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Our Portrait Gallery.

BLUNSON & CO., LONDON.

HENRY JAMES BLUNSON, whose portrait we have pleasure in presenting to our readers, was born in Cambridge on the 21st of August, 1843. In 1856 he came to London with his stepfather, who became foreman to Mr. Ramage, and who procured for him a situation at the trade, apprenticing him to the trustees of the late John Wright, of Noel-street, Soho, in whose establishment the rudiments and principles of sound and enduring binding were then taught, and the young learner was not slow in acquiring a practical knowledge and skill in his work. Among his fellow apprentices in those years were Mr. John Ramage, the late Mr. Samuel Hogg, and the late Mr. Joseph Starie, for the latter of whom Mr. Blunson expresses the kindest memories of good fellowship.

How much poor Starie won the respect of all who knew him throughout his life may be judged from one reminiscence of Mr. Blunson's. When Mr. Starie came out of his time, in 1861, his fellow apprentices subscribed for a dinner, to which their friend "Joe" was invited to his great astonishment, being altogether against the customs of the trade. This dinner took place at Gravesend on the same day as the annual shop dinner, and several of the journeymen chose to attend the dinner in honour of Starie rather than their own gathering, and a most enjoyable day was passed, one that Mr. Blunson recalls as "one of the happiest days of his life."

In due time the subject of our sketch finished his apprenticeship, when he joined the Society of Day-working Bookbinders, and worked at the trade gaining experience as a journeyman, until he became foreman. In that position he remained for seventeen years, until the rather melancholy termination of that firm's history and the break up of the business known as Hammond's, when he started in business for

himself in partnership with Mr. C. Fox, a stationer, from whom he derives great assistance, more especially upon the question of the various makes of paper, a subject with which the trade generally is but little acquainted, but which in old work it is necessary to understand.

Their first workshop was in Glasshouse-street, but after eighteen months of fair progress a removal was made to Carnaby-street, where the firm began to make for itself a name for large work, and more room being

required than was at their disposal, after about two years there, they removed to the present premises, in the same neighbourhood, No. 3 Bridle-lane, Golden-square, W.

A walk through the three floors occupied soon convinced us of the character of the work Mr. Blunson turns out. Huge folios of plates: orchids, works of fine art, photographs, plans, Mexican and Egyptian antiquities, and other similar works guarded throughout and handsomely bound in full morocco were there, with others in various stages of preparation; and this work is studied as a speciality, though there is plenty of the ordinary class found in other shops, including books requiring print inlaying, washing and mending, repairing and renovating, etc., and the binding of fine editions in fine styles. The finishing shop contains a very large assortment of tools

of almost every design, which Mr. Blunson boasts "will match every style ever done," and he seems fully justified in saying so, for besides those he has specially ordered he bought the entire collection owned by Wright and Hammond. Two sets in the collection are of a style we have never seen in any other shop: Egyptian and Runic emblems used for such special works as they fitly ornament, as will be seen by two panels given herewith.

Mr. Blunson is a believer in the old methods of hand work, and apparently allows his people a proper time for its execution; his policy is good work and a fair



HENRY JAMES BLUNSON.

price for it. The savoury smells of the old-time binders' workshops, that were wafted around as we passed through, warned us that it was near dinner

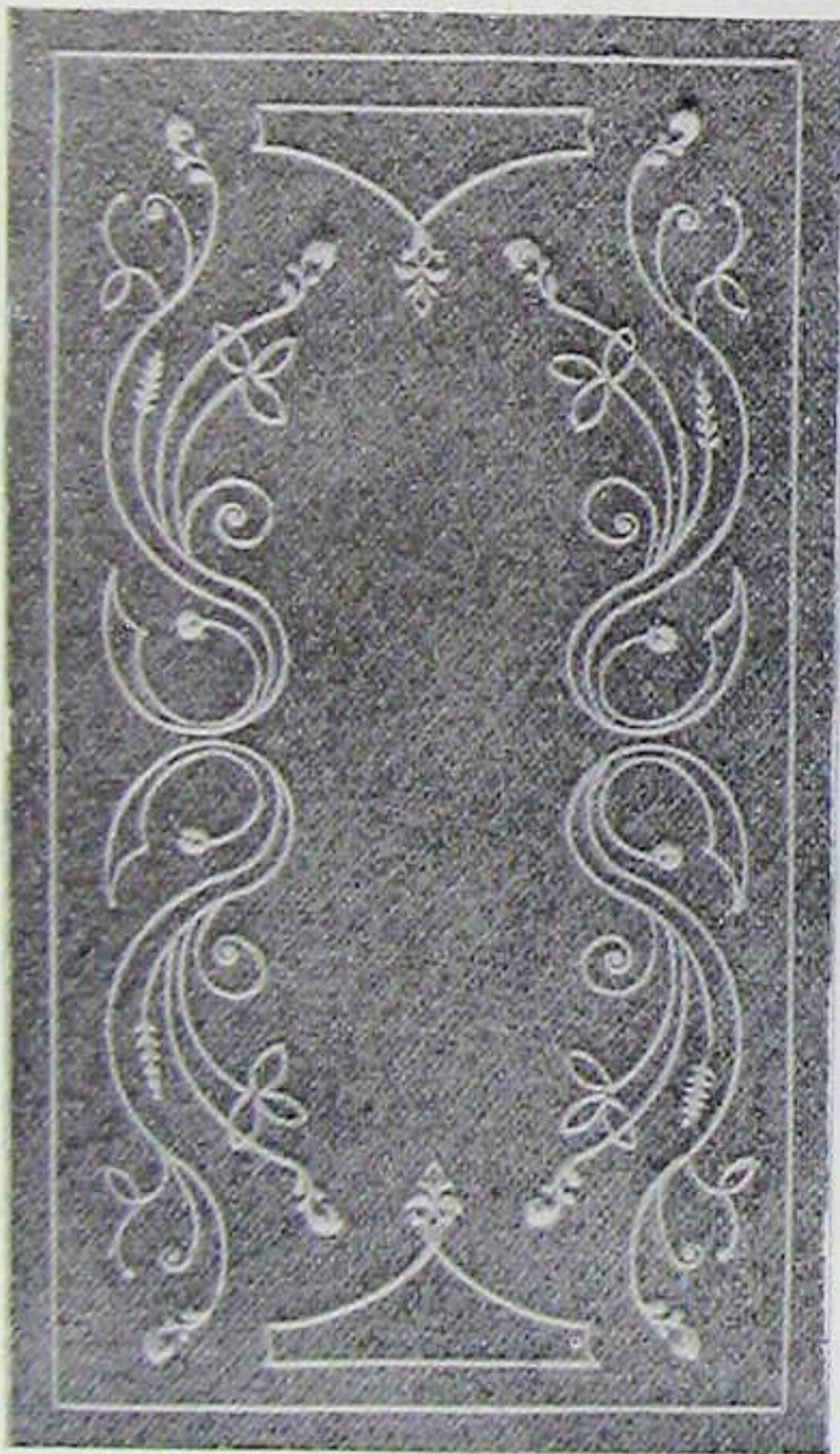


time, and drew from our guide the remark, "You see we allow our men to look after their dinners here"; a privilege which we fear has almost died out.

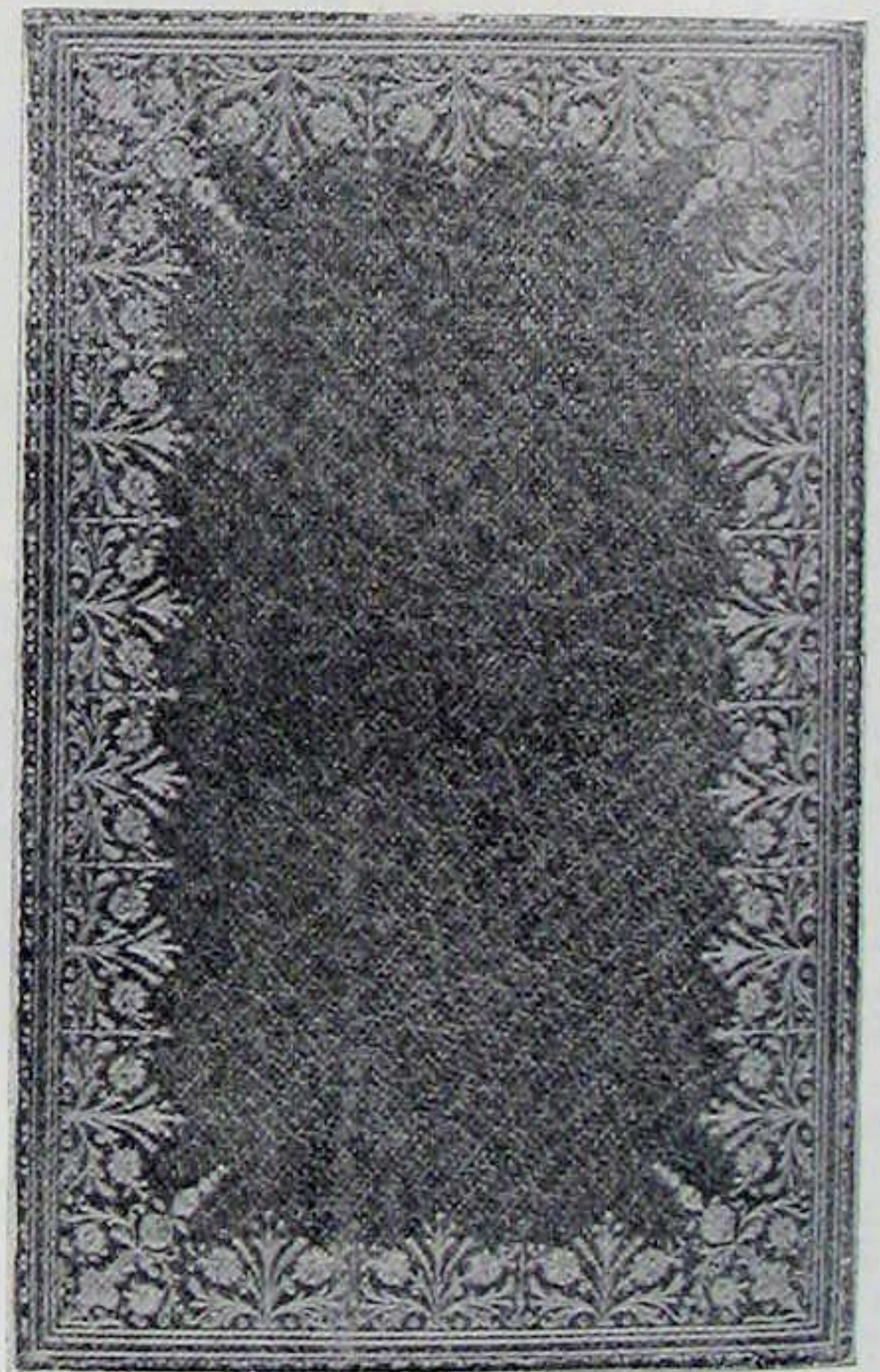
it was against his practice. He wished that employers could be brought to a common agreement to put a stop to it altogether, as he feels that it would do more to steady trade than anything else, and that there is no advantage in being over-driven for a few months and half idle for the rest of the year; a sentiment we need scarcely say we heartily endorse. Hurried work is seldom good work, and the results are painfully apparent after a rush is over, as almost every publisher might demonstrate.

It is pleasant to hear these feelings expressed, because they come rarely from our overburdened and worried men of business, who generally feel themselves helpless in the matter, if they trouble to think

at all, instead of making a firm stand and urging others to do the same against such an obvious evil. That Mr. Blunson may reap a rich reward for such



Commenting upon the general condition of the trade and Mr. Blunson's well-filled shop, we suggested the possibility of having to go on overtime with the usual end-of-the-year rush. "Oh no," said he, "I don't believe in overtime; I think it a most pernicious system." He admitted that occasionally something urgently wanted might necessitate such a course, but



wise considerations in the conduct of his business, as well as prove the soundness of his work, is our sincere hope; at least his own enjoyment of life after working hours will be sweeter, and his health the better for it.

