Some Indiana Bookplates

In that delightful book, "Bookplates of To-day," recently issued by Tonellé & Company, Mr. W. G. Bowdoin, an authority on this subject, says in his account of the well known bookplate designer of North Dakota, Mr. William Edgar Fisher: "Most of our leading designers have hitherto been grouped in the eastern section of our country, or at least not much farther west than Chicago. Some few designs, it is true, have been produced in California, but for the most part the bookplates of note have been marked with an eastern geographical origin."

It is always, of course, a matter of more or less surprise, to the resident of the Atlantic seaboard that any good thing, especially of an artistic nature, should come out of what is vaguely termed "the West," and this also seems to be the state of mind with reference to bookplates. It is no doubt true that the most notable designers have hitherto been the product of an eastern environment, but that geographical considerations count for little is exemplified in the work of Mr. Fisher himself, which has not been excelled in this country for charm, originality and the manifestation of the proper function of the bookplate. However, this is not a controversial dissertation upon the subject, but some account of the results of an endeavor to make a collection of bookplates in one's own State designed by persons native thereto or resident therein. It has been a strenuous search with some rather remarkable and amusing disclosures. Naturally, one would turn to the alleged "literary" people, to the numerous novelists and abounding poets, but, surprising as it may seem, very few of them have bookplates and some have even declared, with the most delightful candor, that they are in densest
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ignorance as to the nature of them. Then, there are others who are very great and magnificent personages and must be approached with many profound salaams. “Please, sir, have you a bookplate? Enclosed find a two-cent stamp,” you timidly murmur. The Successful Novelist, with his ear to the wall, listening to the rumble of the presses throwing off the millionth edition of his last inanity, haughtily tosses your request aside. “A thin device for my noble autograph,” he says, with ineffable disdain. However this may be, it is a fact, more or less interesting, that very few of those most flagrantly “in the public eye,” in this State, are the possessors of bookplates; Mr. James Whitcomb Riley being one with an avowed indifference to a special indication of the ownership of his books.

Mr. Edward Eggleston, however, is an exception, as he owns a characteristic plate, reproduced here, the figure being Fra Angelico’s “Reading Monk” and the words from Chaucer, the motto, also, having been carved on the frame of Mr. Eggleston’s library door. Among those whom one would expect to find in the possession of a cherished bookplate, General Lew Wallace does not conspicuously figure, and this seems the more surprising as General Wallace, it is understood, is of the most pronounced bookish tastes aside from his authorship; his picture taken in the midst of his books in his specially constructed library, being familiar to the public.

It has been so far impossible to discover who was the earliest bookplate designer in Indiana, but it is thought that this honor may be accredited
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to Mr. Bruce Rogers, who has acquired reputation as a designer of bookplates and of other notable work with Houghton, Mifflin & Co. Although a native of this State, he is now a resident of Boston; his work in bookplate designs being represented in this collection by the plate of Dr. Richard B. Wetherill, of La Fayette, which was also engraved under Mr. Rogers's direction. There are, it has developed in collecting, a number of clever designers living in the State, and perhaps Miss Margaret Steele, daughter of Mr. T. C. Steele, the well known landscapist and portrait painter, leads in the number and variety of designs, several of which are reproduced here. Miss Steele has been a pupil of her distinguished father and of her brother, Mr. Brandt Steele, a clever and brilliant young artist. She shows a pronounced talent for distinct decorative effects; decorative design in black and white always having had a fascination for her, and the designing of bookplates naturally following. Her first plate was designed for Mrs. Bowles, the wife of Mr. J. M. Bowles, who at one time conducted, first in Indianapolis, and then in Boston, one of the most beautiful art magazines ever published in America, "Modern Art." In addition to the dominant decorative note, Miss Steele's designs display, in some instances, a certain elusive fancy and a piquant charm not often
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found in work of this kind. The plate of Mr. Noble W. Krieder, a lyre with a border of vines and bunches of grapes, is particularly appropriate for a young musician, while those of Edna McGillard Christian and Charles White Merrill are purely symbolic and heraldic. Aside from other considerations, the plate of Charlton Andrews possesses a personal interest for those who know him; he having lived several years in Paris, where he became known as a writer of verse of a high order of poetic charm, and where his recent novel, "A Parfit Gentil Knight," had its beginnings. Mr. Test Dalton, a relative of General Wallace, whose bookplate by Miss Steele is shown here, has also made an essay into the field of the historical novel. The plate of the Indianapolis Sketch Club is at once conventionally decorative and chaste in effect, and is one of the most successful of Miss Steele's designs.

Mrs. Brandt Steele, until recently Miss Helen McKay, has made some exceedingly attractive plates: among them one for her mother, Mrs. Horace McKay, the motif for which is the night-blooming cactus; while the piquant little plate designed for her husband is characteristic, as Mr. Steele has accomplished some remarkable achievements in pottery. The third plate reproduced here, that of Miss Anna E. Fraser, was made for the latter when a student at Smith. Mrs. Steele has made other charming and effective plates which are not distinguished so much for their decorative quality, as for the expression of a distinct individuality.

Some of the best work in bookplate
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designs produced in this State has been done by Miss Anna Hasselman, of Indianapolis, whose plates are largely pictorial in character. The one made for Mt. Vernon Seminary, Mrs. Somer’s school at Washington, is especially notable from the inclusion in a small design of several different motifs; the interior shown being a corner of the music room of that institution, with the alumnae pin and motto in the opposite corner of the plate, while the conventionalized daisy, which forms a part of the border, is the school flower. The bookplate of Mr. Henry Scot Fraser, designed by Miss Hasselman, is a most enticing one, showing the interior of Mr. Fraser’s study, with his writing table and other appurtenances; while the plate of Sarah Gilbert Millard includes the genuine portrait of a dog and is not that of an imaginary animal. Miss Hasselman has designed a number of other plates of a more or less pictorial character, in all of which the well balanced composition and the presence of an individual sentiment are marked.

Miss Grace and Miss May Greenleaf are young art students living in Indianapolis, who have designed several charming plates; the one reproduced here being that of Mr. Harry I. Miller, of St. Louis, of the Vandalia railroad; and Carl Bernhardt, a clever lad of Richmond, has made several original plates, one of which shown here, that of the Rev. J. E. Cathel, a well known resident in Des Moines, Iowa, being especially unique. He has also designed an interesting plate for the library of Mr. William D. Foulke, known to the public.
as a writer and member of the civil service commission. Mr. Raymond White, of Richmond, has also designed several clever plates, two of which, one being that of the writer, are reproduced here, the other, that of Mr. Herbert C. Emery, of Boston, being heraldic in character; the two or three other plates made by him, however, being characteristic of the individuality of the owners. He has engraved one or two of his designs on wood. Mr. William M. Voris, of Franklin, who published for a time a clever little magazine, “The Westminster Chap-Book,” has also designed and cut on wood a few plates of simple motive.

Among the plates in this collection from well known Indiana people, that of Mr. William M. Elliott, of Logansport, is interesting from the fact that it was designed by Elbert Hubbard. Mr. Elliott is a clever young writer of verse, some humorous verses written by him and illustrated by Oliver Herford having been published in a recent “Century.” Considerable interest attaches to the plate of Miss Besse Coffroth, of La Fayette, which was designed in London and printed on genuine Kelmscott paper, which she was fortunate enough to obtain. The plate of Mr. John B. Peddle, of Rose Polytechnic Institute, Terre Haute, reproduced here, is interesting from the play on his family name made by the old peddler who is approaching a hill at sunset.

The plate of Mr. George Cottman, shown here, was designed by Mr. William Forsyth, one of the “Indiana Group” of painters, and one of the most highly regarded and best known landscapists in the West.
Mr. Cottman is himself a writer of charm, an authority on certain phases of the early life of this Commonwealth, an ardent lover of nature, and a famous pedestrian, the latter quality being the *motif* of his bookplate. Another writer of reputation, whose articles are familiar to newspaper and magazine writers, and whose plate is included in this collection, is Mrs. Emma Carlton, of New Albany, in the south of the State. Mrs. Carlton’s "Ike Morgan" of wood cut of her father where her parent also ing library. The lard bottle and the lady in mantilla, are all reminiscent of that far away time, and the motto, "Fair and Wholesome Pasturage," from Lamb’s "Old Hertfordshire," was suggested by early perusal of Lamb’s essay given her by her father to read. Mrs. Carlton is an enthusiastic collector of various objects of art, and, among other things, of old bottles, her fascinating article "At the Sign of the Carboy," in a num- ber of the "Century" within the past year or two, having inspired more than one person with a desire to make such a collection. The
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State Library of Indiana uses the state seal as a bookplate, and the writer has in her collection some fascinating old plates which were found in books in the Workmen’s Institute Public Library, at New Harmony: that famous old town in South Western Indiana, the scene of the social experiments of Robert Dale Owen; the library having been founded in 1828 by William McClure. In the Public Library at Richmond, one of the oldest and largest libraries in the State, are to be found a number of interesting old plates, some of English design and others owned by colonial booklovers. Altogether, a search of this kind can be recommended to the collector as a most interesting way to form a collection.

CONCERNING CLASSICAL KNOWLEDGE

I DO NOT THINK THAT I AM SAYING TOO MUCH WHEN I ASSERT THAT HE WHO HAS NOT KNOWN THE WORKS OF THE ANCIENTS HAS LIVED WITHOUT KNOWING WHAT BEAUTY IS.

HEGEL
MISCELLANIES
Fireplace with Copper Hood
Bromsgrove Guild, Worcestershire, England
Fireplace and Mantel
Bromsgrove Guild, Worcestershire, England