Stationery Forwarding.

Mr. Alfred Bean deals with the processes of account-book binding in the columns of a contemporary. After describing the necessary tools, etc., he says:

I will now proceed with the work itself. You have the paper, ruled or otherwise, in readiness. It should be double the size only of the leaf required, writing paper not permitting its folds to be crossed by others without serious protest, in the form of an ugly wrinkle. The paper then, cut to proper size, should be placed in front of you on the table, the head of the sheets being nearest you. Take up five of these sheets, and, after knocking the edges quite straight on the table, bring the right-hand edge over and place it perfectly even with that to the left; then, whilst holding it in place with the left hand, run the folder sharply down the bend. Repeat this throughout the whole number of sheets, using some discretion, however, when nearing the finish, in order to cause an even division of the sheets into sections. For instance, supposing you have arrived within twelve sheets of the last, then, instead of continuing to fold in fives, thus causing a very diminutive section at the end of the book, divide the twelve into three equal parts, making them into sections of four sheets each. If you purpose having an index inserted in the front of the book, the requisite paper (usually ruled feints only), should be folded separately from the other sheets, or you will find, on opening the book, that the index will be divided by leaves belonging properly to the body of the book. If it is intended to be what is technically called a “one letter index,” that is, one furnished with a leaf for each letter of the alphabet, two sections of five, as in the book proper, and one containing four sheets, will be required, thus making, when folded, an index of twenty-eight leaves; the two additional leaves being used in connecting it to the book and end-papers on either side. A greater or less ratio of leaves to letters I will leave to your own arithmetical powers.

You must now place these sections of five, or less, perfectly straight, with the folds towards you, and near the edge of the table. Hold them in place with the left hand, the thumb of which must upraise the folds of all but the lowermost division; then take in your right hand the folding stick, and rub down, with the heaviest pressure possible, this bottom fold. After this section is thoroughly flattened, the next one above must be released and the folder be made to bear on the two, the same process being continued until the whole number are under the folder. You must then cut a couple of strips of calico the length of the book and an inch wide, and paste them around the folds of the first and last sections. A quarter of the width only should be allowed to lay on the side of the section intended to be placed towards the interior of the book, the greater width being put outside. A similar strip, three-eighths of an inch wide, should also be pasted down the centre of each of these outside sections.

When the calico is very nearly dry, the book must be placed in the standing-press, or between suitable boards in the laying-press, using a pair of smooth millboards to separate the book from the wood. If the book is a very thick one, it should be divided in two or more parts by smooth millboards, the back of one division being placed over the front edge of its companion. During the ledger’s stay in the press, which should continue for a few hours, the end-papers and boards must be prepared for use.

For the former, take the two sheets which I told you, in a former article, to leave
unruled; also, a couple of waste or spoiled sheets, and fold each of the four singly. Then cut two strips of cloth the length of the book, and 1½ inches wide, and glue each to the folds of a spoiled and clean sheet placed alongside each other. The proper order of doing this, after placing the glued strip in front of you, is to first lay the crease of the dirty sheet to the long centre of the strip, then that of the unruled sheet at about three-sixteenths of an inch from it. Now turn this combination over, and run the thin edge of the folder over the centre of the cloth along the crease of the first sheet deposited. Four pieces of marble paper must now be cut to the size of the half sheet, minus the width of the cloth, and be affixed, with thin paste, to the sides of the end-papers already garnished with the cloth, the verge of which the marble must cover. To complete the ends, they should be folded at the joint where creased by the folder, the decorated portion being placed inside.

The board used on an account-book is necessarily, as you will subsequently observe, made up of a combination of a heavy one and a lighter one at least, so that in getting them out you must not forget to allow for this. As a guide in choosing the boards, I may say that a foolscap two inches thick will require a coalition of Nos. 1 and 6, and from this you may, I think, calculate for any other size or thickness, adding, perhaps, the thickness of a No. 1 board for each increasing half inch in the book; a larger size will, of course, require a correspondingly heavier board. In pasting them together, they should be secured across half the width only, if two boards merely are used; if another one is added, it should be pasted all over on the heavier of the half-united two. The portion unpasted is afterwards secured over an appendage to the book, as will further appear, to ensure greater strength.

The ledger may now be removed from the press for sewing, its place being taken by the boards, in which position they should be kept until required by the book.

For the purpose of the sewing, a frame, though certainly very useful, is not in stationery binding absolutely necessary, as, instead of string being used for the connection of the sections, the somewhat stiffer vellum or webbing forms the foundation. The webbing should be cut into lengths about three inches longer than the thickness of the book; the vellum into slips the same length, and one inch wide. Three or four slips of either will be sufficient for a moderate-sized book, if placed at even distances along the length.

The proper position for sewing is to sit with the left side to the table, on which the unsewn book has been placed, with room in front for its gradual resuscitation there. In bringing this about, take first one of the end-papers, place it clean side uppermost, with the fold to the edge of the table, and push the threaded needle through the joint at about an inch from the near end, leaving out two or three inches of thread. The needle must then be brought out against the position of the first slip, around which it must be passed, to be then reinserted through the cloth. It must then be taken back through its former exit, and also round the slip and into the interior of the end-paper again. This must be repeated at each slip, after circling the furthest of which the needle may be withdrawn at one inch from the further end of the leaves. Now take up one of the sections of paper, and, after placing it even with the end-paper, sew in the same manner—inserting the needle immediately over its last exit, without cutting the thread—as described for the outside leaves, omitting, however, the circling of the slips, though before reinserting the needle at each of these it should be passed around the
underlying thread. When brought out at the near end of the section, the thread should be fastened securely to the projecting end immediately over which the needle should appear. The remaining sections are then sewn on similarly to the first, with the exception of the twisting of the outlying thread at the slips. The thread, however, when brought out at the end of each section, must always be fastened to the loop connecting the two divisions immediately beneath. In sewing on the remaining end-paper, the operation of circling the slip must be again performed, combined with the twisting of the thread. I should mention, also, that each section must be well pressed down whilst being sewn; and that the thread, too, be pulled as tight as it is possible to do, without throwing the book out of shape.

The book, after sewing, must be beaten at the back and head on a level table until perfectly straight at both places, when it will be ready to receive a coat of hot glue, which must be well brushed into all crevices between the sections, any neglected portion causing an ugly gap to appear, when the book is opened, on its completion. In mentioning glue, may I remind you that no more should be melted than is likely to be required at the time, as its power of adhesion greatly deteriorates with each reheating.

After the “gluing-up,” and whilst the back is getting dry, you may prepare for, perhaps, the most trying operation to a beginner (if unable to secure a machine)—I mean the cutting. I must admit, however, that the greater portion of trouble occasioned in the practice of this is caused by the use of a blunt plough-knife. Be advised, then, and do not allow the knife to enter the plough until you are satisfied that the metal holds as keen an edge as it will take, when you may be assured that fully half the difficulty found in cutting will be removed.

When the glued back of the book is nicely set, you may mark on one of the outside leaves the amount necessary to be taken off, denoting the same distance also on one of the cutting boards, measuring from the broadest edge. This edge must then be placed even with the fore-edge of the volume on the unmarked side. Another board must then have its same edge placed to the marks on the book, which, with its embracing boards, must now be placed in the press, the edge of the unmarked board and the marks on the other being even with the top of the press, and the latter board being on the grooved side. Screw up as tightly as possible, then set the plough with the point of the knife just touching the protruding paper, the opposite side of the instrument being deposited in the groove formed on the press for its reception. Now draw the plough steadily backwards and forwards along the press, taking hold of the ends of the screw for the purpose. This screw, at each stroke of the plough, should be very slightly turned, in order that the knife may make a deeper cut; too much turn, however, should not be given, or the resulting edge may perhaps furnish you with one explanation, at any rate, of the identity of names claimed by two seemingly utterly remote instruments, viz., the agricultural and the bookbinder’s plough.

The fore-edge being cut, must be furnished with a covering of some kind as a protection from, or rather, perhaps, a concealer of, dust. The simplest method of doing this is to sprinkle on it a red or blue dye in fine showers, from a brush furnished with stiff bristles, which, being knocked against a stick or ruler, give forth the contained colour.