OUR PORTRAIT GALLERY. No. 11.

W. J. MORRELL.

W. T. MORRELL.
Amongst the visitors to the Arts and Crafts Exhibition last year, few who had any love for books and book-binding, will fail to remember the beautiful exhibits of the house of Mr. W. T. Morrell in the Roger Payne style: the richness and brilliancy of the work caught the eye of every one who saw them, and we are not at all surprised to find that at the recent exhibition of fine bindings at the "Caxton Head," the popular taste was manifested by the vote in favour of a Roger Payne pattern on a book bound by the present representatives of this house. The richness of the design and its chasteness, the brilliancy of the gold, and the delicacy of the execution, all contributed largely to enforce Mr. Morrell's claim to public notice, whilst to those who had the opportunity of handling the book there was evidence of similar thorough and careful treatment in the forwarding, which could also be found in his other specimen for which we gave our vote, adhering to the terms of the order for binding and considering it the more "appropriate" of the two.

After such an emphatic vote of approbation, given by such a mixed and cultured body of judges as those attending the exhibition, we could not long resist the temptation to visit the successful binder and seek from him some information about himself and his work, so we went to 21 Dean-street, Soho, and were soon in conversation with Mr. William John Morrell, a muscular young man with his apron on and shirt sleeves rolled up: a good type of the working binder who knows his craft, works at it and delights in it. We might have expected that, for the black coated gentry who have little practical knowledge of the business in which their money is invested have small opportunity of making themselves felt except through their power to finance the trade, which is a separate business to that of bookbinding. The bookbinder of the present day must be a keen student of his craft, and an experienced workman to boot, if he would make for himself a good business connexion and eschew the "tripe" and offal of the market upon which so many have to exist.

Being informed of the object of our visit, he had no objection to talking about his work, or showing it, with justifiable pride, but rather modestly objected to being made the subject of comment, parade, or advertisement; however, we managed to overcome his scruples so far that we are able to give photographs of the firm with examples of their work and some ideas as to how the work of the house is conducted, which we venture to think will interest our readers.

The business of Messrs. Morrell, though comparatively a new one, may be said to have originally been the business of Mr. Charles Lewis, one of the leading binders in London during the first half of this century, during part of which time Francis Bedford was working there as a journeyman. On the death of Mr. Lewis, F. Bedford carried it on for the widow, and made the acquaintance of the then Duke of Portland, which served him in such good stead later on, when he left Mrs. Lewis and went into partnership with John Clarke, Mrs. Lewis's business falling into the hands of H. Stamper, who controlled it until 1861, when Mr. W. T. Morrell took it over. It was then conducted at 17 Frith-street, Soho, and was a quiet private trade in good work, yielding a comfortable living. In 1879, Mr. W. T. Morrell brought his son William John into the workshop, but on his (W. T. Morrell's) death, in 1881, W. J. Morrell was turned over to Messrs. Kelly & Sons to finish his time, and there, under the experienced tuition of Mr. Thomas Pymm (to whom Mr. W. J. Morrell acknowledges himself particularly indebted), he became a good workman, staying with the firm for twelve months after the expiration of his apprenticeship, until November, 1887, when he took charge of his mother's business; bringing to her assistance all the zeal and strength of a young man, and shaping for the house a clear line of policy upon which he determined to succeed—

William Hendrie.
that of working for the trade upon good work, and doing it well. The first move was to secure more convenient premises, and the business was then removed to Dean-street, Soho, the upper part of the house being then occupied; another move has since been requisite, and the ground floors are where the work is now carried on. For some little time he had an uphill struggle, but with good help from his skilled workmen, and especially from Mr. William Hendrie, his foreman—whose able services Mr. W. J. Morrell cannot speak too highly of—in less than four years, he has succeeded in making his house known far and wide as one of the best binderies in London, where every reliance may be placed on books committed to their care being properly and tastefully bound. Quite recently, Mr. John Morrell has been taken into partnership with his brother, Mrs. Morrell having retired, and at the present time their workshops are crowded with work, for they get quite as many orders as they can fulfil, the great difficulty being that of obtaining a sufficient supply of workmen having the requisite skill; for such competent men they can always find employment.

A glance round one binder's workshop is so like to a glance round another, that the eye soon takes in any little important difference worth noting, but we were hardly prepared for such an absence of machinery as we found here, although Mr. Morrell had previously informed us that he had demonstrated to the trade the wisdom of hand work, and that no decent book, even for trade work, need be touched by machinery. All the work is done by hand, even half-bound work. The forwarding and finishing departments are well lighted, being under a long V-shaped glass roof. Every forwarder has his press and plough, and every book is cut in boards, the boards as well being cut by the plough. All the headbands are hand-worked, the colours of the silks being arranged to harmonise with the general details of the work. Japanese vellum papers are in much request for flys, and on leather-jointed books, where silks are used for ends, there is usually a second—marble paper—underneath, as in French work. A great deal of the work is sewn on bands, flexible, not sawn in; and the difficult-to-make and uncomely-looking flat backs were in evidence where books were required to open particularly flat.

All the marbling and gilding is done indoors, a separate shop having been fitted up on the premises for this purpose. Tree-marbling is also done by the firm, and, both in this and the colour-marbling, most excellent results are obtained.

The finishing department is always interesting, and there we stayed some time examining many beautiful specimens of the Roger Payne style, which has become the speciality of the house. Every book or set differs from its fellows, although the style is the same, for in this branch of work endless variations may be made by very slight alterations of the tools employed, so that however much they resemble one another, each book has its own design, and is not merely a slavish copy of that master's work. For other styles, special designs are drawn and worked by the men, Mr. Morrell—who is a devout believer in co-operation—paying extra for an accepted design, thus encouraging the development of their creative faculties, and at the same time securing for himself a higher standard of skill amongst his expert staff of workmen. We would that this example should be more generally adopted; too often, special and exceptional skill in this kind receives no better reward than a rate of pay calculated upon mere mechanical ability, with only some slightly better chance of permanent employment by reason of being useful. Yet, employers think nothing of paying professional artists large sums for special designs which are charged upon their customers, while should a similar effort be successfully made by a finisher, no extra recompense is given for the expenditure of creative energy.

Altogether the firm employ about fifty workpeople upon work done almost exclusively for the trade, much of which is the best class of prize books, and so far as we could see it will stand comparison with that of any other house. From some that were in hand at the time of our visit we have selected four which will suffice to show the character of the work produced. No. 1, "Memorie de Madame de Stael," in gobielin blue crushed levant, Roger Payne style. No. 2, "L'Abbé Tigrane," in dark crimson with a scroll border. No. 3, "Tennyson," in gobielin blue, with scroll design filled in with tudor roses. No. 4, "Tennyson," in gobielin blue with grolieresque design.

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**A Twin Book.**

A set of Prayers and Hymns has just been curiously bound in fac-simile of a Prayer Book formerly in possession of Charles I. The books have been laid together, heads the same way, back and foreedge, and bound with one piece of silk embroidery, so that the two books are securely fastened together and have only to be turned over for use. The material is white thick corded silk, worked on the side with a tulip in yellow and orange outlined with gold cord; above the tulip is a piece of shaded blue waved stitching, presumably for a sky. On each back are four panels, with alternate St. Andrew's and Maltese crosses made of leaves in shaded silks. The insides are lined with pale blue watered silk. The twin book is laid in an elegant bevelled bed of blue silk velvet, enclosed in a delicate white German calf square box, and has been done for a customer of the Oxford University Press.

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A work that promises to be a standard handbook is the "American Dictionary of Printing and Bookmaking," the first part of which has just been issued from the Lockwood Press, Duane-street, New York. It is uniform in size with The American Bookmaker, with which journal it is presented as a supplement, but it will be issued in a separate volume at 50c. Those who prefer to remit 25c in advance can be supplied at that price with the complete work when finished. The compiler, Mr. W. W. Fasko, is author of a "History of Printing in New York," and is an authority on printing and bookmaking. The work comprises references to all that is known of the art from the earliest to the present time, and is profusely illustrated.