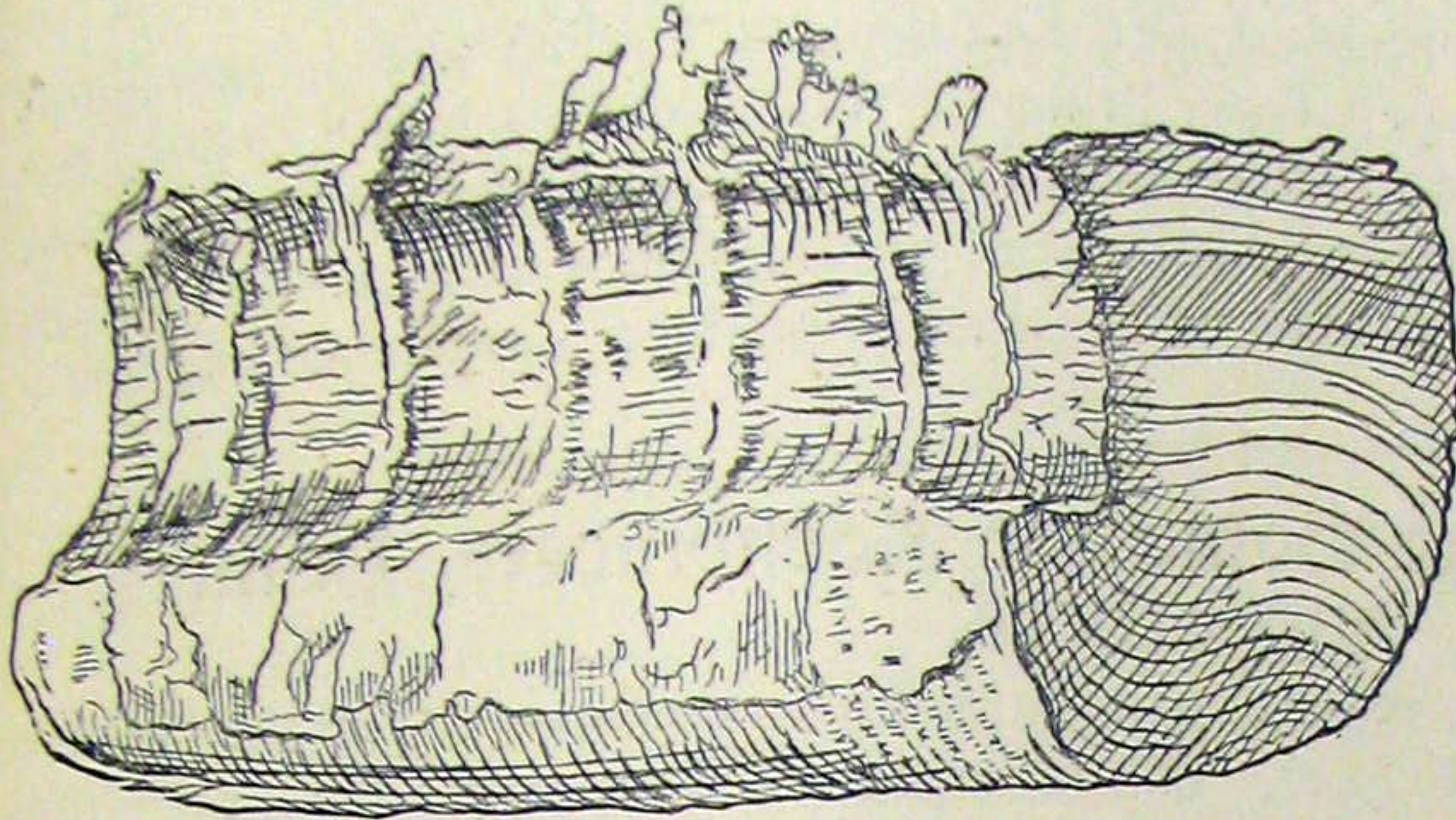


Hollow Backs.



SINCE we are being taught by the great binders of the future that the proper way to bind a book is to give it a hollow back, we have ventured to look around us for some further information upon the subject. It is held, we believe, by the new school that the book in the course of binding should be allowed to follow its own natural inclinations, and that these

inclinations tend to a hollow back. It is further asserted that the usual round-back form is an antediluvian absurdity, only continued to-day because of the immense respect binders have for their predecessors in the craft of centuries ago. Now we were much struck with the air of Gospel truth that pervaded the publication of these statements, and, in order to clear up the last doubt, an ancient copy of the Gospels was brought to light. It was a copy that had evidently been bound some hundreds of years since with a hollow back; it had been allowed in the binding to follow its own inclinations, and, strange to say, had followed them ever since. The accompanying sketch represents this volume in its present happy condition, and we need hardly add that, after examining it, we have still a little doubt concerning the wisdom involved in allowing a book or anything else to follow its natural inclination.

Gilding over Colour.

DURING olden times it was customary to gild over other than red coloured edges, and very pretty effects were obtained. A bright green under the gold, for instance, was thought to be very beautiful; the gold, while it toned the colour, did not hide it altogether, but its own richness and brilliancy became more dazzling and charming through the verdant tints which faintly flashed or glimmered through it. Another form of ornamenting edges was by working flowers or designs by means of two different shades of leaf, a deep one and a light one. The light gold being placed on the edges in manner described, a coat of size was rapidly and gently passed over it. This second coat of size when dry was rubbed over with palm oil, and the deep-coloured leaf used for the flower or design was laid on with chosen pallets or ornamented tools, which were first warmed at the finishing stove. This was called "gilding à la antique."

Sometimes volumes were gilded after their edges had been previously marbled. In such cases the edges were not overcharged with colour. After pressing and burnishing, the size was laid on evenly and lightly, so as not to disturb the colours or design of the marble pattern, and then the gold was instantly put down and finished off in the usual manner. The marble showed through the gold and looked superbly beautiful. Dr. Dibdin, in his "Bibliographer's Decameron," in speaking of this style of edge-decoration, says it is "the very luxury, the *ne plus ultra*, of the bibliopegistic art."—*The American Bookmaker*.