. The presence of the London arms on a similar pair of panel-stamps used by H. A., proves him to have been a citizen. Another citizen, Henry Jacobi, bookseller, printer and binder, did not, so far as I know, make use of the second design, but either repeated the first with a stamp representing a gryphon, the same or very like that used in Caxton’s workshop, or else a panel representing Our Lady of Pity, with, in the margin, the antiphon: *Saeve mater misericordie*, interrupted at the angles by a quatrefoil, and terminated by his initials united by a knot. Another citizen, G. R., did not, I believe, make use of the second design; the first he enclosed within a frame bearing a verse from Psalm cv.: “Confitemini Domino quoniam bonus quoniam in seculum misericordia eius: Deus meus respice” (vol. i., p. 163); in conjunction with this, he employed panel-stamps divided into four compartments, each containing the full-length figure of a saint beneath a canopy; the saints on one of these are S. Katherine, an archbishop, S. John the Evangelist and S. Barbara (vol. i., p. 164); those on another, S. Michael, S. George, S. Katherine and S. Barbara, these last surrounded by a frame bearing the inscription: “Quidquit agas prudenter agas et respice finem. O mater dei memento mei.” Julian Notary used both designs (vol. i., p. 120), but not until after he had removed from Westminster, as the London arms occur on both panels. R. L. was not a citizen; he placed a rose and a fleur-de-lys in the upper corners of one panel; a fleur-de-lys and a shield with the Cross of S. George in those of another. Another binder, M. D., placed the royal arms ensigned with the crown between two portcullises, the supporters beneath, and the rose and scrolls above. In conjunction with this, he employed a panel-stamp with the figure of a saint holding a sword and a shield within a circular
medallion surrounded by the Evangelistic animals with large inscribed scrolls. I believe him to have been a Frenchman. A citizen, G. G., substituted for the dragon and the greyhound two angels as supporters. Another binder, A. H., used a panel-stamp with the second design, in conjunction with a representation of the Annunciation, similar to those employed by several Netherlandish binders. Another, R. O., discarded the supporters, and placed the royal arms and the rose in two circular medallions surrounded by foliage on one panel with two shields, one bearing the cross of S. George, the other, his trade-mark; together with this he used a panel representing Our Lady of Pity, the style of which resembles panel-stamps of Netherlandish bookbinders, who visited or settled in England about this time. It is difficult to decide as to the exact date of these stamps, but I am inclined to believe that they were all executed before the accession of Henry VIII., after which Queen Katherine's badge, a pomegranate, was added immediately beneath the rose, as on the panels used by E. G. and by John Reynes, of London. Other binders of this period used two vertical panels, one bearing a shield with the arms of Henry impaling those of Katherine, supported by two angels and ensignified with the royal crown; the other, those of Henry supported by the dragon and greyhound, with two portcullises at the foot; and the Tudor rose between two angels with scrolls above the crown. Other binders, again, used a panel with the royal arms surrounded by the garter in the middle, and the rose, pomegranate, turretted gateway with the portcullis, and the fleur-de-lys in the angles, sometimes enclosed within a frame bearing the legend: "Deus det nobis suam pacem et post mortem vitam eternam. Amen." A band, which often occurs on books bound between 1500 and 1520, bears a curving oak-branch laden with acorns, above which are a dragon, a portcullis ensignied with the royal crown, and a lion sejant.

Another ornament used by several binders in the earlier years of the reign of Henry VIII. was a band divided into rectangular compartments containing royal badges. Guy Gimpus placed his trade-mark at the foot, and, in four compartments above it, the Tudor rose, pomegranate, fleur-de-lys, and turretted gateway with the portcullis, each ensignied with the royal crown. Gerard van Graten, whose trade-mark was very similar, adopted the same arrangement. Nicholas Spierinck placed the gateway in the third, and the fleur-de-lys in the fourth compartment. Guy Gimpus made use also of a roll stamp showing a lion, a vivern, and a gryphon facing to left with his initials at the foot; Nicholas Spierinck, another very similar, but with the gryphon at the foot and the vivern at the top. Another, or perhaps the same binder, adorned his book covers with a broad band divided into four canopied compartments, that at the foot containing three fleurs-de-lys, ensignied with the royal crown and his initials, N. S.; the others, the Tudor rose, the turretted gateway with the portcullis let down, and the pomegranate, each ensignied with the royal crown. Other smaller stamps used by these binders seem to have been copied from one another. Another unknown binder, whose initials were L. K. or K. L., appears to have been connected with Julian Notary. He made use of several small stamps representing a rose, a pomegranate, a lion, a portcullis, &c., the letters K. L., and a lover's knot, which, juxtaposed, occur as a border on a volume impressed with Notary's panel-stamps. T. H. or H. T. made use of three stamps similar in design, but varying in detail and size. At the foot of each is his trade-mark, above which are the fleur-de-lys, the portcullis, the turretted gateway with portcullis, the royal arms ensignied with the crown, the pomegranate, and the rose, surrounded by branches of foliage.
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By W. H. James Weale.

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Very similar stamps bear a trade-mark with the initials I. S. (perhaps John Siburg of Cambridge), or the initials I. H. and H. H. Besides these there are a number of other bindings impressed with stamps representing the badges of Henry and Katherine, but without any trade-mark or initials to give a clue to their authorship. One of these binders was probably a German, another of French origin.

Having enumerated all the binders who decorated their book-covers with royal badges during the reign of Henry VII. and that of Henry VIII., down to 1528, I must now make mention of other bindings of that period bearing initials or trade-marks.

R. Macé was a Norman bookseller and binder who, I think, visited this country, but did not settle here. His two finest stamps date from the last quarter of the 16th century, but I have not met with any binding impressed with them executed before 1510. P. P. was another Norman—probably Rouen—binder, who bound liturgical books of the use of York.

G. W., whose trade-mark occurs on the covers of many books bound in England between 1489 and 1510, was probably associated later on with another stationer, I. G.; an elegantly designed stamp, bearing both marks, adorns many bindings executed between 1512 and 1535 (see vol. ii., p. 36).

L. W. was another bookseller and binder, who exercised his craft in the reign of Henry VII. One of his stamps represents the vision of Arcad; another, two Apostles. Another binder whose panel-stamps have a thoroughly English appearance, probably lived at the sign of the "Maid's Head," in some provincial city, perhaps Norwich, Lincoln, or York. The panel-stamps used by him represent S. George on horseback about to despatch the dragon, and S. Michael overcoming Satan, with this marginal legend: "Qui seducebat omnes gentes peremptus est a Michael archangelo."
Nicholas Spierinck, alias Speyrinke, Sperynge, belonging to a Netherlandish family of stationers, illuminators, and bookbinders, some of whom were established at Lille, others at Antwerp, came to this country at the end of the 15th, or early in the 16th century, and settled at Cambridge. He lived in the parish of S. Mary, of which he was churchwarden in 1516. Nicholas Spierinck, Garrett Godfrey, and Segar Nicholson were appointed stationers to the University, 20th July, 1534. Spierinck died in 1545-6, and was buried at S. Mary’s. He brought with him to Cambridge two panel-stamps, with which he had adorned his book-covers prior to settling in this country. I have found them on many small sized books bound by this binder, but never as yet in conjunction with the roll-stamps above described, which only appear on the covers of folio and quarto volumes. Garrett Godfrey succeeded Spierinck as churchwarden of S. Mary’s in 1517, and died in 1539. It is just possible that this binder may be the same person as Gerard van Graten. Nicholas and Garrett, and John Siburg (probably John Lair of Siegburg), are mentioned by Erasmus in several of his letters. Andrew Lisly was employed in 1520-21 during 199 days in binding and repairing the books belonging to Eton College library; he was paid fourpence a day in wages, and one shilling a day in commons; the bursar of the college bought for his use all the materials he required. S. G. used a panel-stamp divided into four compartments containing full length figures of SS. Katherine, John the Evangelist, Nicholas and Barbara, enclosed within a frame adorned with birds and monsters, alternating with sprays of foliage. I. R., a Netherlandish binder, seems also to have sojourned in England; one at least of his panel-stamps, representing S. George (vol. i., p. 183), was doubtless designed to adorn the covers of books produced for the English market; another, representing the Baptism of our Lord, is figured vol. ii., p. 8. These two stamps may possibly have belonged to John Richard of Rouen and Paris.

A London binder who used a roll-stamp adorned with an eagle, a bee, a two-headed eagle displayed, a hound, and his trade mark, may perhaps have been connected in some way with John Reynes, and with G. W. and I. G.

John Bedel, stationer and bookbinder of the City of London, was the executor of Winkin de Worde’s will in 1534. Henry Pepwell, another citizen to whom Winkin de Worde bequeathed four pounds in printed books, was a printer as well as a bookseller, binder, and stationer. He carried on his business at the sign of the “Trinity,” in St. Paul’s Churchyard, from 1518 to 1539; his will is dated the 11th of September in the latter year. He was, it is said, a zealous Catholic, in business relations with Michael Hillenius of Antwerp, and Claude Chevalon of Paris. John Reynes, printer, binder, and stationer, dwelt at the sign of “Saint George,” in St. Paul’s Churchyard from 1527 to 1544. A portrait of this stationer, and a window to his memory adorned the hall of the company prior to the Great Fire. As a binder he employed a number of stamps differing considerably in style. In addition to those already noticed, I would draw attention to the large panel-stamp (vol. i., p. 147), representing the instruments of the Passion, treated heraldically after the manner of a cut employed by Thielman Kerver. A later panel-stamp, with two profile busts in medallion, is of thoroughly Renaissance character. John Cawode, his apprentice and assistant, succeeded to his business. Two other panels bear the arms of Henry VIII. impaling those of Anne Boleyn; one of these has the initials H. A. at the foot. T. P. used a panel-stamp with two medallions containing profile busts of men within a frame of Renaissance ornament; and a roulette stamp of ornament, both bearing his initials.
English Bindings in the Reigns of Henry VII. and VIII.

I have now to mention a certain number of foreign stationers to whom letters of denization were granted after the passing of the Act of Parliament (25 Henry VIII., 1534). Several of these had certainly sojourned from time to time in England, but, probably owing to the importation of bound books being prohibited, they established their domicile here. Henry Harmsen, stationer, from Deventer, in the diocese of Utrecht, was granted letters of denization 19th February, 1535. James van Gavere, stationer, from Ghent, in the dominion of the emperor, obtained similar letters, 2nd of March, 1535, but had probably been in this country for some years previous to that date, as Winkin de Worde, in his will dated 5th June, 1534, calls him his late servant, and makes him one of his executors. He continued to use the same panel-stamp with which he had adorned his book-covers in Flanders. John Holibusche, alias Holybusche, of London, stationer, otherwise bokebynder, born in Ruremonde, in the dominion of the emperor, took out letters of denization, 24th of February, 1535. Tho-e of John Gachet, alias Frenchman, of the city of York, bokebynder, from Rouen, France, are dated 10th May, 1535; those of Henry Brikman (Birckman), stationer, from Culemborg, the 19th February, 1535; those of Simon Martinsson, of London, stationer, from Haarlem, 26th February, 1535; and Gerard Pilgrome, of Oxford, stationer, native of Antwerp, 6th March, 1535.

Thomas Berthelet, alias Bartlet, probably a Frenchman by birth, was a printer, bookseller, and binder, who carried on his business at the sign of "Lucretia Romana," in Fleet Street. He succeeded Richard Pynson, in 1529, as printer and binder to King Henry VIII., and was the first stationer who received this honour by patent. Henry VIII. granted him, on the 15th February, 1530, an annuity of £4 for life. The arms granted to him by Clarenceux King-of-Arms, September 1, 1549, were:—Azure, on a chevron or, three trefoils vert. He died shortly before the 26th of January, 1556.

An account of books, &c., supplied to Henry VIII. by Berthelet in the years 1541, 1542, and 1543, occupying twelve leaves of paper, small quarto, is preserved in the British Museum. I have not been able to identify any of the volumes mentioned in this account, but there is in the British Museum a copy of the "Image of Governance," printed by Berthelet in 1540, in its original binding as supplied to the king, and also a manuscript bound for Edward VI. The covers of both these volumes are adorned with gold tooling, the design being in a mixed French and Italian style, or to use Berthelet's own words, "goriously gilt after the fashion of Venice." Another volume, presented to Henry VIII. by Antonius de Musica in 1544 or 1545, has a French-Italian border, but the general treatment of the design is of a very mixed style and inferior character.

From this time on, until the end of the century, all the best work done in London was executed by foreign binders.