

Leipzig as a Home of Wholesale Bookbinding.

WHOLESALE binding is comparatively new in Germany, being scarcely thirty years old. The first stimulus to its cultivation came not so much from the publishers, but from the so-called "Baarsortimenter," wholesale booksellers to the trade who keep a large stock of the most marketable books on sale for cash at prices scarcely exceeding those charged by the publishers. These commission houses, chief among them F. Volkmar, L. Staackman and K. F. Koehler, perceived that there was a demand for popular books in cheap but elegant bindings, and they accordingly bound at their own risk in tasteful bindings series of popular books issued by the publishers in wrappers. The speculation was successful. The pretty books found a rapid sale, and a new industry, wholesale binding, arose.

The home of the new industry was naturally Leipzig, the centre of the German book-trade, and as the industry developed, it not only conquered all Germany but many other countries. The excellence of the work done depends on the price paid, and reckless competition threatened at one time to ruin the new trade by undertaking work at figures which did not permit sound, much less artistic, work. Lately, however, the complaints of over-competition and bad work have decreased, the natural artistic taste and solidity of the German people have made themselves felt, and, as a consequence, the style and technical execution of the bindings has greatly improved.

A house which may be said to have grown up with the new industry, is that of the court bookbinder, Gustav Fritzsche, founded on a very small scale in 1864. The proprietor had, in fact, only one assistant; but Fritzsche held fast to the traditions of the great binders, that a binding has not only the duty of protecting the book, but also of pleasing the educated eye by its elegance, however little of ornament may be lavished upon it. Maintenance of these principles soon secured him recognition. The business grew, and when Fritzsche proceeded to apply the same principles to the cheap bindings executed for wholesale houses, his success was assured. The little bindery with one "hand" is now an imposing five-story building in which, during the busy time, some two hundred persons are employed. Here are turned out bindings of all kinds, from cheap board-work at 30s. per 1000, up to bindings *de luxe* valued at £1000. The latter, of course, only kings can indulge in, and even they confine such expenditure to presents on occasions like the Jubilee of a Pope. The business of Gustav Fritzsche does not stand alone. Foreign libraries and bookbuyers know that for a reasonable price Leipzig binderies can turn out neat and solid half-bindings that will stand a good deal of wear and tear. But the main stay of all is the cheap wholesale binding to which we have chiefly devoted this article.

The Coloured Plate.

OPPOSITE this page we present a tinted plate which is a photographic reproduction of a magnificent specimen of Monnier's binding. It is in citron morocco ornamented with variegated inlaid leathers, representing Chinese temples, with human figures, dromedary, dragon, birds, flowers, &c., of exquisite workmanship, the inside *double* with olive morocco, covered with gold tooling, *à petits fers*, gold fly-leaves, painted gilt edges.

It was lot 855 at the Beckford Sale, Part I., June 30, 1882. It was sold for £356 by Messrs. Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge.

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THE next business to be founded was, in chronological sequence, that of Moritz Göhre, the master of the Bookbinders' Guild. Immediately afterwards followed Gustav Fritzsche, whose establishment we have already mentioned. Moritz Göhre celebrated last year the twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of his firm, and has lately added a department for the manufacture of albums. The specialty of his house is bindings of a better quality, in the production of which some 60 persons find permanent employment under his roof. Göhre holds a high place as a manufacturer of portfolios, addresses, albums in leather, mosaic work and hand gilding for festival occasions. He is also well-known for bindings in calf and in vellum after Italian patterns. In this latter branch Göhre's house stands alone in Leipzig. His "school for hand and machine gilding" enjoys a deservedly high reputation.

Twenty years ago what is now H. Fikentscher's Steam Bookbindery was established in quite a small way. To-day it has a staff of 90 hands with 60 machines, and produces annually some 300,000 bindings, a fact which speaks volumes for Fikentscher's energy and correct appreciation of the wants of the trade. Fikentscher produces as well plain and extra half bindings, atlases, hymn-books, prayer-books, pamphlet bindings, etc.

The decade which followed after the termination of the war with France was extremely favourable to the development of wholesale bookbinding in Leipzig. A whole series of new workshops arose, which were destined to develop, under the direction of skilled masters, into establishments of considerable importance.

F. A. Barthel's business was founded on a modest scale in 1872, and now ranks among the best and most important of German binderies. The new workshops into which he has just moved are fitted up with all the resources of modern science. During the season, some 200 men are employed in the production of wholesale bindings of all imaginable kinds, as well as of portfolios, cases, and higher class bindings. One gets some idea of the magnitude of Barthel's establishment when one learns that he keeps 11 wire-stitching machines in constant operation to stitch some 160,000 sheets daily: 21 gilding presses, 8 paper cutters, and some 30 other machines complete the catalogue of his outfit. The motive power is supplied by a 30 h.-p. engine, and a 25 h.-p. engine drives the dynamo for the three arc lamps and 350 incandescent lamps which furnish the requisite light. An accumulator provides for further 70 incandescent lamps. The heating surface of the two boilers exceeds 140 square metres.

Paul Schambach's bindery was established almost simultaneously with Barthel's. Schambach's specialty, in addition to the usual work for the publishing trade, is the manufacture of albums of all classes: his Autograph and Scrap-books are found in almost every country on the face of the earth. The present chiefs of the house, Messrs. Moritz Gregel and Wilhelm Baessler, have, by solid and tasteful work, extended the business of their establishment to such a degree that, at the present time, about one million and a half of bound books and albums annually leave their shops. Their staff consists of 220 to 250 hands, with 80 machines, which are driven by two powerful boilers and a 40 h.-p. engine. The factory is erected on ground belonging to the firm, and covers more than 2400 square yards. It is lighted by 5 arc and 266 incandescent lamps.

[To be continued.]

