

## German Bookbinding

... seen through ...

### English Spectacles.

[Continued from *Buchgeverbeblatt.*]



LASTLY, we will take the occasion to show the difference between the English, French, and German methods of binding.

It will be naturally understood that we shall only take the work of art binders, that is, that of the better class. Anything lower than that is what we call rubbish, or what is known in England as "sheep-work," a name which is peculiarly appropriate.

We think it necessary that in a good binding the sheets should be folded by hand, and even if a book has been sewn by machine, every sheet should be revised and refolded. This is done by us, as it is in other countries; the first difference is in the end sections. The French paste a double leaf at back and front; the English paste two leaves and overcast the sections with fine thread, which gives them greater strength. If leather or linen is employed, in France it is pasted on, but in England they have a method of their own to overcast, but sometimes they are pasted on. Some of the employers do it one way, some another. In Germany, as a rule, for better half-bound books coloured paper is favoured. The sewing is everywhere done with thread. In France the end sheets are sewn on separately; in England and Germany with the other sections.

Everywhere sawing-in the backs is the rule, but we know that in England and Germany the best work is done in flexible style, that is, the backs are not sawn-in, the sewing thread is passed round the bands and the bands sewn on; even for simple octavo books, in Germany, as in England and France, five bands are used.

Everywhere the bands are laced through the boards, always in France and in England, but in Germany they are not always drawn through. In France they are drawn-in through three holes, finishing off inside; in England, through two holes, finishing off outside. In Germany both methods are employed, but in many workshops the bands are only pasted outside the boards. Real art bookbinders always lace their bands in.

In reference to the cutting, we always do that by machine, but the books are first pressed, and then tied up for the cutting. In France the boards are attached to the book, thrown back, and between each band something is pierced, when the leaves are moved backwards and forwards to make them flat, then they are cut in a hand-press. In England the boards are put on before cutting in the same manner, knocked up from the head and tail, and cut in-boards; so that neither in France nor in England is a good book cut in a machine,

In Germany and France, for the lining, they cut and make up a back to fit the book; but the English glue

on their backs in a way of their own, of strong paper, which is a very good plan, and one which in Germany is being very much imitated.

This is the reason that books bound in this way do not open flat, though they are stronger. We Germans find ourselves in a very peculiar position with our public, because our wise men will have it that a good binding should open at once quite flat, and that is impossible with small books when strong paper is used and the book is well and strongly bound. Whether English or German, if such a book is thoroughly opened up, it will open, but never so as to lie flat on a table as if covered in cloth. A book ought to last ten years always in use, and for this the back should have a certain amount of solidity about it, but that is the very reason why it will not open as easily as one commonly bound, besides which, such books have always more bands than commoner and sloppier bindings that open so easily. I hope these gentlemen critics will take this to heart, and not talk so easily about the free opening of books. I have especially gone into this sore point to help our workers.

Covering, making ready for the finishers, and finishing is done much the same in all three countries. In Germany the making of head-bands is not so often done by hand as in France and England.

We in Germany mostly use silk or fine brocade paper for ends. England and France love marbled papers, even for their finest work.

A striking feature in English libraries is the few half-bound books; the majority are in whole-bound light yellow calf, with hardly any ornamentation on the sides and not much on the backs.

There is one important difference in the method of gilding the backs. The Frenchman does not put his book in a press, he fastens a block on his bench, pushing the book against it from the left, and then works his tools across the back from right to left. The Englishman fastens his book in a finishing press; and we Germans either use the old-fashioned block-press, or, as at the present time, the Leo gilding apparatus, which allows of the book being turned in all directions, and which has found a place in England.

These are the main differences in the technique of our trade in the three countries.

We hope that our English trade colleague now sees that the case against us is not quite so black as it has been made out in the German journals he has reviewed. On the contrary, our German art is a pleasant one and ever on the side of progress. But will he try to bring this truth more forward, that which he has wished for so often, that if the English had more energy "the tables might be turned, and a very fair share of trade be done in binding German books for German use." We should like to see this, for then we should have the opportunity, with reference to our at present incomplete art work, to learn a little more of the English and—to imitate.—PAUL ADAM.

WE have now given several pages to the subject of German bindings as compared with English, and have done our best to present to our readers German opinions upon the subject as faithfully as possible—

allowing for the difficulties of translating technical terms of foreign processes—and American opinions on the same subject.

Neither the writer in the *Illustrirte Zeitung*, nor Paul Adam in the *Buchgewerbeblatt* have denied one single allegation we made in reference to German work; the former admits by inference that our criticism may do them good, and the latter wishes that more English work might find its way into Germany for their imitation. The most powerful point raised by Herr Adam against our criticism is contained in the single word *Bums*, from which we admit we recoil, not knowing what it means. Where we got our sixty examples from is not of very much importance, but we very plainly stated that they largely consisted "of plates and illustrations deemed to be of sufficient importance for a place in their own journals"; these we took to be fairly illustrative of their better-class designs. Some from the technical schools which Herr Adam admits "in the way of design need reform." One design he recognises, the "Die Heilige Schrift," and denounces it as "frightfully ugly."

The whole of the latter half of his article is a comparison of methods of doing the work, upon which we said nothing, and care less, only judging by results; but we cannot admit all his statements to be correct.

He says that we have tried to set German bindings "in a doubtful or bad light," but has not attempted to show on which point of detail we were wrong, beyond charging a Carlsruhe writer, whom we quoted, with writing "untruthfully"; that part we must leave the Carlsruhe writer and Herr Adam to fight out between them. For ourselves we claim to have been fair, strictly to the point, and moderate in our strictures, and now after hearing so poor a defence we must come to this conclusion, that after allowing for a few exceptions produced by the very few art binders, the great mass of the bound work of Germany (not cloth, but half-bound and whole-bound commercial bindings), is the most miserable trash, "*rubbish*," to quote Herr Adam.

THE DISCOUNT BOOK TRADE.—Messrs. Macmillan and Co., writing in *Fame*, the advertisers' organ, says:—"In our opinion, any system of 'cutting' prices which tends to make retail business unprofitable must, in the end, be injurious to manufacturers and the wholesale trade. We regret to say that we have no patent system for preventing excessive competition, nor do we think that anything can be done except by agreement of the retailers among themselves. What we have done has been to assist in breaking down the notion among the public that all books are subject to a discount from the advertised price. This has been done by issuing certain books at *net* prices, and announcing that they were supplied to the trade on terms that did not admit of discount. The effort has been so far successful that, nowadays, if a bookseller says to his customer that so-and-so is a '*net* book,' he does not ask for discount. From letters that we constantly receive, we gather that the system has the strong approval of the best booksellers in all parts of the country."

## Foreign Notes.



SINCE our French fellow craftsman's visit to London, M. Braguier and other members of La Solidarité de Reliure have been endeavouring to provoke a little enthusiasm among the binders of Paris with a view to reorganisation; and at a "General Reunion of the Corporation of Binders and Finishers" held on the 4th of December, in the Hall of the Thousand Columns, Rue de la Gaité, under the presidency of A. Godefroy, the following little bit of history was given by the first speaker, M. Legris. The question was "The situation of the working binders of Paris."

"To judge of the actual situation of the binders of Paris at the present time, it is necessary to know a little of the past, and for this purpose, without going too far back, we will commence with 1864, when the binders of Paris worked twelve hours per day. In the month of September of that year, an understanding was established among the workmen of both the large and smaller houses to ask for a reduction to ten hours. The resistance of the employers put that movement down. Eight days afterwards, those who had gained their object and had not been defeated, knowing the advantages of union, met together and founded La Société de Solidarité; all the workmen were eager for the honour of joining, and not only had they this Society, but also a meeting place, under the title La Marmite (the saucepan), where the young people and those who worked at a distance from their residences could have breakfast, or join in a hand at cards or draughts in the evening, and entertain themselves, besides helping to bring about a wider feeling of association amongst their fellow workers.

"By 1870, nearly all the promoters of the idea of social emancipation had died, or been removed, but we shall always recall their names with pleasure as the honoured of the proletariat. First there was Varlin, the soul of the Society; then Rifflet, Bovinet, Camille Ducuing, with the exiles and those who were deported (to the war) Clémence Delacour, and Mme. Lemelle; those whose teachings and ideas we now practice. In 1872, some who escaped safely from the war assembled together and a new meeting was convened in the grand amphitheatre of the School of Medicine, which was only just large enough to hold our comrades. Then came a reverse: right up to the time of the exposition at Philadelphia, the Society had always had implicit faith in the treasurer, Vinardi, who had been one of the most zealous workers from the establishment of the Society; but it was just then found out that he had spent the Society's gold, the money paid in as subscriptions. In 1878, a *Chambre Syndicale* was formed on the ruins of the old Society. Some would not pay up their contributions, some opposed for this thing, some for that, and one after another they dispersed. In 1879, a new Society was started with the same rules as in 1865, and progressed so well that in two years they had about 1,000 francs in the funds. Then a demand was made in the house of Engel for overtime rates, which were promised.