

ON THE MAKING OF BLANK-BOOKS.

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BOOKMAKING, which, to-day, has reached almost the ideal of perfection, had its beginning in the crude efforts of the early writers to fasten together the sheets of bark, metal or parchment, upon which they had cut or written their records. The modern word "book" is derived from the old Saxon word "boc" or "beech," indicating that the early writing was inscribed on boards or bark cut from beech trees. The binders' work at that time consisted in securing the different pieces with clamps, or hinges, or with cords passed through a hole in the corner of the blocks. During the middle ages and down to the invention of printing, bookmaking was entirely in the hands of the professional copyists in the different monasteries, whose work consisted in transcribing and ornamenting old Latin manuscripts for the use of the monks or for wealthy laymen ambitious of collecting a library. The duty of the binder was to sew together the different pieces or rawhide bands, and encase them in wooden boards with an outer covering of leather or velvet. The covering was then decorated with a fanciful design burnt into the leather by heated tools, similar in character to those used by modern book-finishers.

The result of the introduction of printing was a vast increase in the production of books, and many improvements have been made in the art of bookmaking since that time. These, however, have been mainly in greater perfection of workmanship and in the use of finer and better materials, for books to-day are bound substantially as they were in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

LETTERPRESS AND BLANK-BOOK BINDING.

The art of bookbinding is now divided into two distinct branches, letterpress binding and blank-book binding. Speaking generally, all books consisting of reading matter are classed as letterpress books, and all others, whether plain, ruled, or printed, are called blank-books. The work of the letterpress and the blank-book binder is totally different, and few workmen have a thorough knowledge of both branches. The development of large binderies, or book-making factories, has caused workmen to become specialists in different departments of the trade, rather than bookbinders in the true sense of the word. The net result has been greater perfection of workmanship, for the entire thought and attention of each workman is given to his own branch whether as ruler, sewer, marker, cutter, forwarder or finisher.

PAPER.

The paper which enters into the making of blank-books is as varied as the materials with which they are bound. For the smaller and cheaper books paper is made in a score of qualities and as many weights; but foolscap, small post, large post, and double foolscap, either in folio or folded, are the sizes mainly employed. For the larger books the finest of linen ledger and hand-made papers only are used. These papers are made of strong, fibrous materials, capable of withstanding the wear and tear to which such books are subjected. The surface

is specially suited to bear erasures, and they are not liable to become discolored or brittle with exposure to light or heat. The sizes and weights of the book papers in general use in this country are:

	Size.	Lb. to Ream.
Foolscap.....	14 x 17	16
Demy.....	16 x 21	26
Medium.....	18 x 23	36
Royal.....	19 x 24	44
Super Royal.....	20 x 28	54
Imperial.....	23 x 31	72

If larger books are required, certain of these papers may be had in double sizes, as double foolscap, double demy, double medium, and for smaller ones the papers may be cut or folded in any way desired.

THE MAKING OF BLANK-BOOKS.

A blank-book, in the course of manufacture, passes into many hands. Except for ruling and trimming, machinery has no part in its making. It is entirely a hand-made article. Skill, knowledge and judgment are the essential qualifications in a good bookbinder. He alone is responsible for the strength and stability, the shape and set of the book. He selects the proper boards and the most suitable piece of leather for each individual book. He must know when to act and how. The shape of the back, the setting of the glue, the stretching of the leather, are matters of the utmost importance, and no two books even of the same size, but of different thickness, are bound exactly alike.

RULING.

The work of the ruler is to trace upon the plain paper the pattern of faint lines and columns which adapt the book to the purpose for which it is intended. Each part of the pattern is ruled separately, first the head line and faint lines, and afterwards the vertical columns. The pens, arranged to conform with the pattern required, are clamped in a beam across the ruling machine and the paper is carried under them by means of a sheet of cloth revolving upon rollers. The color is fed by means of ink-saturated flannel wrapped around the shanks of the pens. By arranging that certain of the pens are fed from flannel carrying one color and others from another, several colors may be ruled simultaneously. In ruling the lines which start from the headline, or from any place other than the edge of the paper, an automatic device called a "gate" is attached to the machine, which allows the paper to feed only at a certain speed, and which causes the pens to be lifted and dropped where required as the paper passes through.

FOLDING AND SEWING.

After the paper has been ruled, it is carefully examined, and all soiled or broken sheets either cleaned or removed. It is then sent to be printed, if a heading is required; otherwise, it is folded in sections of four or five sheets, according to the thickness and strength of the paper, and placed between boards, in a press, to give the book greater solidity. At one time, every