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Our Portrait Gallery.

GEORGE CROSS, LONDON.

BOOKBINDER TO THE QUEEN" is a title that should win for its possessor a large share of respect, for the lady who holds the exalted position of Queen of England and Empress of India is known to have a very refined and artistic taste, and despite the many cares and duties which occupy her mind and time, she is said to be still able to spare a little space for an intelligent appreciation of our ancient and beautiful handicraft, and to take pains to see that her special books are fittingly covered and suitably ornamented, besides viewing with a critical eye the presentation volumes executed for her by other hands than those of her own chosen binders. We are pleased, therefore, to be able to present in this closing number of our sixth volume, a portrait of the Bookbinder to the Queen, with some specimens of his work.

GEORGE CROSS was born on December 19th, 1825, at Exeter, where his father, George Cross, had been established as a bookbinder since 1797, and it was in his father's workshop and under his tuition that he learnt the business in all its branches, from folding to finishing. In 1849 he went up to London, and obtained employment in the most important bindery in the city, Messrs. Remnant and Edmonds, where so many of our good binders have been put through a severe but thorough training in their craft, and he improved considerably by the experience there gained. In the same year he joined the London Consolidated Lodge of Journeymen Bookbinders, and the Pension and Asylum Societies. A little later he went into the British Museum under Mr. Charles Tuckett, and remained there until 1852, when Mr. Tuckett opened an establishment in Great Russell-street, under the management of his son, Mr. John Tuckett, when Mr. Cross was given the superintendence of

the finishing department. After the decease of Mr. Charles Tuckett, the business was continued until Mr. John Tuckett ultimately retired in 1880, when Mr. Cross established himself, taking over many customers of the firm, including, through R. R. Holmes, Esq., Her Majesty's Librarian at Windsor Castle, the binding for the Royal Libraries.

Since that time Mr. Cross has continually had entrusted to him the binding of the more important works executed directly for the Queen, and has probably bound more books for Her Majesty than any other person living, as the shelves of the Royal Library at Windsor Castle would show. Having worked on his own account and given entire satisfaction, in February, 1883, a Royal Warrant of Appointment as Bookbinder to Her Majesty was given to Mr. Cross, and this appointment he still holds. A book formerly belonging to Queen Elizabeth, which was on view at the Burlington Fine Arts Club Exhibition, and was reproduced by Mr. Griggs in the large paper catalogue, was sent to Mr. Cross for restoration and repairs, and the skill displayed by him on the work won for him the following letter:—

"Windsor Castle.

"Mr. Cross,—I have shown the book bound for Queen Elizabeth, which you have restored, to the Queen. Her Majesty was much pleased with the

skill with which the repairs were carried out.

RICHARD R. HOLMES.

"Royal Library, 29th November, 1890."

We learned from Mr. Cross that the Queen's taste in bookbinding is by no means so limited as the silly comment which recently went the rounds of the press would lead us to believe. Her Majesty's books are not usually bound in blue morocco; indeed, there is no usual colour. The royal bindings are very varied both in style and colour, each being chosen as being best suited to the book, and both are largely left to



GEORGE CROSS.

the artist librarian, who at times draws the designs for the decoration. In the half bound work there is however this peculiarity, instead of having corners, the whole length of the fore-edge is covered with a strip of leather or vellum a shade narrower than the back in width, at the top corner of which, on the front board, the monogram "V.R.I." with an imperial crown is worked in gold, and a similar mark is placed on the backs.

Mr. Cross himself is well versed in all the most difficult branches of the binder's art: washing, mending, staining, mounting, and print inlaying, besides other lesser known manipulations in which the binder of exceedingly old and valuable manuscripts and other works must be an adept to make the success required by exacting bibliophiles and connoisseurs, and he makes these points a speciality. We had the opportunity of examining some fine work in hand at the time of our visit, including some volumes of fifteenth and sixteenth century manuscripts for the Duke of Northumberland, written with a very fugitive ink which would float off on the application of water, and which required the most extreme care in the restoration, print inlaying, and binding, but which Mr. Cross succeeded in transforming into handsome volumes bound in antique pigskin. Besides this class of work on which he is constantly employed by wealthy collectors and noblemen, he has many presentation copies of books entrusted to him by leading publishers for elegant bindings, and his house at 230 Caledonian-road is usually full of beautiful examples of his skill.

He is assisted in the business by his two sons, Alfred Connett Cross, who joined him in 1883 and devotes his attention to the finishing, besides designing many of the patterns for special works; and Frank Walter Cross, who assists with the forwarding, having joined his father in 1891.

Mr. George Cross has been appointed one of the Arbitrators for the London Chamber of Arbitration.

Of the specimens we have chosen representing the work of the firm, the first is an imperial quarto containing the Royal Household Jubilee Address and the names of Her Majesty's household, engrossed on vellum, which was presented to the Queen with a superb silver vase. The book is covered in pale French blue crushed levant morocco, the front side ornamented with a design in oxidised silver by Messrs. Elkinington & Co. The inside is lined with nut brown levant morocco, with cream panels and crimson ribbons inlaid, elegantly tooled in gold with an Italian floral scroll pattern designed by R. R. Holmes, Esq., librarian to Her Majesty.

The "Fra Angelico" is in white vellum, with Italian floral scroll work and bosses inlaid with two colours, the insides being lined with Venetian green morocco, with crimson inlaid ribbon work.

The "Songs of Innocence," by W. Blake, is bound in olive crushed levant, with an allegorical design on the outside by Mr. A. C. Cross, the inside with a broad tooled border.

It was long a saying amongst the French that a man had never seen Paris who had not looked upon the books of Thuanus.

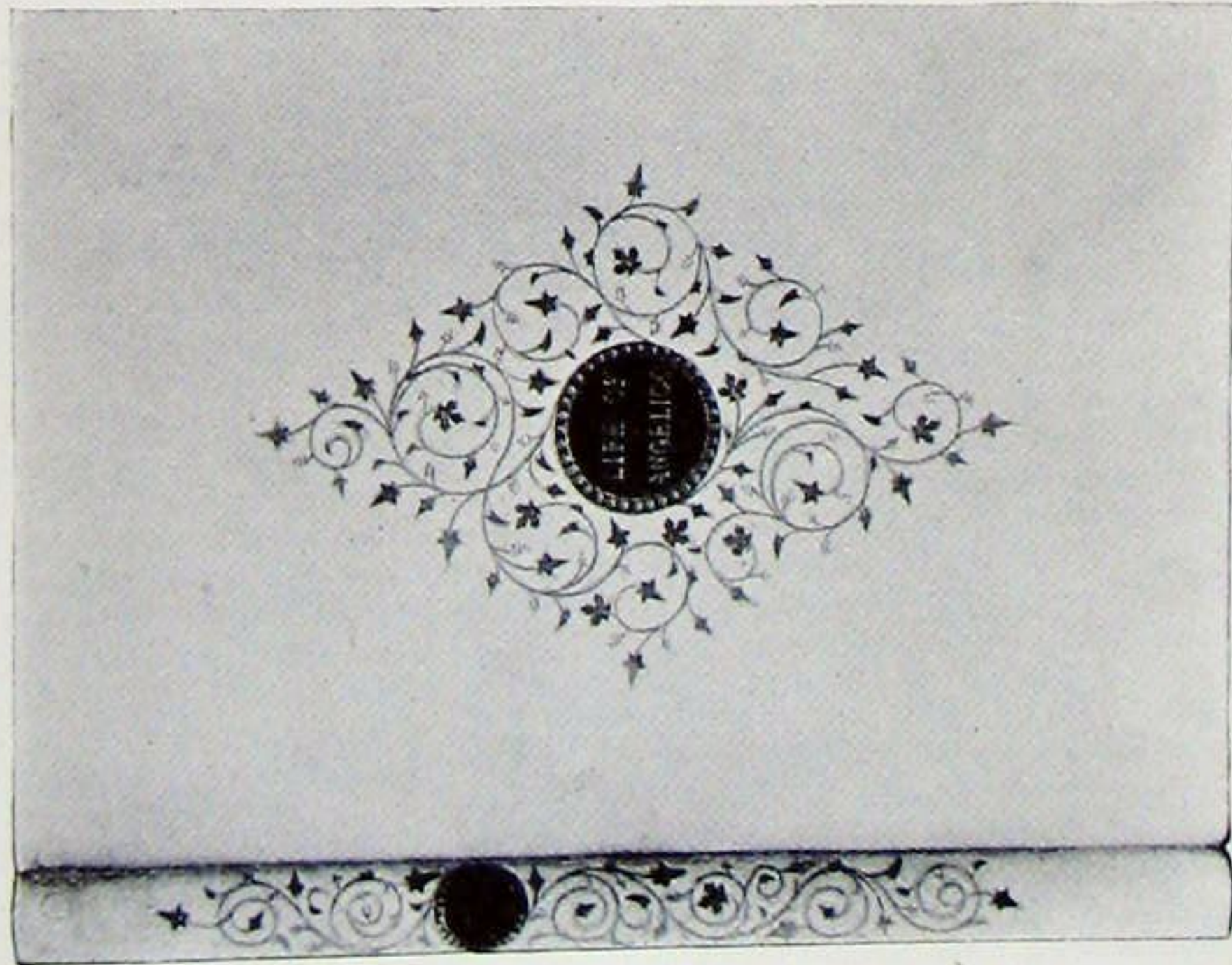
IS BOOKBINDING A MECHANICAL ART?—Listening a few Sunday mornings ago to Mr. Moncure D. Conway, who was delivering a discourse on the history of South-place Chapel, I was impressed, though in a different way to the rest of the congregation, by an anecdote he related about William Johnson Fox. Mr. Fox, preaching on the revelations made by geology, concluded his sermon by closing his Bible, placing one hand on each of the covers, and exclaiming "O my friends, do not let the range of your minds be narrowed by the mechanical art of the bookbinder." The sentence was an effective one to conclude a speech with, but otherwise there was nothing in it. The point of importance to me was that bookbinding was described as "mechanical," and I deny that such a description is accurate when applied to our trade. In some of its aspects it is more dependent on the intelligence and the artistic instincts of the worker than almost any other trade in existence. In so far as it has become mechanical it has deteriorated. Mr. Fox of course knew nothing of bookbinding, and looked at it as the clergymen of his day looked at the work of artisans generally—as being something quite outside the concerns of religion or the church. But Mr. Conway's eloquent sermon deserves to be, and no doubt will be published, and therefore the term "the mechanical art of the bookbinder" should not go without challenge. He spoke of the many great names, and there have been many connected with South-place, but when he included one of them, I thought of bygone experiences, sighed wearily, and wished myself out in the sunshine.—F. R.

AMONG folks' books "Reynard the Fox" has for more than five centuries had a popularity equalled only by the "Seven Wise Masters of Rome," and "Friar Rush." "In that rude old apologue," says Thomas Carlyle eloquently, "we have still a mirror, though now tarnished and time-worn, of true magic reality; and can discover there in the cunning reflex some image both of our destiny and of our duty, for now, as then, 'Prudence is the only virtue sure of its reward,' and Cunning triumphs where Honesty is worsted, and now, as then, it is the wise man's part to know this and cheerfully look for it, and cheerfully defy it."

BOOK-LOVE is a good angel that keeps watch by the poor man's hearth, and hallows it, saving him from the temptations that lurk beyond its charmed circle; giving him new thoughts and noble aspirations, and lifting him, as it were, from the mere mechanical drudgery of his everyday occupation.

IN French factories ten hours per day is the limit for males and females under sixteen years of age, and eleven hours for those from sixteen to eighteen years, but neither may work for more than sixty hours in one week. Eleven hours per day is the limit for women over eighteen years.

IN St. John's College, Oxford, is preserved a portrait of Charles I. in which the engraver's lines, as they seem to be, are really microscopic writing, the face alone containing all the Book of Psalms, with the Creed, and several forms of prayer.



BOUND BY GEORGE CROSS.

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