



A
French
Binder
of the
Seventeenth
Century.

Florimond Badiet.

ONE of the finest books and most remarkable for its binding in the National Library, Paris, is a folio *De Imitatione Christi* (Paris, *Imprimerie Royale*, 1640), bound by an artist who has placed his name on the inner lining (*double*) of the cover, FLORIMOND BADIET FECIT. INV. Except that he was made one of the booksellers to the king, Louis Quatorze, in 1645, we know little of this excellent craftsman. Monsieur Léon Gruel thinks that Badiet may be the real name of the worthy, well known under the sobriquet of *Le Gascon*, and, as a proof, urges the great resemblance between this signed work of Badiet's, and the designs usually attributed to the Gascon. And, doubtless, there is a very similar plan of dividing the side of the book into various differently-shaped panels—filling in the spaces with small ornaments *aux petits fers*, and the extreme use of the stippled dots in brilliant gold (*au pointillé*), both of which characteristics are found in the beautiful works usually called *Le Gascon's*; but this similarity may possibly have been only the copying of a style then fashionable in Paris. Unfortunately we too well know how prevalent the hateful practice of copying still is.

Le Gascon is but a legendary character: nothing whatever is known of him personally. His most celebrated work, the binding of *La Guirlande de Julie*, presented to Mademoiselle de Rambouillet, is historical; but in none of the writings of the time, and they were numerous, is it distinctly attributed to him by name. If we could but discover whether Florimond Badiet was born in Gascony or not, this would greatly help us to settle the question.

In the original work, which is bound in deep-red morocco, the centre star is an inlay of olive-coloured leather, the oval is of bright orange; the eight-leaved panels on either side are olive with a darker centre; the small ovals (one above, one beneath) are also olive, surrounded with orange; the four-sided irregularly-shaped panels at their sides are marbled, with centres of citron; other panels are very similarly treated. The book is in perfect preservation, and nearly as bright as when it left Badiet's workshop. When it is remembered that the plate is a reduction, one fourth the size of the original, we can imagine the amount of labour and the many days and hours that its author expended upon it. In no collection of bindings can we find its equal for elaborate and exquisite workmanship.

