

Acquisitions to the Mosher Press Collection

BOOKS FROM MOSHER'S LIBRARY

More books from Mosher's library have been added to the 500+ others. In particular there were a couple of note:

(Eragny Press) Perrault, Charles. *Historie de Peau d'Ane*. London, 1902.

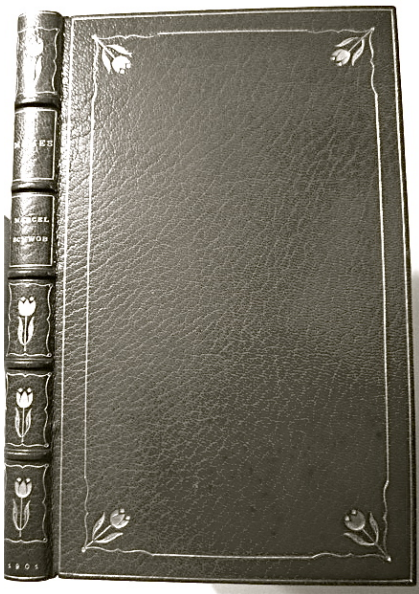
Varney, George. *A Brief History of Maine*. Illustrated. Portland, ME: McClellan, Mosher & Co., 1888.

The Lucien Pissarro designed cover of *Peau d'Ane* was photo-mechanically used by Mosher for the covers of his editions of *The Last Christmas Tree* (1914, Japan vellum copies only) and for the *Magic in Kensington Garden* (1916). In other words, this book's cover design was the source for these Mosher Press editions. That in and of itself makes this a particularly choice acquisition and it now takes its place alongside two other Eragny Press books from Mosher's library: *C'est d'Aucassin et de Nicolette* (London, 1903) and Villon's *Les Ballades* (London, 1900).



The *Brief History of Maine* was a publication under the joint publisher names of McClellan and Mosher. Since Mosher's first belles-lettres publication was marked with his publication of George Meredith's *Modern Love* in 1891, one wonders why this children's book on Maine's history would hold any interest or significance beyond the fact that Mosher's name was listed as part of the publisher information and that this volume appeared in his library. The answer is simply this: this is the first book for which Thomas Bird Mosher wrote a preface. Spanning only pp. [7]-8, the unsigned Preface heralds the many introductions, prefaces, notes and other attending material Mosher would write to accompany many an author's text. This copy of the Varney book contains Mosher's own private library bookplate and so constitutes a nice association "package" betwixt book, publisher and writer of the Preface.

OF BINDINGS THERE IS NO END



Stikeman Binding

Several notable bindings by period art binders were added to the shelves. Two are from the noted outlet of the Guild of Women-Binders in London. Another is a signed binding "Bound by HBS" on the 1902 publisher-signed facsimile edition of the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, The Astronomer-Poet of Persia*. Yet another is a subdued but lovely red binding by Henry Stikeman's firm, quite possibly by Henry himself, on a copy of Marcel Schwob's *MIMES* (Mosher, 1901).

The large *Rubáiyát* is notable in and of itself in that it's the first facsimile of the original edition of FitzGerald's translation, presents a bibliographic overview of notable *Rubáiyát* editions, and is signed by the publisher. Mosher had assembled what was considered by many to be the finest *Rubáiyát* collection in America which he later sold to Henry O. Wheeler (his first choice was to have Henry Huntington purchase it). The binding (not pictured here) in dark green morocco was an attempt to adorn the book with some beauty—certainly with quality leather—even though its execution is amateur at best, but shows signs of promise with the onlay work applied to the outer edges of the boards.

While we're on the topic of the *Rubáiyát* I thought I'd mention a little red Vest Pocket edition that came

from a dealership in New York state called Yesterday's Muse. It's not particularly noteworthy as a binding, but I did have a little fun with how I came about finding it. While using the Internet for some research I stumbled upon a blog post by one who called himself "Tarquin Tar" (the posts end in 2012). And the blog itself is called "Tarquin Tar's Bookcase." The post I discovered was entered Nov. 14, 2010 with a title "11-th Century Persian Atheism... in Rhymed Quatrains and Goatskin." There are a dozen pictures of the binding and contents, including the endpapers. Tarquin Tar (hereafter T.T.) provides several remarks about this little book in red binding:

"This week's book is an exquisitely bound little copy of the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*...published by Thomas B. Mosher (1852-1923) of Portland, Maine in October 1916. This was Mosher's ninth edition of the *Rubáiyát* [then he lists all preceding editions]. This list of dates suggests the popularity of the *Rubáiyát* with turn-of-the-century New England readers..."

"[T.T. describes the contents in detail] the pages measure 7 cm x 13.5 cm. and are made of a high-quality paper with 3 cm. horizontal chain-lines and bearing the familiar crowned goat's head and lettering watermark of the celebrated Dutch firm Van Gelder Zonen... The book was printed in duodecimo format, with no signatures. The book is in excellent condition, through an early owner did decide to press a three-leaf clover (?) inside the book at the first page of the preface. "

"As I noted above, the binding is quite beautiful. This past week I attended a fascinating lecture at the Massachusetts Center for Renaissance Studies on the topic of rare and old-book bindings. I learned at that talk that the only commonly used medium for binding that can be dyed is goatskin, or 'morocco', and therefore, since my book is bound in a red leather, I assume it is morocco. The surface has the usual pebbled texture of morocco bindings. Gilded lettering on the cover identifies the title and translator, and gilding decorates the raised bands on the spine as well. Around the inside edge of the front and back boards there runs a gilded chain-design."

"More fantastic, however, are the pastedowns and end-pages; instead of the usual marbling, these are covered in colorful, cloudy patchwork of pinks, purples, greens, with occasional black lines. It's almost like an hallucinated watercolor painting. Interestingly, while the red morocco binding was expertly done, the cutting around the edges of these pages – both at the front and back of the book – are rather ragged and uneven. Within the book, between pages 22 and 23, one can see the frayed end of the pink string used to tie the gatherings together in the rebinding."

"Interestingly, this kind of rebinding of Mosher titles is not only common, but it has made them highly collectible as well... my copy of the *Rubáiyát* was originally issued in thin cardboard with a blue paper wrapper (I only know this because book-seller Harry Alter has one listed online and it still have its original binding)."

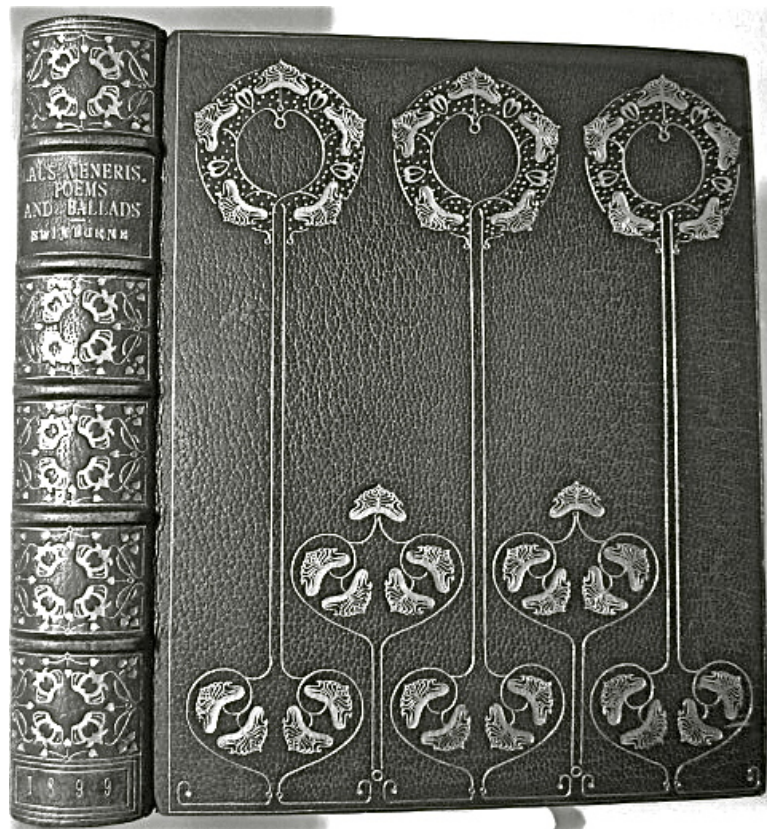
You can imagine my surprise when several years after T.T.'s post there appears an exact picture of this little red binding along with a basic description that basically matched what I read in his blog post. This had to be THE VERY SAME BOOK. Hmmm. T.T.'s last post was on February 11, 2012. "Must have been an older gent" I surmised, "guess that dealer got T.T.'s books, maybe a few or maybe the whole shebang." By just seeing the picture of it, I wouldn't have ordered the book. The binding is not of the caliber I tend to acquire, but after all of T.T.'s exuberance, his holding it so dear to his heart, well... that sort of changed the picture and since it really wasn't expensive, I ordered the book thinking at later on I'd ask the owner how he acquired T.T.'s books. In short, the book has an interesting story behind it.

A couple days later the little volume arrived. I opened the box and took it out, "yep, this is T.T.'s copy, I mean just look at the binding and those "hallucinated watercolor painting" endpapers. This it IT, or so I thought. I went to first page of the Preface to see that image of the four-leaf clover. Not there. Went to see the frayed pink string between pages 22 and 23. Not there. Still with book in hand, I scrolled down on the computer screen to comparatively examine those zany endpapers and very carefully followed their patterns against T.T.'s picture on his blog. Very similar, but there are noticeable differences in the alignment of the pattern. "Good heavens" I exclaimed, "there are at least two of these crazy bindings out there!" Mind you, same edition of the book, the binding and tooling near identical, but then all the other

descriptors by T.T. fall by the wayside. What I chuckle I got over it all. So I have a binding almost identical to T.T.'s copy, obviously done by the same binder, and what? He had multiple copies of that 1916 little Vest Pocket *Rubáiyát* to put into bindings? Guess so. The joke was on me, and I guess that's what makes this little binding distinctive. The story behind its purchase and the discovery that there are at least two. Mountain out of a molehill, you say, but heck... isn't that what some of this collecting game is all about? As long as it remains at least a quaint form of fun for me, I'll play along.

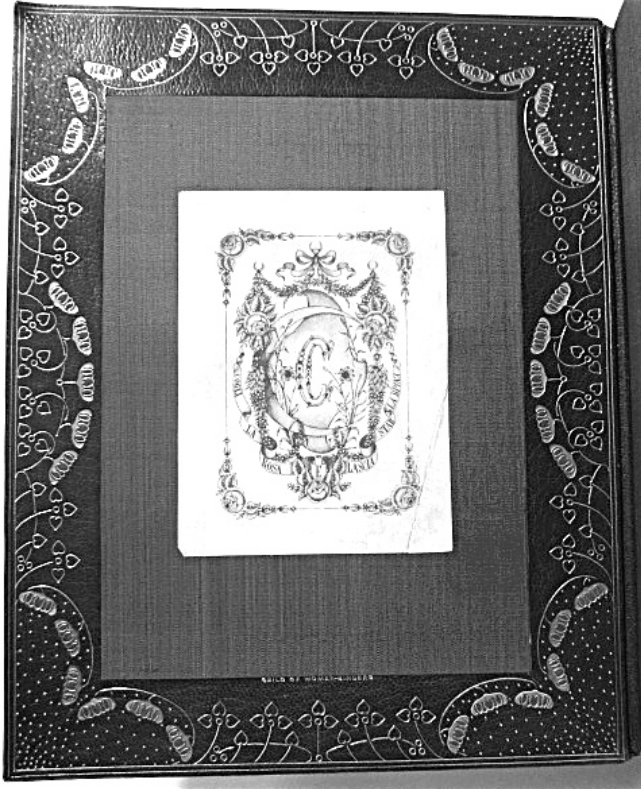
And yet another little flimsy thing, yes another Vest Pocket by Mosher only this being Robert Louis Stevenson's *AES Triplex and Other Essays* (Mosher1907) in a hand-decorated slip-cover "binding" entered the collection. There are a number of these in the collection. Not everyone could afford full or even quarter leather bindings, and so resorted to making their own homemade protective concoction. This uses a coarse cloth, carefully stitched, with decorative elements at each corner of the front cover, the title in two colors along with the large RLS initials toward the bottom, and a four leaf clover at the foot of the otherwise plain spine. The inner flaps are of red silk, and the whole production allows the original paper covers of the book to slip behind the inner silk flaps thereby securing the book to its new cover. The book dealer who sold it to me called it a "home-made cloth jacketed cover" which works as well as any description I guess. He also alerted me to the importance of the title essay: "I really liked that little book. I would recommend a reading of the title essay" as it's one of Stevenson's greatest essays dealing with the passion for living and coping with death. Well, did I?

What about those two Guild of Women-Binders bindings? Although I have several in the collection, I've always been a sucker for more of them, especially if they are of particular merit. The first involved rather protracted negotiations. The British dealer had listed it at one price and I scrambled just as soon as



I saw the listing, albeit at a most inconvenient time and location. I was getting ready to board a bus from Lancaster to Ephrata, PA when all of the sudden up popped a listing on my iPad that immediately commanded my attention. It was a copy of the large Quarto Edition of Swinburne's *Laus Veneris* (1899) in a lovely Guild binding. Condition was not what I like to adhere to, but the binding was certainly extra-ordinary. I immediately responded by emailing the dealer and followed up just as soon as I arrived home. I then found out from the dealer that the book's price was not what they wanted for the book. They indicated that the listing was prematurely sent and they would have to reconsider what the price should be. Long story short: we finally agreed to price and the book was shipped. The sellers are nice folks, just a little hesitant. Since their listing was informative, I'll leave it do the talking with just minor editorial revisions:

Swinburne, Algernon Charles. *LAUS VENERIS*. Portland, Maine: Thomas B. Mosher, 1899. Limited Edition. Small 4to (18 x 22cm). Full Leather. Very Good. An outstanding Art-Nouveau style binding by the Guild of Women-Binders, with their gilt binder's stamp to the front turn-in; and with excellent provenance. One of 450 copies on hand-made Van Gelder paper. Frontispiece portrait after D. G. Rossetti with facsimile signature; *xlv*, 354 pp. Green crushed morocco, though faded to tan on the spine and edges, elegant and elaborate gilt floral motifs to the front and rear board, in an art-nouveau style, enclosed within a single gilt fillet; five raised bands to the spine with compartments between decorated with repeating floral motifs, dated 1899 to the base of the spine; gilt fillet



dentelles. Wide gilt decorated turn-ins, consisting of a floral design with blue on-lays to the flower-heads, with central paste-down of red silk (upon which is a bookplate) This part of the binding is perhaps the most attractive and with an Arts & Crafts influence. Green morocco internal hinges and red-silk endpapers; original maroon silk marker (somewhat worn and dust to exposed top edge); top edge gilt, other edges uncut. Binding very good with a little rubbing to edges and joints, sunned as mentioned. Contents clean and tight, no foxing or other marks. A fine and beautiful book in an elegant binding. PROVENANCE: Bookplate of Cynthia Graham (née Duncombe) includes the legend: *Cogli la Rosa e Lascia Star le Spina*. Cynthia Duncombe was one of the daughters of the 1st Earl of Feversham and wife to

Sir Richard James Graham, 4th Bart. She was sister to Helen Venetia [Duncombe] Vincent better known as Helen Viscountess D'Aberon, who was described as the most beautiful woman in England - as captured in John Singer Sargent's famous portrait. The Duncombe sisters inhabited a world of grace and elegance and, above all, wealth, and were able to enjoy the finest "trinkets" that the world could offer. This book is inscribed Christmas 1907 and was evidently a Christmas present - possibly from Venetia Helen Viscountess D'Aberon.

Curious thing, I had already purchased a lovely copy of Mosher's Old World Series *Kasidah* (1896) bound and elaborately decorated by Zaehnsdorf with the same bookplate which I wrote about in the March 2014 issue of *Endpapers*. I was then unsure as to whom the bookplate belonged. With this copy of *Laus Veneris* I now have the answer.

In a somewhat lighter tone, I have secured yet another Guild of Women-Binders binding. Heck, if I'm going to be foolish, I might as well make a complete idiot of myself. Anyway, below is how the most recent auction house described it. Following that is the listing from Bernard Middleton's copy of the Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge "Catalogue of Bindings by the Guild of Women-Binders and the Hampstead Bindery for which the Silver Medal was awarded at the Paris Exhibition, 1900" (compliments Kirtas Technologies Inc.) with the sale date listed as Monday, the 10th of December 1900.

Most recent auction house listing:

A. [Andrew] Lang (ed.). BALLADS & LYRICS OF OLD FRANCE. Portland, ME: Thomas B. Mosher, 1896. Tall 12mo. Original full light brown leather with covers consisting of a raised/embossed display incorporating flowers and angels, and the following phrase on the rear cover: "Worlds Delight and Sad Hearts Sorrow." Title on spine. Green edges. Marbled endpapers. Binder credited with a printed label at lower corner of rfeep recto: "Bound by the Guild of Women Binders." Split to lower portion of rear joint, otherwise intact and attractive, text near fine. Total of 1025 issued: #55 of 100 on Japan Vellum.

Original listing in the Guild catalogue of 1900:

Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge listing:

#38 Lang (Andrew). Ballads and Lyrics of Old France. *Japanese vellum, medioeval morocco, joints, green edges, both sides embossed with designs of the children of France singing ballads.* (Mrs. Macdonald) 1896.

[Priced copy of catalogue indicating Maggs bought it for £3-10-0]



Front cover and spine



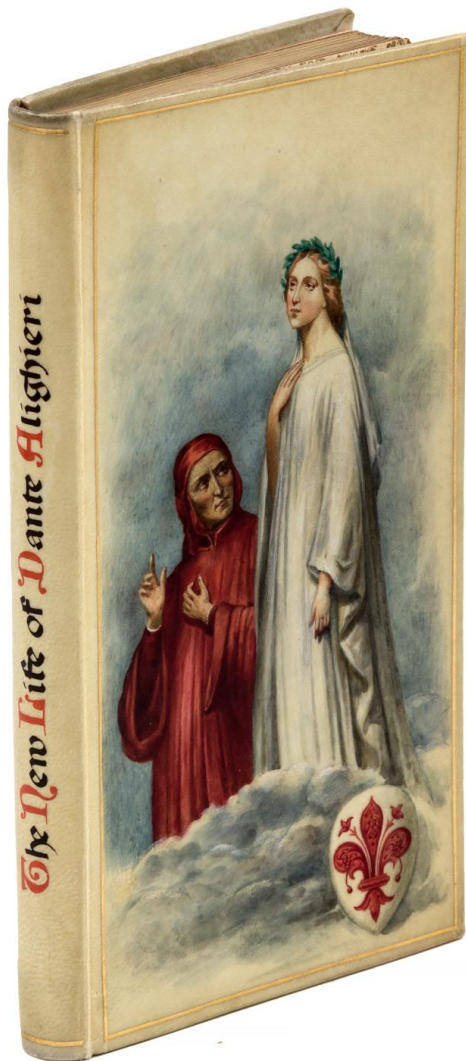
Back cover

The binder, Annie MacDonald, was an important figure with regard to the Guild in that it was she who inspired Karslake to set up the Guild of Women-Binders. She also developed her own method of working the modeled leather laboring with virtually only one tool called a "Dresden." There's a nice write-up on her in Marianne Tidcombe's *Women Bookbinders 1880-1920.*, pp. 97-99. I can just imagine

Macdonald at the workbench working on this little binding. Many members of the Guild had no qualms in binding Mosher books, but the Doves Bindery--well, that's another story; however, American women who trained there eventually had their say and freely bound copies of the Mosher books when not under the watchful eye and control of Cobden-Sanderson. Likewise, Sarah Prideaux applied her designs on Mosher Press volumes.

So, having this electronic version of the Guild catalogue for reference finally paid off since I not only knew that it was bound for the Guild, but furthermore by Mrs. Macdonald herself. The other modeled Guild binding I have similar to this was bound by Miss Gaskell (*Rubáiyát*, 1897).

Another binding most recently acquired is perhaps a mistake in my purchasing it in the first place. I say mistake in that the binding is on Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Hand & Soul* (Mosher, 1899). I was called by a bookseller on the West Coast who wanted to know if I knew who the binder might be. The full red-morocco binding—rather plain except for the spine—is signed on the inside of the bottom rear cover: 19-KCT-12. The dealer described the binding over the phone and mentioned that the author is mislabeled (William Morris instead of D. G. Rossetti). After two pictures were sent I wrote back that the binding wasn't for me. The next day I was in Philadelphia chatting with a collector of private press books and described the binding of red morocco, four raised bands, gilt spine, and Japanese shadow-paper endpapers and my negative response. He thought I was completely wrong, especially given the price, and that the misidentification of the author on the spine of the book actually has a certain charm about it. Irrational fool that I sometimes can be, I willingly succumbed to his fanciful argument and sat down right then and there and ordered the book on my iPad. Now perhaps I might live to enjoy this little volume, but this just goes to show that I'm not always capable of making the best of decisions; however, the mystery of who it belonged to has now been solved. I'll wait until the next *Endpapers* to explain. Suffice it to say, turns out I made the right decision after all.



Then there is the full vellum binding with the binder's label of the Florentine firm "Giulio Giannini Parchment Works." There are several of these Italian bindings in the collection, including from the Roman firm of A. Casciani on *Our Lady's Tumbler* (Mosher, 1904), and an unsigned yet quite luxurious satin-lined and gilt-decorated flexible vellum binding slipcover with a large monogram NLVM. The book it protects is a Japan vellum copy of *Spring in Tuscany* (Mosher, 1912). Another is a copy of the *Kasidah* (Mosher, 1920) with hand-painted vellum covers, quite possibly an Italian production, but unsigned. But none of these compare to the utterly exquisite copy of Rossetti's *The New Life of Dante Alighieri* (Mosher, 1905) with the vivid hand-painted scene of Dante and Beatrice after the Dutch-French Romantic painter Ary Scheffer whose 1846 oil painting "The Vision" is now at the Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Staffordshire, England (another version from 1851 is found at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). The painting is meant to accompany these lines translated from *The Divine Comedy* (1321):

And, of a sudden, meseemed that day was added
unto day, as though he who hath the power,
had adorned heaven with a second sun. Beatrice
was standing with her eyes all fixed upon the
eternal wheels, and I fixed my sight removed from
there above, on her.

The spine is lettered in red and black. The painter's rendition covers Beatrice's feet with a cloud, and the prominent red Florentine lily, in an egg-shaped oval at the bottom right, made famous by the early printing family of Giunta. Just a remarkable little gem in very nice condition with protective folding cloth-laminated-to-card chemise and slipcase. Books bound like this were produced for the well-to-do English community for which Florence served as host during the Victorian and into the Edwardian era. The bindery still exists in Florence, and on their website they recount their history, a portion of which seem apropos to this little book:

During this period, which coincided with the Victorian era, Florence was home to a large English community characterized by wealth and a love for the fine arts and craftsmanship. Giulio Giannini's workshop and shop attracted a large and faithful clientele... Parchment bookbinding exquisitely decorated with gold leaf stenciling, colorful leather insets and hand-painted tempera set a new standard for bookbinding known as the "Florentine style..."

The binding and its painting were most likely done by Pietro Giannini's son, Guido Giannini Sr. (1877-1956). And so it is with great pleasure that I add this little book to the Mosher Collection as a fine example of its kind. Incidentally, there is an inscription in the book: "Bertha A. Keyes / June 1906 / K.S." Bertha Anna Keyes (1868-1959) was born in Arlington, MA, graduated from Smith College in 1891, joined the faculty of The Franklin School (private girls' school) in Buffalo in 1899 and became its headmistress in 1925 which she held until her retirement in 1938. The binding eventually passed from her ownership to that of Clifford J. Awald of Buffalo whose library was sold at PBA Galleries in July 2014.



The very last mention I'll make of bindings involves the 1925 Wise imprint of *The Bibelot*, all 21 volumes. A long time ago when I was a clerk in a used bookshop I handled a set of this commemorative imprint bound in full blue morocco binding. Such sets were expressly produced for subscribers and although not the best of bindings, nevertheless were attractive enough. I dealt with that set long before I became an avid collector of all things Mosher, and since it post-dated Mosher by two years, I never bought a set. Now, complete that I am, I came across one that finally matched my demand for fine condition. Although priced a bit high, I still ordered it after communicating with the owner. When I received the set packaged in two boxes I found out that, well, I'll let my response to the seller explain:

I received the set yesterday and opened and unpacked the small box and then opened the large box only unwrapping two volumes, but only unwrapped eight volumes. The spines of volumes I-IV are of one color, and vols. V-VIII were of another color. I didn't bother to open the others. As such this set is not acceptable with the first four volumes mismatched to the others that I've seen, so I am returning the set.

I'm placing both boxes into one larger box so it will not only be doubly protected, but will also remain together. Your postage & handling and my own will be paid by me, so I will enclose a check placed with your invoice in volume #1. I will mail the set, insured.

If there are other mailing instructions, please advise. Very sorry this didn't work out. I didn't mind paying a stiff price for the "Testimonial Edition" so long as the set was OK, but I cannot abide differences in color. Wish it were otherwise.

To which the seller indicated that he will review the set when it arrives back in California and added that "this hasn't worked out well at all." Indeed, had I known there was a mismatch in bindings I would not

have ordered the set to begin with. Alas, some things work out; some don't. So I'm still in the market for a fine set of the "Testimonial Edition" bound in three-quarter gilt decorated leather.

VELLUM PRINTINGS

An addition to the Mosher books printed on vellum occurred as well. In this case a copy of the first book printed in the Quarto Series, Swinburne's *LAUS VENERIS* (Mosher, 1899) is now represented in the books printed on Roman vellum section of the collection. This is Copy No. 1 of four copies so printed and is from the famed library of Emilié B. Grigsby. Bound in full flexible vellum with gilt-stamped spine and silk ties, this brings the total count of Mosher books printed on vellum in the Mosher Collection to thirty-three. It's the same title as the Van Gelder copy reported above in a Guild of Women-Binders binding. When it rains, it pours, sometimes in strange coincidence.

REFERENCES

An addition to the reference section of the Mosher Collection was that of a specimen portfolio which was assembled and printed in 1976 to accompany Ronald Reed's *The Nature and Making of Parchment* (Leeds, England: Elmete Press, 1975). This 'samples' portfolio is called *Specimens of Parchment* with notes by Ronald Reed and was published by Dawson's Book Shop in Los Angeles. Along with various mounted leaves like those from a manuscript 'Book of Hours', a piece of an 18th century indenture, and more modern samples of parchment, there appears this one mounted specimen which, quite frankly really doesn't belong there, but I guess was included because it uses the word 'vellum' in its designation. The accompanying note to the page reads:

"JAPAN VELLUM." This is not a parchment. It is a smooth hand-made paper originally developed in Japan by using the bark of the mulberry tree as its main ingredient. It comes out naturally in this pale yellowish shade. This example is a leaf from a book published by Thomas Bird Mosher (1852-1923) in Portland, Maine.

Perhaps its inclusion was meant to clarify a point. Just because it's called Japan vellum doesn't mean it's a parchment, thereby resolving any confusion over its name alongside other 'real' parchment examples. Whatever the reason, it's present in the portfolio and so deserves a place in my references on book mentioning Thomas Bird Mosher and/or the Mosher Press. By the way, the leaf selected is pp.27/28 from one of the Brocade Series printings of Richard Jefferies's *The Pageant of Summer*.

Another reference book that just came is a copy of the *Excepts from the Letters of Thomas Bird Mosher* which was a privately printed production by Audrey Arellanes (Bookworm Press, 1972) who sadly is no longer with us. To be sure, I already had a copy, but since this one was bound in a different color, I thought it might be best to have both.

Lastly, I received a complimentary copy of Robert Spoo's *Without Copyrights—Piracy, Publishing, and the Public Domain*. NY: Oxford University Press, 1913 with a nice note from the author. The first chapter of this book. "The American Public Domain and the Courtesy of the Trade in the Nineteenth Century" opens with a discussion about Thomas Bird Mosher and neatly introduces the reader to the whole picture of copyright in America. It's a well crafted work on how publishers handled copyright questions and clearly lays out the conditions surrounding the American market going into the 20th Century. Dr. Spoo made reference use of my bio-bibliography on Mosher and the Mosher Press, and I was pleased to supply his publisher with an image of Mosher used in the book. As time goes along this work will be recognized as an invaluable contribution to the understanding of author, publisher and copyright in America, and in doing so, shows Mosher and his "ways" in a new light within the larger framework of the American publishing scene of the era.

Philip R. Bishop

July 20, 1914; amended July 28