

Museum, and in the Library of St. John's College, Oxford, will be found in *Two Lives of Nicholas Ferrar*, admirably edited by the Rev. (now Professor) J. E. B. Mayor, Cambridge, 1855. There is likewise at the British Museum an *Acts of the Apostles* similarly bound in morocco, evidently the work of the Little Gidding household; the side of the book is ornamented with a kind of diamond-shaped lattice work.

Dr. Dibdin on Bookbinding.

THE following account of Binding and Binders in Paris, written by the celebrated Thomas Frognall Dibdin, at the beginning of the century, may interest our readers: *

"What then remains in the books very worthy of especial notice? Bookbinding—Yes! Some few hours of my residence in this metropolis have been devoted to an examination of this seductive branch of book commerce. And yet I have not seen, nor am I likely to see, one single binder, either Thouvenin, or Simier, or Braidel, or Lesné. I am not sure whether Courteval or either of the Bozérians be living; but their handy works live and are lauded in every quarter of Paris. A preliminary observation or two may be forgiven me. "The decline and fall" of empires is a theme sufficiently notorious to us from early youth; but the decline and fall of bookbinding at Paris is a theme which perhaps may not be of quite such familiar occurrence, even to the most celebrated of our own collectors. Nevertheless, so it is. There has been a great "decline" of the Bibliopegistic Art among the Parisians, but the present bookbinders indulge a hope, and even promulgate about that there will be no absolute "fall" or helpless prostration of that same art. They are right in so doing, nor with a little care and a less indulgence of national vanity need they look forward to such a decay. Formerly the French eclipsed all the world in bookbinding; the copies in the Préfond, De Boze, Gaignat, and even De la Valliere collections confirm this observation. Our Johnsons, Montagues, and Baumgartens are not to be mentioned in the same breath with their Desseuil, Padeloup, Delorme and Derôme, as to taste in finishing in the ornaments. And if you choose to carry the history of the art three centuries back, who have we to put in competition with Gascon—the supposed binder of Grolier's books—and even, perhaps some of those of Henri II. and Diane de Poitiers? The restorer of the Fathers (if you prefer this latter appellation) of modern bookbinding in France, was the elder Bozérian, of whose productions the book amateurs of Paris are enthusiastically fond. Lord Spencer possesses, in the Latin Polybius of 1473, one of the most splendid specimens of the tools of Bozérian; but I verily believe that the same distinguished collector would cheerfully part with the copy, if he could obtain another equally large and in equally good condition, but bound in the more correct taste of the English school. Bozérian undoubtedly had his merits, but he was fond of gilt tooling to excess. His ornaments are too minute and too profuse; and moreover, occasionally, very unskilfully worked. His choice of morocco is not always to my taste, while his joints are neither carefully measured nor do they play easily;

* Reprinted from an exceedingly scarce "Bibliographical and Picturesque Tour in France and Germany," by Dr. DIBDIN, published in 1821.

and his linings are often gaudy to excess. He is, however, hailed as the legitimate restorer of that taste in binding, which delighted his purchasers in the Augustan age of book-collecting. One merit must not be denied him; his boards are usually square and well measured. His volumes open well, and are beaten—too unmercifully. It is the reigning error of French binders. They think they can never beat a book sufficiently; they exercise a tyranny over the leaves, as bad as that of an Eastern despot over a prostrate slave. . . . Thouvenin and Simier are now the morning and evening star in the bibliopegistic hemisphere. Of these Thouvenin makes a higher circle in the heavens; but Simier shines with no despicable lustre. Their work is good, substantial, and pretty nearly on the same taste. The folio Psalter of 1502 in the Royal Library is considered to be the *ne plus ultra* of modern bookbinding at Paris; and if I mistake not Thouvenin is the artist in whose charcoal furnace the tools which produced this *échantillon* were heated. I have no hesitation in saying that considered as an extraordinary specimen of art, it is a failure. The ornaments are commonplace; the lining is decidedly bad, and there is a clumsiness of finish throughout the whole. The head-bands—as indeed are those of Bozérian—are clumsily managed, and I may say that it exhibits a magnificent inferiority even to the productions of Mackinlay, Hering, Clarke, and Fairbairn. Indeed, either of these artists would greatly eclipse it. I learn that Thouvenin keeps books in his possession as long as does a certain binder with us—who shall just now be nameless. There is a bookbinder of the name of Lesné—just now occupied, as I learn, in writing a poem upon his art—who is also talked of as an artist of respectable skill. They say, however, that he writes better than he binds. So much the worse for his little ones, if he be married. Several impartial collectors, with whom I have discoursed, seem to think that the art of binding in France, just now, if not retrograding, is at least stationary, and apparently incapable of being carried to a higher pitch of excellence. I doubt this very much; they can do what they have done before. And no such great conjuration is required in going even far beyond it. Some whisper has reached me that Charles Lewis might come over for a while, and establish a school of binding upon principles of English taste.”

MANUEL HISTORIQUE ET BIBLIOGRAPHIQUE DE
L'AMATEUR DE RELIURES. (*Paris: Gruel & Engelmann.*)

EVERY lover of bookbinding will rejoice at the sight of the magnificent volume which M. Léon Gruel has just produced with such great care. The text is exquisitely printed by Robert Engelmann on the finest paper ever used in a book, and the seventy heliographs and gold-and-colour-printed plates, which are reproductions of the most characteristic bindings to be found in France and Germany, are beyond all praise. The production of this Manual has evidently been a work of love to the author, and we cannot but congratulate him on the result of his labours.

We remember that in the great Exhibition of 1851, no bindings were more admired than those shown by Madame Gruel. The beautifully smooth morocco, delicately gilt, and the brilliancy of the gold on the edges of the books were a revelation to us—there was nothing like them among the English binders' work; and when on a visit to Paris with a