Mr. Eeles, sen., originally founded this business in 1843. He was apprenticed in 1818 to the Mr. Leighton of that day and his connexion with that house continued for 25 years in the successive capacities of apprentice, foreman, and eventually partner, the business being carried on in Coldbath-square and afterwards removed to Exmouth-street. In August, 1843, a dissolution of partnership took place and Mr. Eeles transferred his energies to 22 Cursitor-street. From the first, he found generous supporters, and his first week’s wages list amounted to about £30—by no means a bad beginning.

Mr. Eeles, Senr.

The first job he turned out was the sixth volume of Knight’s “London,” and just before Christmas in the same year he had the binding of the first of Dickens’s successful Christmas Books, “The Christmas Carol.” He undertook to do 1,700 per day, but managed to exceed this number—making up 2,000 a day besides his other work. This would be thought nothing of now, in the days of steam and the many modern appliances for facilitating work, but at that time all the cutting was done by hand with the old plough, and all the backing with the hammer; the edge-gilding too was a difficulty. As they were compelled to work early and late, and sometimes all night, the sound of the backing hammers was anything but a welcome serenade for the neighbours.

The price paid for the binding was enough to make the mouths water of the present generation of bookbinders, but it must be borne in mind that there were no strawboards then and the cheapest millboards were £36 per ton. The price is given in Forster’s “Life of Dickens,” which anyone interested in the matter may consult. “The Carol” was bound in the common red cloth, but before the “Chimes” appeared in the following year, the rich turkey-red cloth was produced and the Christmas books were afterwards all in that colour.

Mr. Eeles, Junr.

Several artful attempts were made to procure copies of these books, presumably for the American market, but without avail. One Sunday, just before Christmas, 1843, as the family were sitting at tea, there was a ring at the door-bell and the servant announced that a gentleman wished to see Mr. Eeles, and on going down stairs he found an entire stranger who, after beating about the bush for some time, offered Mr. Eeles £50...
for a copy of the "Carol," bound or unbound. It is needless to say that he was at once dismissed in anything but a complimentary manner.

Business progressed so favourably that early in the new year Mr. Eeles invited his friends to the number of eighty to celebrate his success and the result was a not unworthy imitation of Mr. Fizzywig's Ball. The workshop was cleared out and hung with coloured cloth, a violin, harp, and flageolet were mounted on the shavings tubs, and dancing was carried on until well into the morning, much to the surprise of the neighbours and the policeman on the beat, who was astonished at the transformation scene, but did not object to a small share in the festivities.

The business continued to grow and the family were compelled to turn out and live away from it and to extend the premises by building over the yard. Not long after the two houses opposite—now converted into one, and occupied by Mr. Barber, the printer—were remodelled and converted into workshops.

Sometimes laughable mistakes arose in connection with the binder's business, such as the following:—
There was a book in hand for Mr. J. F. Shaw, then of Southampton row. It was entitled "Life in Jesus," a Memoir of Mrs. Mary Winslow; at the same time a number of Thackeray's Miscellanies were being done, and being about the same size, one of the vols. got accidentally into the Winslow case and in due course was placed on Mr. Shaw's shelves; a customer coming in asked for a book for a present: Mr. Shaw recommended the work, and the customer was much surprised on opening it to find Thackeray's "Book of Snobs."

Mr. Eeles was one of the first to take advantage of the backing and cutting machines and other appliances which were destined to supersede old processes and in doing so encountered much trouble and opposition.

The heaviest job he ever had was the preparation of the catalogue for the opening of the Crystal Palace. The staff worked all the night before the opening day, and at sunrise three waggon loads were sent off, weighing 48 tons of paper—about half the order. The Catalogue had been printed hurriedly, the cover being covered with heavy blocks of black and dark blue, and the ink being wet many ladies and gentleman transferred it to their gloves and subsequently to their cheeks and noses.

The Atlas of the Society of Useful Knowledge was also bound by Mr. Eeles, between 2,000 and 3,000 copies being done in half-russia or morocco at a cost varying from 15/- to 25/- per copy. They were done with India-rubber backs which at that time was a patent process, an annual license being paid for permission to use it.

Some curious orders occasionally came into the hands of the firm. Amongst others, the Library doors in Mr. Dickens' house in Tavistock-square were fitted with false book backs in calf and morocco, witty titles being supplied by Mr. Dickens. These titles are recorded in Mr. Dickens' letters published shortly after his death. Some years later the doors in Mr. Forster's Library at Kensington were fitted in the same way.

After his retirement from the stage Mr. Macready was an occasional visitor in Cursitor-street, to give instructions for the binding of books, principally purchased at Mudie's, for the purpose of presentation to the students at a Literary Institution at Sherborne in which he took great interest.

Mr. Eeles died in July, 1859, and the business was carried on by his son, the surviving partner, to whom we are indebted for the above particulars. In 1864 the business was transferred to its present site and the premises were fitted for steam power and all the newest appliances secured.

In 1867 Mr. Matthew Bell joined the business as a partner. In 1870 he took over the whole business and has since conducted it on his own account.

Mr. Bell is a Yorkshireman—the son of Mr. Bell who carried on for many years a business as printer, bookseller, and bookbinder, at Richmond, in Yorkshire, and Mr. George Bell of the well-known firm of Geo. Bell & Sons, publishers, is his eldest brother.

After leaving school he assisted in his father's business for a time; then came to London and was with his brother, then in Fleet-street, for about two years. He then returned to Richmond to take a position in one of the local banks, in which his brother-in-law was a partner. In 1865 he came back to London and was again with his brother, then in partnership with Mr. Daldy, and remained with them until his removal to Cursitor-street in 1867.

In 1875 on Midsummer day the old premises were unfortunately destroyed by fire, but by the following Midsummer day they were rebuilt on a much larger scale, and re-occupied.

Two sons have been associated with Mr. Bell in the business for some years past, but one of them having recently left to go into another business, he has secured the co-operation of Mr. Colley, by whose untiring energy and perseverance the business bids fair to take rank among the first cloth-binders in London. A recent visit to the Temple Works enables us to give some description of them and of the excellent appliances and arrangements for carrying on an extensive wholesale business.

The block of buildings that closes up the end of Cursitor-street must strike the callers as covering large and important business transactions, and this is the fact. The business of Mr. Matthew Bell is not only one of the oldest, but one of the largest. His bindery is replete with all the latest machinery, and the place hums with business from morning till night. With four stories and a basement, which covers 6,000 feet of ground, the firm is enabled to cope with huge quantities of work, and to turn out orders in an exceptionally short time.

Accompanied by Mr. Bell, we ascended to the top of the house, and then found ourselves in an excellently lighted room, which will comfortably accommodate a hundred folders. The iron girders that support the roof are a noticeable feature on this floor, in fact, the use of iron-work in the place of wood was evidently a matter of ever present importance with the builders. Having been once burnt out, every endeavour was made to obviate a similar catastrophe. Another interesting item on this floor and one that somewhat surprised us, consisted of two or three large gas-ovens. Mr. Bell explained that these ovens had been specially
Our Portrait Gallery.—No. 2.

Matthew Bell.
provided to cook the dinners of the workpeople, and
certain of the women-folk were always told off to act
as cooks. The ovens are of the latest pattern. The
workpeople bring their own food and can buy their
potatoes cooked. The second floor is devoted to
collating, sewing, and papering. This is a much larger
floor than the one above and will take in considerably
over a hundred workers. We noted three Brehmer’s
sewing machines at work here, and our guide men-
tioned that they would sew either on string or tape.
There was also a back sewing machine, and knocking
down and nipping machines. There were women at
work in this room “guarding,” and one old lady, who
was doing her work with excellent precision, told us
that she had been at the work for half a century.

Mr. Bell then initiated us into the mysteries of caout-
chouc or india-rubber work. “We use it as extensively
as anyone in the trade,” he said, “and find it invaluable
for large atlases and books of plates.” Having
explained how the solution of india-rubber was placed
on the edges and then affixed to the specially made
cloth, the proprietor permitted us to test some of the
work done, with a result that satisfied us that the
ordinary overcasting could not compare with this
system. Several men were engaged upon some large
folios that were being placed in leather, and very
handsomely finished, but Mr. Bell explained that he
made no pretensions in this department, and did not
take in ordinary leather work. Upon coming a floor
lower, quite a bevy of attractive young ladies were
discovered busy at work laying on the gold ready for
the blockers. Floating a small piece of gold leaf in
the air, Mr. Bell asked us to guess its thickness? We
gave it up and then learned that it was the 360
thousandth part of an inch.

We now found ourselves in the basement, and here
all was alive with work. Guillotines, clamping
machines, and blocking presses of all descriptions
were in full swing. A trimming machine was working
with a pleasing noiseless action in an out-of-the-way
corner. It left the edges practically uncut, the knife
cutting with a saw-like movement upon a table that
rose and fell. Fourteen presses were all in use upon
an extensive variety of work and thirteen hand blocking
machines with four of Gough’s steam blockers were
in full work. The dexterity of the cloth-cutters is
extraordinary, and would utterly astonish an outsider.
Passing from the basement we espied the fine sixteen-
horse power engine that provides the machinery on
the whole four floors with the necessary driving power.
It was some relief to get into the calmer atmosphere
of the counting house, were we were able to have
five minutes chat with our good old friend, Mr.
McInnes. A refreshing cup of tea greeted our return
to the proprietor’s sanctum, and here we sat for a
while listening interestedly to that ever-busy worker,
Mr. Colley, who next to Mr. Bell, is the soul of Temple
Works. He was able to inform us upon many matters
concerning the state of the trade, expressing his entire
satisfaction with the amount of work the house was
doing at this almost dead season of the year.

As we rose to leave, Mr. Colley asked us to remem-
ber that Temple Works paid full wages and
thoroughly believed in the Trades Union.

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Bookmaking—Past and Present.

There are certain people who are wont to give vent to exaggerated
expressions of admiration for all the productions of a past age,
not infrequently accompanied by a disposition to belittle the work
of the present day when compared with the more remote.
This is especially true of the results of the printer’s and book-
binder’s art. We hear of and read articles extolling the superiority
of the make of books which date from the period when the
invention of printing had just been made known to the world.

From the glowing phrases one
would receive the impression that the cutting of
letters, the manufacture of paper, the perfection of
ink and clearness of printing had been all at once
attained at the birth of the new art, and that it had
been rather retrograding than advancing since that
day. It is perfectly natural and admissible to both
feel and express admiration for the fine qualities
possessed by the early specimens of art, as it is
equally true that he must be a person devoid of
appreciation who can without enthusiasm examine
the beautiful illuminated manuscripts which, although
wrought by hand 500 years ago, preserve their gold
and colours to this day with undimmed brightness.
But that is no reason for attempting to deny the
immeasurable advance in the progress of humanity
which was made by the advent of the printing press.

Just as the very art of printing came at a time
when the age was ripe for it, which is true of other
great discoveries, so other improvements have been
added from time to time as the reading world has
been educated up to a demand for a greater number
of publications, characterized by points of superiority
of make over those which have preceded. Not a
week passes without there being chronicled a claim
of more or less importance for some new and useful
device which appertains to the art of bookmaking
in one of its numerous branches. Necessity being the
mother of invention, as the old saying runs, in these
days of a demand for an extensive and cheap pro-
duction of books the producer is compelled to meet
the demand for cheap and artistic work by the use of
new and improved machinery. To save labour is to
save money, and the prudent man who hopes to meet
his competing rivals must avail himself of every
means which tends to lessen the cost of production.
Our cheap bound books of the day are simple marvels,
and one can hardly refrain from expressing surprise
that any profit can be obtained after the paper maker,
the printer and the binder have performed each his
share of the whole work. That there is a profit is
unquestionable, but to the inexperienced it would seem
as if the elaborately rich covers of some of our gift
and holiday books were alone worth the price which
is asked for the volume.