

THE BOOKBINDINGS OF JOHN RATCLIFF  
AND EDMUND RANGER, SEVENTEENTH  
CENTURY BOSTON BOOKBINDERS

BY THOMAS J. HOLMES

A WHILE ago the William Gwinn Mather library acquired an ancient little book, in a morocco binding of unusual character of that class known to connoisseurs as "fine binding," having gold tooled finishing. It was of early Colonial workmanship apparently contemporary with the book. The title of the book is: *A Call from Heaven*. It was written by Increase Mather and was published in 1679. The copy was the author's own.

The binding competes with the Psalm book of 1651 now in the New York Public Library for the distinction of being, so far as I know, the oldest gold tooled binding that has come down to us from Colonial New England; the binding of that Psalm book being very probably of some years later date than its printing. Simple though the binding on *A Call from Heaven* is, it is a more ambitious piece of work, more highly decorated, than is the binding upon the Psalm book of 1651.

I wondered who had made this binding on Mather's book. Bibliographers have a touching faith in imprints which accepts the statement of an imprint, before, beyond and above any other sort of evidence. I had seen in various Boston imprints of this period, the words: ". . . sold by Edmund Ranger Bookbinder." It seemed there could be no question but that Edmund Ranger lived in Boston at this period

and that he sold books and was a bookbinder. From other sources (consulted by G. E. Littlefield, *Early Boston Booksellers* pp. 87-88) it appears that Edmund Ranger was admitted a freeman of Boston in 1671, and that he bought a house in 1673. He established himself as a bookseller, stationer and bookbinder and continued his business until his death in the autumn of 1705. His inclusive active dates then, were 1671-1705. He easily could have bound a book published in 1679, probably did bind it, I thought.

I showed the book to Mr. Brigham. He suggested that we consult Mr. Wroth, librarian of the John Carter Brown Library who was then studying colonial binding for the chapter on bindings in his Grolier Club book, *The Colonial Printer*. I sent him photographs and a description. Mr. Wroth read the imprint of the book; it reads: "Boston, Printed by J. Foster, sold by John Ratcliff, 1679"; and he instantly recalled from his reading in Littlefield (*Early Boston Booksellers*) that Ratcliff was a bookbinder. It seemed then perfectly logical to conclude that this copy, one of an edition published by Ratcliff himself, being in its original binding, must have been bound by its own bookbinder-publisher Ratcliff.

Mr. Wroth's reasoning is very convincing, but in the absence of proof he would not be conclusive. So, with gratitude to Mr. Wroth for his setting me on the right path (it is always half the journey to be put upon the right path), I set out to resolve the question one way or the other, with the probability thus far in favor of Ratcliff.

There were other bookbinders in Boston before John Ratcliff. Some binder or binders bound the first edition of the Bay Psalm Book in 1640, and the other forty or fifty editions of books which were printed and published in Cambridge after the Bay Psalm Book and before the Indian Bible. There exists a record that John Sanders, bookbinder, took the freeman's oath in

Boston in 1636<sup>1</sup>, probably three years before any printing was done in Massachusetts. John Ratcliff came from England some twenty-five years after John Sanders, that is, Ratcliff came about 1661–1663, for the purpose of binding the Indian Bible. He comes to notice in history by his petition to the Commissioners of the United Colonies in 1664 about the small pay he received for binding Eliot's Indian Bible.<sup>2</sup> Littlefield says that Ratcliff disappears from the records in 1682, and makes a guess that Ratcliff returned to England in that year, 1682. If Ratcliff bound this book it might bear evidence tending to indicate that it was completed before 1682. The binding indeed bears such evidence.

There is an ink blot on the backboard lining of this book which is clearly an off-set from the blot made by Increase Mather's pen on the opposite final blank verso when he wrote "8 sheets and  $\frac{1}{2}$ "—the exact quantity required per copy for the new edition—which indicates that the finished binding antedates the edition of 1685. This blotted note, certainly in the author's hand, is apparently contemporary<sup>3</sup> with the manuscript changes made in preparing this copy for the printer of the 1685 edition. The changes agree with the text of that edition, and they are unmistakably in the hand of Increase Mather. The binding is not a re-binding; it is the original, and almost certainly was done in 1679 when the edition was issued—when its author's interest and its bookbinder-publisher's interest was at its highest.

Ratcliff could have bound it; we have seen that it

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<sup>1</sup>I have taken this reference from the list of bookbinders given at the end of the *Grolier Club Catalogue of Ornamental Leather Bookbindings Executed in America Prior to 1850 Exhibited at the Grolier Club November 7 to 30, 1907*. John Sanders's name occurs in the list of persons made free the 25th of May 1636, printed in the *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay* . . . Boston, 1853, vol. 1, p. 371.

<sup>2</sup>Ratcliff's letter is quoted in part in G. E. Littlefield *Early Boston Booksellers*, p. 95, and in the introduction to the *Grolier Club Catalogue* mentioned in Note 1 above. The whole letter is printed in Wilberforce Eames *Bibliographic Notes on Eliot's Indian Bible*, p. 15. and in James C. Pilling *Bibliography of the Algonquian Languages*, Washington, 1891, pp. 141–42.

was most probably bound while he was still in Boston. Yet for anything we have so far proved, Edmund Ranger, who was John Rateliff's competitor in binding the books of Boston at this period, might have bound this *Call from Heaven*. Can we prove that Rateliff bound this book and that Ranger did not? If we can establish any distinguishing criteria of technique between the bindings of the period we might by noting these distinctive characteristics compel the bindings themselves to add to the meagre stock of information which documentary sources yield, and so furnish a solution to our problem.

Those who have observed bookbinders at work, have seen that each man directs his efforts towards an ideal—a concept high or low as it may be, which will be slightly different from the concept of any other man—and that he realizes his ideal in the exact degree of his skill. Thus an individuality stamps the product of each man which is characteristic of all his work. The observer could also note that the combined products of a number of workmen under the direction of a master binder or a firm will have a strong family resemblance one piece with another. Therefore an individuality, good, bad, or indifferent, will characterize the bindings of one firm and distinguish them from the work of all other firms. There are peculiarities which mark the combined products of a given city; and even still more marked are those characteristics of craftsmanship which are distinguishable as national. Our problem now is to distinguish between the work of two individual bookbinders who worked in Boston in 1679 or 1680.

The character of the product of a craftsman's hand is a distinguishable essential part of his personality. His craftsmanship, once developed, becomes unchangeable, inseparable from himself as are his habits, and as is the color of his eyes, the sound of his voice, the conformation of his features, the individuality of his step.

"If we could see one of those Indian Bibles which are still in the original binding," I said to Mr. Brigham, "not any of those twenty copies which were bound in London<sup>1</sup> probably by or for Samuel Gellibrand<sup>2</sup> but those which were bound by John Ratcliff in Cambridge, or any other binding identified as by Ratcliff, we should be able to identify Ratcliff's work on our copy of Increase Mather's *Call from Heaven*; if Ratcliff bound it."

Mr. Brigham and I during the whole of one Sunday, ransacked the American Antiquarian Society's library

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<sup>1</sup>"Wee haue ordered Mr. Vsher to present youer honors by the next shipp with 20 Coppes of the bible and as many of the Psalms if printed of before the shippes departure from hence." From the letter of the Commissioners to the Corporation in England September 18, 1663. Quoted by Wilberforce Eames in his *Bibliographic Notes on Eliot's Indian Bible*, p. 15 and also printed in James C. Pilling *Bibliography of the Algonquian Languages*, p. 140. In the same place Mr. Eames continues: "After the Indian version of the psalms in metre had been finished at the press, probably in November or December of the same year, it was appended to the bible, and the work was ready for binding. Twenty copies of the completed book in sheets were then sent to the Corporation in England, where some of them (or perhaps all) were bound uniformly in dark-blue morocco." Mr. Eames might be willing to add: with gilt edges; as is mentioned in his description of the known individual copies.

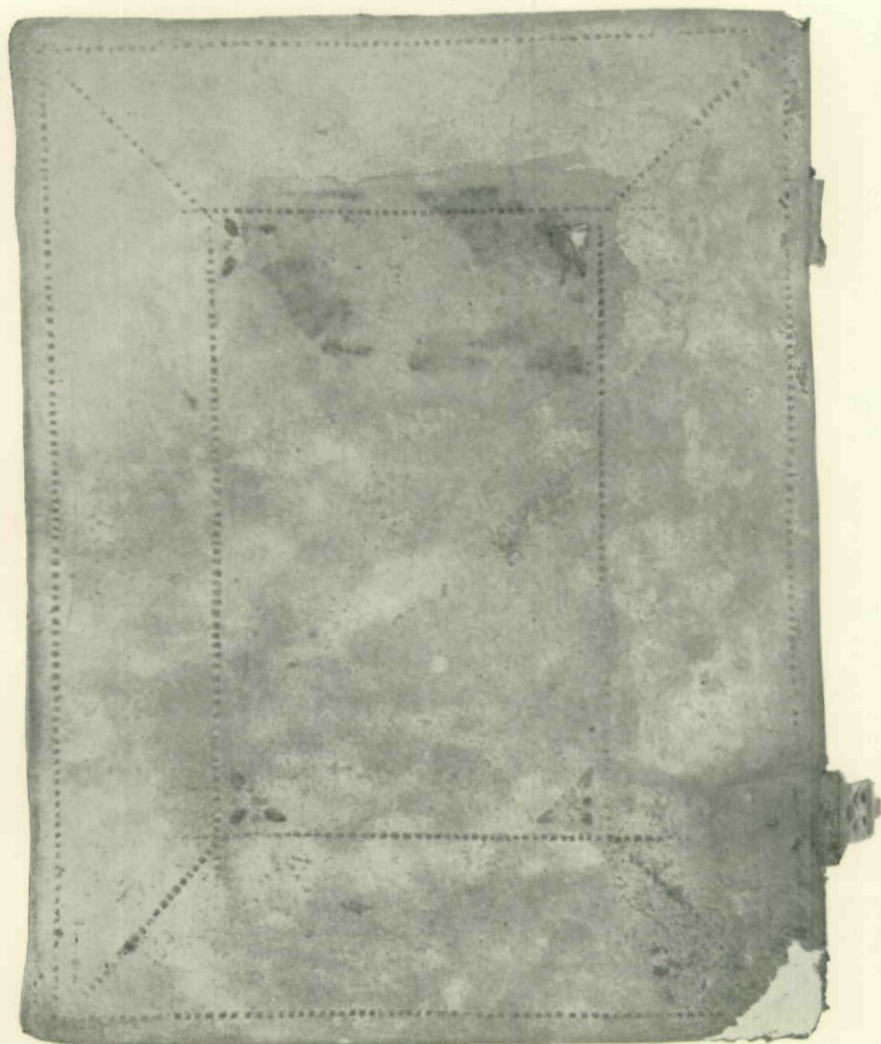
<sup>2</sup>"The Corporation for New England paid Samuel Gellibrand, a London binder, £10, probably for the twenty copies of the Bible sent to England." Worthington C. Ford in *The Boston Book Market* . . . Boston, 1917, p. 43. This seems to be confirmed by an entry in the ledger of the Corporation, for the years 1653-1664, said to be in the State House at Trenton, N. J., which includes the item: "Cr., 21 July 1664: Binding Indian Bibles £10." Quoted on p. v. of the Preface to *Some Correspondence Between the Governors and Treasurers of the New England Company in London and the Commissioners of the United Colonies in America* . . . London, 1897. (Edited by John W. Ford, Governor of the New England Company.) Samuel Gellibrand then, it is reasonable to believe, received ten shillings a copy for his bindings on the Indian Bible, while John Ratcliff dealing with the Commissioners in New-England, received, according to his letter mentioned in note 2, p. 33, only one-quarter of that sum, two shillings and sixpence per copy. Samuel Gellibrand (ca. 1618-1675) bookseller in London, (H. R. Plomer *Dictionary of . . . Booksellers*) probably son of Dr. Henry Gellibrand (1597-1636) mathematician, who had pronounced protestant leanings (see *Dictionary National Biography*), was doubtless the bookbinder just mentioned. That is, as Dr. Eames has suggested to us, Samuel Gellibrand "probably employed some one to do binding for him." The following trifles may be worth adding to Plomer's record: Samuel was a warden of the Worshipful Company of Stationers beginning 8 July 1675. His last entry, on 1st October 1675, was made probably shortly before his death (see *Transcript of the Registers of the Worshipful Company of Stationers*, vol. III). He was named as sole executor of the will of "Samuel Thompson citizen and stationer of London, 25 August 1668, proved 9 November 1668." Fifty pounds is left to Gellibrand for his pains. He was also named in the will of "Martin Simpson, minister of God's Word, living in Hackney, Middlesex, 21 February 1664, proved 17 August 1665." "to my cousin Mr. Samuel Gellibrand four pounds and to his wife twenty shillings." From Henry F. Waters "Genealogical Gleanings in England" printed in *The New-England Historical and Genealogical Register*, vol. 49, 1895, p. 395, and vol. 48, 1894, p. 377.

for early Colonial bindings. We found some interesting specimens which I shall presently bring to your notice. Then Mr. Brigham drew my attention to a note printed in Sewall's *Diary*, vol. II, p. 12\* which Sewall wrote in his Commonplace Book dating its beginning. The note reads: "Samuel Sewall his Booke, Decemb. 29, 1677. Bound by Jno. Ratcliff." The Commonplace Book itself is now in the keeping of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

With Sewall's note in mind, I went, with *A Call from Heaven* in my pocket, to the Massachusetts Historical Society, to beg of Mr. Tuttle the privilege of comparing the binding with Ratcliff's binding on Sewall's Commonplace Book. I found that surely enough Sewall's Commonplace Book, embodies in its binding the strongest resemblance with the binding on Increase Mather's copy of *A Call from Heaven*. The tools used in the decoration of both bindings are identical, and the arrangement of the tools is similar in each; though, on *A Call from Heaven* the tool impressions are in gold leaf upon the rolled-grained morocco cover, while the tools on Sewall's Commonplace Book are stamped in black (possibly candle soot, or a stain of iron and vinegar) on the reversed, rough, surface of its yellow calfskin cover.

Using as a base of criteria the minute elements of the technique of these two bindings observable in their construction as well as in their decoration, I proceeded to identify other bindings which have come down to us from Ratcliff's period.

I have listed below six bindings of distinguished character which have thus been identified as the work of John Ratcliff. I omit mention of the Indian Bibles at this time for two reasons; the first one is because some copies of the Indian Bible have been repaired and even rebound though they have been reported as in the original binding; the second is because I have not as yet had opportunity to examine even one undisturbed unrestored original binding which has remained in good



SEWALL'S COMMONPLACE BOOK. 4to.  
Bound by John Ratcliff.  
See description No. 1. Reproduction is reduced.

enough state of preservation to stand as a representative example of the work of John Ratcliff. I also omit mention of other ordinary edition bindings, usually of undecorated sheepskin, of which, from about 1661 to about 1682, Ratcliff must have produced many hundreds. The six bindings listed at the end of this paper embody those features of Ratcliff's craftsmanship which are characteristic of his style.

Following these I have listed and described three bindings done by Edmund Ranger.

John Ratcliff was a very good workman, but his skill was not of the highest. His work has a provincial crudity quite lacking in metropolitan refinement. He had been practicing his craft in Cambridge or in Boston for sixteen years when he bound Mather's *A Call from Heaven*. The book can therefore fairly stand as an index to the general quality of his work. This is particularly true because the binding is not an ordinary edition binding of sheepskin. Its cover is of morocco, rarely used in the Colony. Its unusual character indicates that it was specially made, almost certainly for the purpose of a gift, calling forth the best efforts of the binder, to be presented by an admiring friend or kinsman to the author; unless the author himself had it bound. The binding possesses the quality of strength, but its technique is crude when compared with European work contemporary with it; in some respects when compared even with other Boston bindings of its period or a little later, as we shall show.

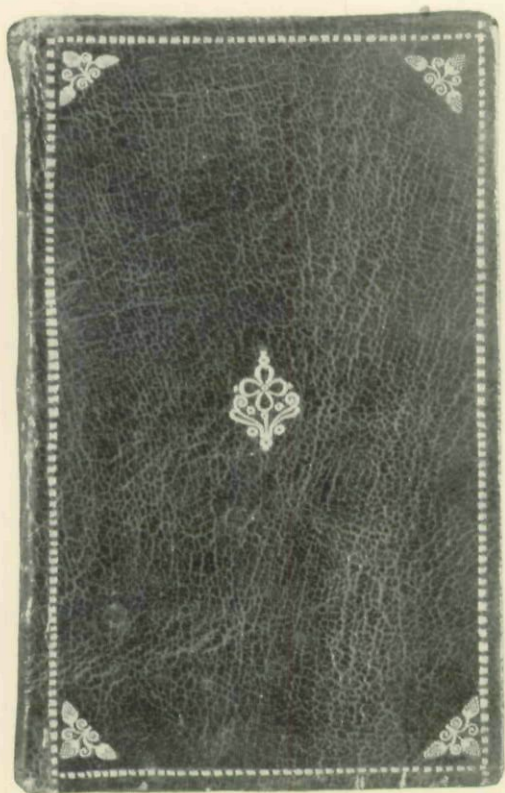
The book is sewn two sheets with one thread, on three rawhide thongs sunken into grooves sawn into the folds of the back; all in the approved time-saving manner for cheap work, though this has pretensions to be an ambitious binding. Two only of the three thongs are laced through the boards—which are built up of paper, and are not the beech or oak boards then used on the commoner sheepskin bindings of the time and used in Boston for fully forty years later. The first and the last fly leaves are pasted down on the



front and the back boards. The morocco cover with grain rubbed down and polished, which may originally have been dark olive, is now deep rich brown. The book has been well preserved and apparently but little used.

The cover decoration is satisfying in the simplicity of its conception but reveals a want of skill in application of the tools. A gilt line border of square dots executed with a line roll sawed into tiny segments, forms a panel on both sides of the book. Within each corner of the panels is an engraved tool impression of triangular outline, in gold. The design of the tool is formed with a spray having three branches each terminating at an angle point with a tiny imbricated bud; in the interstices between these three branches are four tiny scrolls. In the center of the panels on the sides is a four petaled fleuron; and across the back are five dotted lines dividing it into four panels. The edges of the boards are gold tooled with a roll of cat-tooth design. The edges of the book are cut solid, but not gilded, they are merely sprinkled with a reddish brown pigment now almost worn off or faded out. Edge gilding was not one of John Ratcliff's accomplishments.

The workmanship on the binding of this book was superficial throughout; not a single detail in all the processes of the work was performed with any real thoroughness or remarkable skill. The binder's use of morocco and gold-tooling asks indulgence rather than invites admiration. The binding lacks precision in every part; the "squares" of the boards—the edges of the boards which project beyond the body of the leaves of the book—are irregular and clumsy. They do not fit the book. The boards are soft and ill-made; and, as stated, they are attached to the book with two thongs only, while less ambitious bindings on small books of the period are frequently found, the boards of which are attached with three or four, sometimes with five, thongs or cords. The body of the book also is soft. It seems never to have been adequately pressed



INCREASE MATHER'S CALL FROM HEAVEN. 8vo.  
Bound by John Ratcliff.  
See description No. 2. Reproduction is reduced.

or "beaten." The cover leather was crudely pared. The puckered, disturbed grain of the morocco cover attests that it was unskillfully drawn over the book. Crudely was it folded over the edges of the boards, and crudely folded in at the top and bottom of the back leaving a clumsy swelling at these two points.

At the top and bottom edges of the book where the cover leather is thus crudely folded over, we look for "worked headbands" either of colored silk or linen thread, which usually add a touch of decoration and a little strength to the better grade of bindings; but on this ill-made example there were never any headbands. It is probably fair to deny to John Ratcliff the credit for having any skill to weave a headband.

The tooling on the cover shows an understanding of the principles of the decoration of a simple binding, but the tool impressions on the sides are uneven in depth and are irregularly placed. They seem to have been scorched with too much heat. Conscious of the deficiency of his skill, the finisher has refrained from any attempt to tool the back. He has rolled five dotted lines across the back, thereby dividing it into four panels which are otherwise devoid of ornament or lettering. It is doubtful whether lettering in gold was ever practiced in the Colony as early as the date of the binding of this book.<sup>1</sup> We may dismiss the binding on *A Call from Heaven* as being an ambitious product of a workman of merely second rate skill.

Let us now turn for a few moments from John Ratcliff to examine the work of his competitor as exemplified in a modest binding in sprinkled calfskin which we find on a copy of Increase Mather's *Practical Truths Tending to Promote the Power of Godliness, Boston . . . Printed by Samuel Green upon Assignment of Samuel Sewall, 1682*. The copy is owned by Mr. William G. Mather.

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel Willard's *Divinity*, Boston 1726, the earliest folio printed in the Province, was probably the earliest gilt lettered binding made in New England.

The binder of this copy of *Practical Truths*, though in this example engaged on a comparatively simple binding in which he uses less expensive and less durable materials than we see in the binding on *A Call from Heaven*, nevertheless reveals his workmanship to have been of a superior, more refined order, his training more thorough, his command of his craft more able. *Practical Truths* is covered merely in sprinkled calfskin, probably home-grown; while *A Call from Heaven* appears in a dress of fine morocco, doubtless imported.

On the *Practical Truths*, the boards are firm though they were built up of paper. They were originally attached with four cords; but now, through the decay of the cover leather and of the sewing cords the hinges have broken and the boards are detached from the joints. The board squares are neat, small, and are exactly parallel with the evenly trimmed edges of the book. And, most unusual of all, the edges of the leaves have been skilfully gilded. One of the two headbands was still clinging to the book when it came into our possession. The other, in the course of its history, had already been broken off. But it originally possessed headbands worked in colored silk. The book itself is compact and solid. The cover leather was properly pared, fitted, and applied to the book. The leather was beautifully mottled with a brown stain sprinkled upon the whole cover. There was no gilt tooling on the sides; the decoration of the sides rested with restraint simply upon the variegated brown tints of the leather; the cover doubtless was oiled and waxed and polished. The edges of the boards carried a gilt roll ornament to blend its brilliance with the gilt edges. But the chief decoration was in the full gilt back. Most of the back has now crumbled away but enough remains of the gilt finishing of the back to show that it was well designed and skillfully, brilliantly tooled.

This was not the work of a binder with only a provincial training. This bright little binding, shining in its resplendence of polished leather and reflecting the glint of tooled and of burnished gold, was the work of a master of his craft. It is conceivable that this was the best example of bookbinding, that is, technically the most perfect example of binding, that had been produced in English America until that time. It equalled the excellent workmanship on the binding of those Indian Bibles which were bound in London by Samuel Gellibrand. I should expect to find that the creator of this binding had gained his knowledge and received his training in London.

As before stated, Littlefield tells us that John Ratcliff left Boston in 1682, probably returning to England. (*Early Boston Booksellers*, pp. 95-96.) It is highly probable that this copy of *Practical Truths*, published in 1682, was bound after Ratcliff had left Boston. Certainly it embodies a very different type of technique than we can see exemplified in any binding which can be attributed to Ratcliff. Whoever bound this copy of *Practical Truths*, Ratcliff certainly did not.

Edmund Ranger was then working in Boston, his period of activity, as already noted, being 1671 to 1705 (G. E. Littlefield, *op. cit.* pp. 87-88). No other binder is on record as being then in Boston. A craftsman with the skill of him who made this binding on *Practical Truths* must certainly have compelled recognition and must have left his name somewhere on record. Therefore I attribute this piece of craftsmanship to the hand of the only known binder of the period in Boston, other than Ratcliff; that is, to the hand of Edmund Ranger.

The evidence before us, then, seems to indicate that John Ratcliff probably recorded his highest skill in his binding of Increase Mather's copy of *A Call from Heaven* 1679, and that Edmund Ranger easily excelled him in a more modestly conceived but better

executed binding on the copy of *Practical Truths* 1682, here described.

Ned Ward after his visit testifies that the hearts of the male inhabitants of Boston were hard; and John Dunton, the bookseller, found Bostonians niggardly. John Ratcliff earlier than either found Boston not more generous to one following his craft. The coming of competition when Edmund Ranger arrived probably added to Ratcliff's difficulties. If John Ratcliff left Boston in 1682 to return to England, might it have been possible that the superior skill seen in the work of his younger competitor had something to do with Ratcliff's leaving. It may have been the final blow in the causes of his retreat.

The New York Public Library owns a sister copy of Increase Mather's *Practical Truths* 1682, which was once owned by the author's brother Nathaniel and later by the author's grandson Mather Byles. That copy is in a binding most strikingly similar in technique to the binding on William G. Mather's copy. Its technique is quite different from that seen in any recognizable Ratcliff binding. It does distinctly impress an observer as having the characteristics of the work attributable to Edmund Ranger. Yet, curiously, it has stamped in the corners of the front and back boards, the identical tool which John Ratcliff stamped in the center of the panel of his binding on the Mather library copy of *A Call from Heaven*. The New York Public Library copy of *Practical Truths*, bound probably in 1682, was bound *not* by John Ratcliff but it was finished with John Ratcliff's tools.

Viewing this in the light of Littlefield's statement that Ratcliff disappeared from the records in 1682 and possibly returned to England, it seems highly probable that Ratcliff on leaving Boston sold his tools to Ranger, perhaps under necessity, leaving Ranger the master in his field; a position he was destined to maintain almost undisputed for the next twenty years.

## BOOKS BOUND BY JOHN RATCLIFF

1. SEWALL'S COMMONPLACE BOOK; bound in yellow rough calfskin, decorated on the sides with a panel and a border, formed with single lines of square dots, having a diagonal line of of square dots at each corner connecting the panel with the border. Within the corners of the panel there is a fleuron of three buds, having a triangular outline (see plate). The edges of the boards are ornamented with a roll of cat-tooth design. The tooling is impressed in black throughout. The foredge was furnished with clasps, one of which is now missing. The book was well sewn with linen thread on three "raised bands"; two folds or gatherings were sewn on one thread. The volume bears the inscription: "Samuel Sewall his Booke, Decemb. 29, 1677. Bound by Jno. Ratcliff." It is now owned by the Massachusetts Historical Society.

2. CALL FROM HEAVEN, BY INCREASE MATHER, BOSTON 1679; is a small 8vo. measuring  $5\frac{7}{8} \times 3\frac{5}{8} \times \frac{9}{16}$  inches. It is bound in olive morocco, decorated in gold. On the sides there is a border line of square dots. In the center of the field within the border there is a fleuron of four petals with a stem and with foliage of small scrolls on either side of the stem. In each corner of the field there is an impression of the triangular fleuron used on No. 1 (see plate). The roll on the edges of the boards and the dotted line roll—three of the four tools used, are the same as those used on No. 1. On Sewall's Commonplace Book the entire tooling is in black while on *A Call from Heaven* it is in gold leaf. The book is now owned by the William Gwinn Mather Library and is more fully described in the text of the paper preceding this list.

3. A COLLECTION OF TRACTS written by INCREASE MATHER; of various dates 1670 to 1680, bound in one volume and covered in black morocco finished with the same tools even to the edge roll, as were used on the binding of No. 1 and No 2, but the tools were impressed in blank in a design similar to that of No. 1; except that, to the four impressions of the fleuron within the panel at its corners, there is stamped an additional impression of the fleuron on the outside of the panel at its upper

and its lower ends. The book is a 4to. measuring 7 x 5 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches. It includes all of Mather's works before 1681 that were printed in quarto. That it was bound before 1681 is indicated by the fact that it does not include the first edition of *Heaven's Alarm* which was printed in quarto and published in 1681. The thirteen publications in this bound volume, which includes fifteen works with fifteen titles (two of the publications contained two works in each) were probably brought together by Cotton Mather, son of Increase Mather, and bound to his order. The manuscript list of contents on a slip pasted on the verso of the first title-page is in the hand of Cotton Mather. Above this slip is an inscription, *Crescentius Matherus*, written twice in a hand which Mr. Julius H. Tuttle has recently identified as that of Samuel Mather, son of Cotton, indicating that the volume descended to him. In recent times the volume was owned by the late Sumner Hollingsworth of Boston and it is fully described by Mr. Tuttle including the binding and contents, in Samuel A. Green's *Second Supplementary List of Early American Imprints*, pp. 38-42. It was sold at Sotheby's on April 7th, 1925, and is now owned by the William G. Mather Library.

4. THE GENERAL LAWS AND LIBERTIES OF THE MASSACHUSETTS COLONY REVISED AND REPRINTED BY ORDER OF THE GENERAL COURT . . . MAY 15TH, 1672. CAMBRIDGE, PRINTED BY SAMUEL GREEN FOR JOHN USHER OF BOSTON 1672. Bound with this is a later printed addition, the latest date contained in which is 1675. The book may have been bound about 1675-76; it is a small folio 6 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 10 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches, in its original binding of calfskin which has become hard as old vellum. Its color is a rich mellow brown, like the deep tone of old mahogany. It is in a fine state of preservation. The cover is decorated with lines and tools in blank, leaving them a deeper brown than the cover. There is on the sides a border of two lines, within which there is a panel of two lines having a flourish of tooling at the corners— a center flower with side foliage in a fan-shaped tool within the corner, and a conventionalized fleuron consisting of a floret supported with scrolls of foliage growing outwards from the corners. At the upper and



lower ends of the panels midway between the outer corner tools is an impression of the triangular fleuron of three buds which is used in Nos. 1, 2 and 3. In the center of the panel there is an impression of the outer corner tool. On either side of the center tool are impressed in gold the initials I S, which Mr. Brigham thinks may represent John Sherman. The edges of the boards are decorated with the same roll of cat-tooth design used on Nos. 1, 2 and 3. The foredge was furnished with two clasps, the upper one of which is now missing, the lower one matches in shape the clasp on Sewall's *Commonplace Book* and the simple design engraved on each is the same. The book was not sewn through the folds of the sections in the usual manner of book construction. The body of the book was pierced through the sides along its back margins, and sewn through these holes with stitches of thread which penetrated the whole book, holding it entirely rigid. The boards were attached by four rawhide thongs laced into the boards. These thongs passed through holes which penetrated the book between the sewing stitches. The book therefore cannot be opened to the back. The boards and the book are "cut flush"; that is, square at the foredge, the boards being even with the edges of the book and without any projecting squares. The structure of the binding is simple, even crude. It has lasted well because the leather was well prepared, probably with sumach; and perhaps because the book has been but very little used. It is now owned by the American Antiquarian Society.

5. THE PSALMS . . . FOR THE USE . . . OF THE SAINTS . . . IN NEW-ENGLAND. PRINTED BY SAMUEL GREEN AT CAMBRIDGE IN NEW-ENGLAND 1651. Though printed in 1651 I assign the binding of this book to John Ratcliff (who came to Boston not until about 1661) because it bears what seem to me to be unmistakable marks of Ratcliff's technique in all the details of the binding. The book is bound in polished brown sheepskin (not in calfskin as stated by Mr. W. L. Andrews). It is decorated on both sides with a border consisting of a single outer line in gold and two inner lines in blank. At the center there is a small conventionalized fleuron in gold, on

either side of which there is stamped in gold the initials F B. At the foredge there are two brass clasps hinged with leather and lined with vellum. Each clasp is riveted on the hinge with a tiny iron rivet, having a tiny square brass burr on the inside of the clasp. The hinges are riveted to the board with one brass rivet through the board at each hinge. The counterpart of each clasp consists of a tiny iron bar held at either end with a fold of sheet brass which is inserted into the edge of the back board and riveted through.

The book is in eight leaves to the section, and is sewn two sections with one thread upon two sawn-in sunken bands of cord. The boards are built up of paper and the cords are laced into the boards. No headbands were ever made on this book. The book is slightly rounded at the back but the fore-edge is cut square. The edges were sprinkled with brown pigment. The squares of the boards are uneven, and the edges of the boards are not decorated in any manner. The workmanship was crude. The book has been well preserved and but little used. The leaves are clean as if just from the printer. It has been reproduced and briefly described by W. L. Andrews in *Bibliopegy in the United States* and it is described in Lawrence C. Wroth's chapter on bookbinding in his Grolier Club book on American Printing. It is the Lenox-Maitland-Kalbfleisch copy now in the New York Public Library.

6. THE BOOK OF THE GENERAL LAWES AND LIBERTYES CONCERNING THE INHABITANTS OF THE MASSACHUSETTS, COLLECTED OUT OF THE RECORDS OF THE GENERAL COURT FOR THE SEVERAL YEARS WHEREIN THEY WERE MADE AND ESTABLISHED. AND NOW REVISED BY THE SAME COURT AND DISPOSED INTO AN ALPHABETICAL ORDER AND PUBLISHED BY THE SAME AUTHORITY IN THE GENERAL COURT HOLDEN AT BOSTON IN MAY 1640 . . . CAMBRIDGE, PRINTED ACCORDING TO ORDER OF THE GENERAL COURT 1660.

A ms. note in the volume states: *This is supposed to be the oldest edition extant. A previous edition was printed in 1648 but none of the copies are now known to be in existence. Bound with this are Several Laws and Orders . . . Printed in 1663;*



BOOK OF THE GENERAL LAWEES AND LIBERTYES 1660-68. Folio.

Bound by John Ratcliff.

See description No. 6. Reproduction is reduced.

also those printed in 1664, in 1665, in 1666, and in 1668. (The last item is not perfect; it lacks all after p. 18.) The fly leaf at the front bears the inscription: *Edward Rawson his booke*, in the same hand as that in which the signature occurs on the title-page.

The book is a small folio measuring  $6\frac{3}{4} \times 10\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{1}{2}$  inches, in its original binding of smooth brown morocco. The leather apparently was poorly prepared and not well grained, being possibly home-grown and not imported. The surface of the cover in some places has now become abraded. It was bound most probably shortly after the date of the latest addition to the volume, that is, about 1668-69. This would bring it well within Ratcliff's period and before Ranger's. I ascribe the binding to Ratcliff; and there is more than the probable date of the binding on which to base the ascription to Ratcliff. We cannot point to a repetition of the engraved tools that were used on Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4. The design of the tools on this binding are different in detail from those tools. But it is not reasonable to suppose that even a Colonial binder in his most restricted days would impoverish his work and diminish its interest by condemning it to the monotony of one, two, or even three corner tools. Ratcliff must have had at least a small variety of finishing tools.

Though different in detail from the few tools in Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, identified as having been used by Ratcliff, the tools on this binding (No. 6) are nevertheless very similar to those in feeling. They are tools which Ratcliff would select and would like to use; and they are used in the manner he would use them.

The decoration of the binding, tooled in blank throughout, consists of a three line border on the sides, with a panel of similar three lines, within the border. A two-line crease spans the back in the positions of five bands, dividing the back in six panels. At the corners of the panel on the sides there is a flourish of tool impressions—within the corners is a conventionalized fan; while growing outwards from the corners there is a fleuron consisting of a floret supported with small scrolls of conventionalized foliage. This fleuron, used at the outer corners, is impressed also in the center of the panel. The edges of the boards bear no finishing whatever.

But the ascription of this binding to the hand of John Ratcliff rests not on any element in its decoration. It is the detail of the construction of the binding which reveals a striking similarity to the technique employed in the binding on *The General Laws* of 1672 (described under No. 4) and it is this similarity of structure upon which I base the ascription of the binding to John Ratcliff. The volume is now owned by the American Antiquarian Society.

### BOOKS BOUND BY EDMUND RANGER

1. PRACTICAL TRUTHS TENDING TO PROMOTE THE POWER OF GODLINESS . . . BY INCREASE MATHER. BOSTON . . . PRINTED BY SAMUEL GREEN UPON ASSIGNMENT OF SAMUEL SEWALL 1682. The book is a small 8vo. measuring  $5\frac{11}{16} \times 3\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{9}{16}$ . It is bound in sprinkled calfskin, with gilt tooled back having two gilt lines and a dotted gilt line on either side of the four raised bands; and a gilt fleuron ornamenting each of the five panels of the back into which the four bands divide it. The sides have no other ornament than the mottling of the leather. A gilt ornamental zigzag roll decorates the edges of the boards. The edges of the book were skillfully gilded; and a colored silk headband gave a sense of finish to the "caps" at the turnover of the cover at the top and the bottom edge of the back where it meets the edges of the book. The book was well sewn with linen thread upon four raised bands of cord; two folds or gatherings were sewn on one thread. The boards were built up of paper and were well made (possibly imported). The boards were attached to the book by the lacing-in of the four bands, each band being laced into three holes punched through the board. The copy is now owned by the William Gwinn Mather Library and is more fully described in the text of the paper preceding this list.

2. PRACTICAL TRUTHS . . . a sister copy of the preceding; bound in brown sprinkled calfskin now badly pitted with decay probably as a result of acid in the sprinkling stain. The covers of the book are finished with a gilt roll border, and a

gilt tool repeated in each corner within the border on the sides. The same gilt roll used in the border spans the back on either side of the four raised bands upon which the book is sewn. The pasted-down board linings are of combed marble paper, with the inner edges of the marble paper forming a stub which is folded around and sewn with the first and last signature. The fly leaves are the blank outside leaf of the first and the last signature. There were no marble fly leaves. The edges of the book are gilded. It was probably a presentation copy. On the recto of the blank leaf A1 are four lines of manuscript errata in the hand of Increase Mather. There were originally five lines, but the second line has been crossed out apparently with Mather's pen. The autograph of the author's brother *Nathanielis Matheri Liber 1682* on the title-page, seems to indicate that the binding was done that year, the year in which the book was published. The title-page also contains the autograph of the author's grandson [*Mather*] *Byles*.

The tool impressed in the corners of each of the sides was previously owned by John Ratcliff and was stamped by him in the center of his binding on Mather's *Call from Heaven* described under No. 2 in the list above of the bindings of John Ratcliff. See our note concerning this succession of ownership at the end of the paper preceding the present lists of binding by Ratcliff and Ranger. The copy of *Practical Truths* here described is owned by the New York Public Library.

3. SAMUEL SEWALL'S SERMON NOTE BOOK, from Thursday May 3, 1688, to October 12, 1692. The book is a small 8vo. containing 160 leaves folded in ten sections of sixteen leaves each. The sections were sewn all along on three rawhide thongs. The thongs were sunken into saw marks across the back, and they were laced into the boards which were built up of paper. The boards were left unlined and no headbands were worked upon the book. The binding was designed to be very simple and inexpensive. The cover is of brown sheepskin, sprinkled, probably with a stain of copperas. There is no gilt tooling upon the cover. It is finished merely with border creases of double lines in blank on the sides, and with blank two

line creases across the back in the positions of bands. The creasing tool used on the back was narrower than that used on the borders of the sides. The edges of the boards are tooled in blank with the same zigzag roll as was used in gold upon the edges of the boards on *Practical Truths* No. 1 above. The edges of the book were sprinkled probably with burnt ochre. The date of the beginning of the book indicates that the binding was completed before May 3, 1688. The book is in an excellent state of preservation. It is now in the Boston Public Library.

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