

A German View of English Bookbinding.

It is not often we get a view of "ourselves as others see us," but when we do it is worth taking note of, for reflection and self-examination. In the *Illustrirte Zeitung für Buchbinderei* for May 4th we find the following remarks "About English Bookbinding":—

"We have often drawn comparisons between English, French, and German bookbindings, but they have been mainly about the decorative part; the details of the work and how it is done have been only slightly touched upon, so it may be interesting if we go into the subject a little deeper and take notice of how English bookbinding is done. The simplest volumes are put together with wire on bands, glued up, and lined with a kind of gauze and tough paper, the gauze extending on to the sides. The cover is generally of buckram, a kind of linen fabric. The whole of the bookbinder's work is very heavy from the simplest manipulation. While we in Berlin have a Mansfeld folding machine which turns out from 8,000 to 10,000 octavo sheets per hour, the English folding machines hardly turn out three hundred sheets per hour. But with all their clumsy work, it is solid.

"Nothing less than a cloth binding is known, but books are generally in half bindings of sheep leather, goat, russia, calf, and up to the finest morocco as may be required. These books are sewn, the papers are pasted on, and a good opening is secured by drawing the slips through the boards; the back is covered with gauze and paper.

"The solidity of the work is brought about by the sub-division of labour; even in the smallest houses the workmen have only one kind of work to do, which brings them to a pitch of perfection in the one thing, but apart from that work they know very little, and can very seldom do anything that may be called art. There are forwarders, coverers, and finishers.

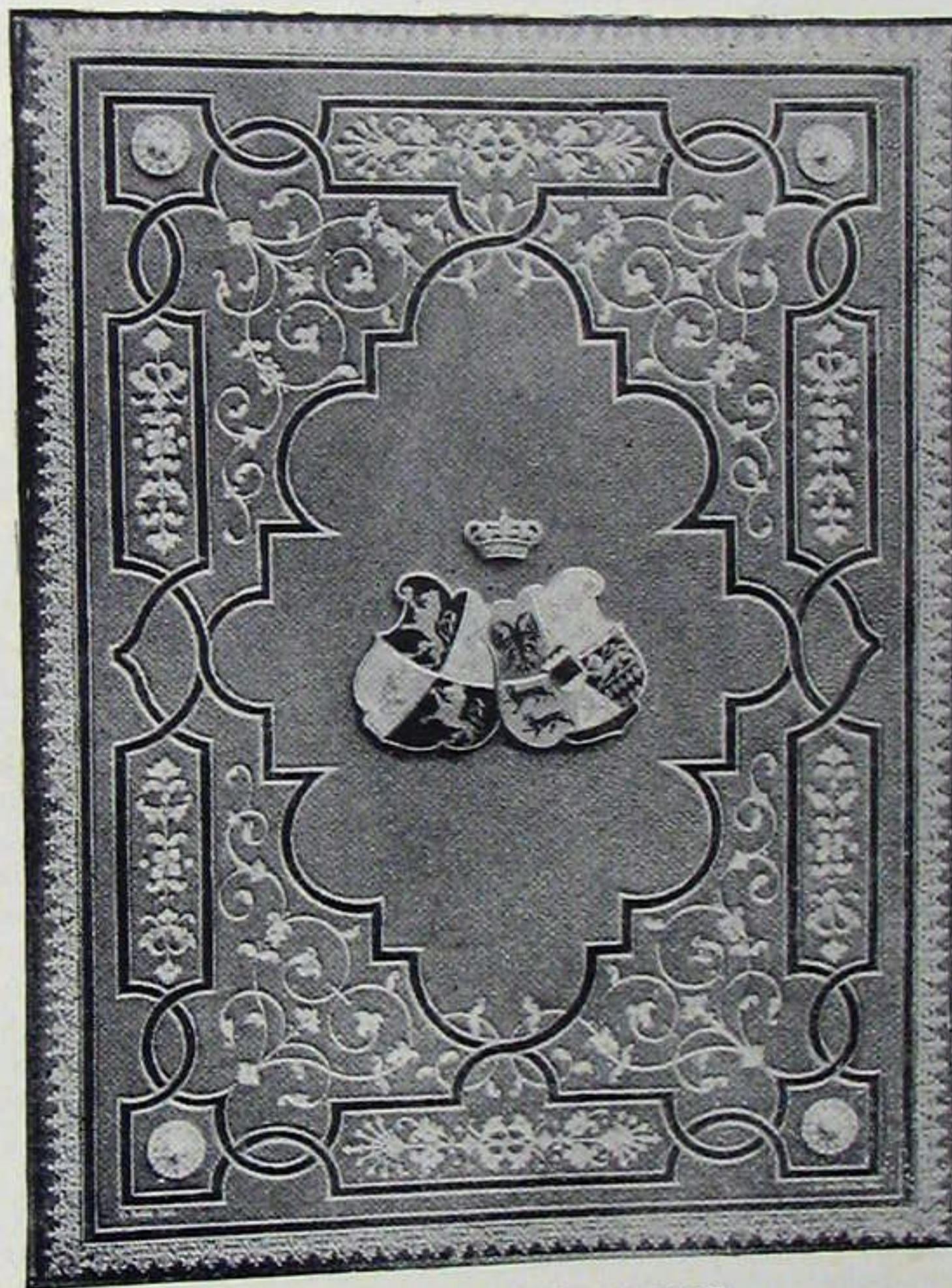
"From this we see that the English book is remarkable for its durability, but of decorative style and taste there is a complete absence. Clumsy are the stamps and poor are the designs in a style not worthy of mention, but the national pride of the Englishman keeps him from studying the work of other nations, either to benefit by it or even to copy it, except a few old historic and well-known originals: they have a chance of being copied, but even in the styles of Roger Payne or Harley they use massive ornaments that require very cleverly putting together to make a tasteful ensemble.

"How different are the old Italian and French products, full of grace and ease! And while we have learned from other nations, and can to-day produce some beautiful work, the English bookbinders in that

particular direction have enclosed themselves as with a Chinese wall. It is, of course, to be understood that there are exceptions, but they are very thinly sprinkled about, and it is wonderful that a trade journal of such importance as *THE BRITISH BOOKMAKER* has been able to produce so little influence for art development in English art bookbinding. Of the decoration of English bindings we shall speak another time."

Now, gentlemen of the trade, what have you to say to this?

THE Daily Chronicle gives the following:—"It is the publisher's experience that 2/- books of light reading won't sell unless they have an attractive outside cover.



A MODERN GERMAN GROLIERESQUE.

At all events, they don't sell by any means so well. A merely artistic cover won't do; there must be something bizarre and catchy. A pipe, smoking like the funnel of an Atlantic steamer, set into Mark Twain's face, is bound to attract. Said a well-known publisher yesterday: "Your 2/- public generally buys by the eye, especially at bookstalls." This gives binders small encouragement to cultivate artistic tastes! If it becomes generally known that a something set into somebody's face is bound to attract, we shall soon have a series of faces strikingly ornamented with more novel articles than pipes.