Leipzig as a Home of Wholesale Bookbinding.

WHOLESALE binding is comparatively new in Germany, being scarcely thirty years old. The first stimulus to its cultivation came not so much from the publishers, but from the so-called "Baarsortimenter," wholesale booksellers to the trade who keep a large stock of the most marketable books on sale for cash at prices scarcely exceeding those charged by the publishers. These commission houses, chief among them F. Volkmar, L. Staackman and K. F. Koehler, perceived that there was a demand for popular books in cheap but elegant bindings, and they accordingly bound at their own risk in tasteful bindings series of popular books issued by the publishers in wrappers. The speculation was successful. The pretty books found a rapid sale, and a new industry, wholesale binding, arose.

The home of the new industry was naturally Leipzig, the centre of the German book-trade, and as the industry developed, it not only conquered all Germany but many other countries. The excellence of the work done depends on the price paid, and reckless competition threatened at one time to ruin the new trade by undertaking work at figures which did not permit sound, much less artistic, work. Lately, however, the complaints of over-competition and bad work have decreased, the natural artistic taste and solidity of the German people have made themselves felt, and, as a consequence, the style and technical execution of the bindings has greatly improved.

A house which may be said to have grown up with the new industry, is that of the court bookbinder, Gustav Fritzschke, founded on a very small scale in 1864. The proprietor had, in fact, only one assistant; but Fritzschke held fast to the traditions of the great binders, that a binding has not only the duty of protecting the book, but also of pleasing the educated eye by its elegance, however little of ornament may be lavished upon it. Maintenance of these principles soon secured him recognition. The business grew, and when Fritzschke proceeded to apply the same principles to the cheap bindings executed for wholesale houses, his success was assured. The little bindery with one "hand" is now an imposing five-story building in which, during the busy time, some two hundred persons are employed. Here are turned out bindings of all kinds, from cheap board-work at 30s. per 1000, up to bindings de luxe valued at £1000. The latter, of course, only kings can indulge in, and even they confine such expenditure to presents on occasions like the Jubilee of a Pope. The business of Gustav Fritzschke does not stand alone. Foreign libraries and bookbuyers know that for a reasonable price Leipzig binderies can turn out neat and solid half-bindings that will stand a good deal of wear and tear. But the main stay of all is the cheap wholesale binding to which we have chiefly devoted this article.

The Coloured Plate.

OPPOSITE this page we present a tinted plate which is a photographic reproduction of a magnificent specimen of Monnier's binding. It is in citron morocco ornamented with variegated inlaid leathers, representing Chinese temples, with human figures, dromedary, dragon, birds, flowers, &c., of exquisite workmanship, the inside double with olive morocco, covered with gold tooling, à petits fers, gold fly-leaves, painted gilt edges.

It was lot 855 at the Beckford Sale, Part I., June 30, 1882. It was sold for £356 by Messrs. Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge.
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The next business to be founded was, in chronological sequence, that of Moritz Göhre, the master of the Bookbinders' Guild. Immediately afterwards followed Gustav Fritzschke, whose establishment we have already mentioned. Moritz Göhre celebrated last year the twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of his firm, and has lately added a department for the manufacture of albums. The specialty of his house is bindings of a better quality, in the production of which some 60 persons find permanent employment under his roof. Göhre holds a high place as a manufacturer of portfolios, addresses, albums in leather, mosaic work and hand gilding for festival occasions. He is also well-known for bindings in calf and in vellum after Italian patterns. In this latter branch Göhre's house stands alone in Leipzig. His "school for hand and machine gilding" enjoys a deservedly high reputation.

Twenty years ago what is now H. Fikentscher's Steam Bookbindery was established in quite a small way. To-day it has a staff of 90 hands with 60 machines, and produces annually some 300,000 bindings, a fact which speaks volumes for Fikentscher's energy and correct appreciation of the wants of the trade. Fikentscher produces as well plain and extra half bindings, atlases, hymn-books, prayer-books, pamphlet bindings, etc.

The decade which followed after the termination of the war with France was extremely favourable to the development of wholesale bookbinding in Leipzig. A whole series of new workshops arose, which were destined to develop, under the direction of skilled masters, into establishments of considerable importance.

F. A. Barthel's business was founded on a modest scale in 1872, and now ranks among the best and most important of German binderies. The new workshops into which he has just moved are fitted up with all the resources of modern science. During the season, some 200 men are employed in the production of wholesale bindings of all imaginable kinds, as well as of portfolios, cases, and higher class bindings. One gets some idea of the magnitude of Barthel's establishment when one learns that he keeps 11 wire-stitching machines in constant operation to stitch some 160,000 sheets daily: 21 gilding presses, 8 paper cutters, and some 30 other machines complete the catalogue of his outfit. The motive power is supplied by a 30 h.-p. engine, and a 25 h.-p. engine drives the dynamo for the three arc lamps and 350 incandescent lamps which furnish the requisite light. An accumulator provides for further 70 incandescent lamps. The heating surface of the two boilers exceeds 140 square metres.

Paul Schambach's bindery was established almost simultaneously with Barthel's. Schambach's specialty, in addition to the usual work for the publishing trade, is the manufacture of albums of all classes: his Autograph and Scrap-books are found in almost every country on the face of the earth. The present chiefs of the house, Messrs. Moritz Grengel and Wilhelm Baessler, have, by solid and tasteful work, extended the business of their establishment to such a degree that, at the present time, about one million and a half of bound books and albums annually leave their shops. Their staff consists of 220 to 250 hands, with 80 machines, which are driven by two powerful boilers and a 40 h.-p. engine. The factory is erected on ground belonging to the firm, and covers more than 2,400 square yards. It is lighted by 5 arc and 266 incandescent lamps.

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One year later, in 1873, another bindery, that of A. Köllner, was established. The new house soon developed to a very remarkable extent, and showed last year an average daily production of more than 1000 bindings of various kinds, in addition to pamphlets, catalogues and music amounting to no less than 3000. Köllner employs some 60 journeymen, apprentices and so on. The works are supplied with gas motor power. Two years later followed the establishment of Adolf Bube's house, a bindery of high repute which employs some 20 machines to meet the continually increasing demands made upon it.

Hübel and Denck's steam bookbinding works started from small beginnings in 1875, and had to suffer much from the depressed prices which then ruled owing to the unfavourable state of trade. But a fixed determination on the part of the firm to maintain a reputation for excellence of work in spite of keen competition and sinking prices proved to be here as always a correct principle; and produced its reward in the sound position in which the house soon found itself. Recognising that the export trade was still capable of considerable extension, the house turned its attention to this field and gained a large number of customers in all countries, a success which was, however, not obtained without considerable trouble and expense. To these exertions it is due that the firm now stands in commercial relations with firms not only in Europe, but also in America and Australia. Cloth art bindings, and artistic covers are an important speciality of the house. The annual turn-over is about £37,500, and the number of machines about 100. A steam motor of 25 h.p. is used to drive the machinery, and four others for the purpose of the electric lighting of the works. According to the time of year Hübel and Denck employ from 150 to 200 hands, and the new works, which have been occupied about two months, have room for an extension up to 350.

Among the binderies which have risen to a height in the wholesale world within the last ten years, is first to be mentioned that of Gebr. Hoffmann, which was established in 1881, and already employs 50 journeymen and 30 machines. Later still was established the house of M. Baumbach & Co., who began business four years ago. In addition to half-bindings, the firm makes tasteful covers, portfolios, colour and iris print bindings, &c. Its selection of types and ornaments is unusually extensive. Young as it is, the firm already keeps in constant employment a staff of 90 assistants. 47 machines with steam power and electric lighting are its not inconsiderable plant. To what extent the firm's efforts have been crowned with success is proved by the fact that the yearly production amounts to 200,000 bound books, 900,000 pamphlets, 150,000 covers and 5000 portfolios.

The limits of our space and our intention only to touch on wholesale binding render it impossible for us to give an account of many eminent houses which are not strictly wholesale binders, although they are not very far from it, and find in Leipzig a favourable field for the unfolding of their energy and skill.

That Leipzig has attained such a high fame for bookbinding not only at home but abroad is due above all to the wholesale binders. The care with which the members of this important branch of industry devote themselves to raising Leipzig's reputation for sound and tasteful work deserves all praise, and will not fail to extend the connections of the town far beyond the limits of the German Empire.

[Conclusion.]