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you such testimonials of my moral and religious character as you may feel yourselves warranted to give me."



BOOKPLATES AT COLBY

BY EDWARD F. STEVENS

IT was a most happy and complimentary recognition of Colby's Book Arts Collection, that Mrs. Frank Cowdery of Albany should greatly enrich the Library's treasures by the bestowal of her collection of bookplates. "Ex Libris" form an aspect of the Arts of the Book of special artistic and personal significance, for the bookplate associates the book with its owner in an intimate relationship. Mrs. Cowdery's bookplates, approaching a thousand examples in number, are recognized not only as an extensive but also as a discriminating collection, in which selective quality, even more than numbers, is apparent.

An historical study of the origin and growth of the book-owner's label would be an interesting story into which this brief paper may not venture, beyond alluding to early examples of family crests and escutcheons identifying the books pertaining to ancestral houses, remaining undisturbed for generations. The heraldic or armorial bookplates were characteristic of the early days, and are well-represented in our new acquisition. But, perhaps closer in keeping with the Book Arts, would be the more modern expressions wherein artists of many talents have lent their genius to a minor art of great individuality.

Inasmuch as many book collections, especially with institutions, are presented or endowed as memorials, the idea of the portrait has largely prevailed, more often by photographic reproduction. Such *carte de visite* photographs have unique character, but the repetition in every related book detracts from the specific honor intended, somewhat as the

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implied honor of historic portraiture on our postage stamps loses efficacy by becoming commonplace. Bookplates, of whatever artistic merit, bearing the names of distinguished characters have high historic interest aside from the art consideration always lending value to a collector. But it is safe to assume, with the Book Arts in mind, that the most alluring bookplates are those which give expression to an artist's genius in the restricted field of Ex Libris.

It is important to record that Thomas Bewick, who revived in England wood-engraving as an art, and William Blake, that brilliant literary and artistic genius, contributed to bookplate art. Mrs. Cowdery had acquired nearly a dozen of Bewick rarities, and her gift shows a fine proof of Blake's plate for "Mr. Cumberland." In America, Alexander Anderson, known as the "father of wood-engraving" in this country, contributed one of the earliest bookplates in American collections.

It is pleasing to note that Mrs. Cowdery's own plate was designed and engraved by J. Winfred Spenceley, and that her collection favors Spenceley's work, always of exquisite refinement. More than one hundred and thirty plates of his design are comprised in Mrs. Cowdery's selection. Perhaps the most widely acclaimed designer and engraver at the turn of the century was Edwin Davis French, of whose art and craft more than one hundred and seventy examples are shown. Three of his bookplates might call for particular mention as work of surpassing execution. The view of the Library of Princeton University, with the tower of the building, then newly erected, has been denoted "the most charming of university plates": the bookplate of the General Theological Seminary of New York has been designated "a magnificent specimen": while that of the Grolier Club appeals supremely to bibliophiles, since it bears a miniature reproduction of the familiar picture of "Grolier at the Printing House of Aldus," and in the margin appears the Hawthorne medallion, an original of which hangs on the wall of the Colby Librarian's office.

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Artists of wider reputation have lent their inspiration to the modest bookplate, which is usually not associated with their names. Edwin A. Abbey designed a plate for Brander Matthews; Bertram G. Goodhue for the Lowell Memorial Library; George Wharton Edwards and H. Siddons Mowbray have done rare examples. Mowbray was teacher of our own Charles Hovey Pepper in his art-student days. A Mowbray bookplate has, incidentally, just come to Colby.

To mention a few worthies in the Ex Libris field that have their place in the front rank, we should include William Edgar Fisher, who did for Bowdoin, Class of 1882, a reminiscent design picturing class boat-races on the Androscoggin; Elisha Brown Bird, Sidney L. Smith, and W. F. Hopson, the two latter represented by some thirty plates each in our new acquisition. Among English artists one of the most conspicuous is Edmund Hort New of Oxford, many of whose designs were already in the initial Colby nucleus, having been given by Mr. New, who was the creator of the present writer's own bookplate picturing "The Dingle."

A culminating group brings together the leading Graphic Arts men of today—such lights as Frederic W. Goudy (most famous type-designer), W. A. Dwiggins (who redrew the Colby seal), Daniel Berkeley Updike (the greatest printer of his time), Bruce Rogers (who has been nominated by highest authority "the most vital force in modern typography"). It is appropriate to note that, during the earlier years of B. R.'s Boston days, he designed the classic bookplate for the Typographic Library and Museum of the American Typefounders Company (now non-existent), but his later designs have been consistent with his favorite manner, in which he made his brilliant reputation in the use of printers' ornaments from the typecases.

Colby's great good fortune in becoming the recipient of this superb enrichment of our Book Arts Collection is due to President Bixler's acquaintance with Mrs. Cowdery. She was once the roommate, at Smith College, of his aunt, now

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Mrs. B. K. Emerson, of Amherst. Realizing Dr. Bixler's vision for Colby's future, it seemed to Mrs. Cowdery that a highly representative collection of Ex Libris could be more appreciatively made known in the new Miller Library at Colby than elsewhere. There the Cowdery Bookplate Collection will prove in variety and appeal not the least fascinating display setting forth the Arts of the Book.



THE SHANNON COLLECTION

LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY, last month, provided an appropriate occasion for announcing the recent gift to the Colby Library by Mr. Richard Shannon, of Waterville, of an extensive collection of papers, documents, diaries, and other material written by, or dealing with, Colonel Richard Cutts Shannon of Civil War fame. At the head of the list stands the military appointment of Shannon, signed by President Abraham Lincoln. There are two military appointments signed by Andrew Jackson, two diplomatic appointments signed by President U. S. Grant, and two diplomatic appointments signed by Benjamin Harrison.

Among Colonel Shannon's own writings, the collection includes his vivid first-hand account of his military service in the Civil War, the diary he kept while a military prisoner in Libby Prison in 1863, his journal of an official visit to Brazil in 1877, and his diary of a trip to China in 1886. Among his later compositions are his "Remarks upon being officially notified of his renomination for Congress" in 1896, and his "Reminiscences of College Life."

Finally, the Shannon Collection includes genealogical and biographical matter, photographs, some personal correspondence, and Professor E. W. Hall's Memorial Address, delivered in the Colby Chapel on June 25, 1911. The library is deeply indebted to Mr. Richard Shannon for the gift of this rich historical and literary material.