

bindings upon which every detail of the decoration is impressed with the most scrupulous care, and each impression of the finisher's tool is as a stroke of the artist's brush.

In the early days of bookbinding, the shelves of a library inclined like a reading desk, and books were laid side by side in order that their beauty might be seen. Now, however, with the great increase in the number of books and their arrangement in ranks upon level shelves, the necessity for fine tooling on the sides is not so great, and more attention is given to the backs. This, also, has resulted in the half-bound book, in which the back and corners only are of leather and the sides of cloth or paper—a style of binding that has come into very general use for a great many kinds of books. The book-lover, however, in the binding of his choice volumes—the tall copies with liberal margins—insists upon the full suit, contending that such economy—for the half-bound book was born of economy—is incompatible with artistic excellence.

In their creamy Oxford vellum,
In their redolent crushed levant,
With their delicate watered linings,
They are jewels of price, I grant.

A detailed description of the various operations of bookbinding will be necessary in order to form an intelligent idea of the work of the binder. The ordinary use of the term binder is a mistaken one. When it is said that a book is "beautifully bound" it is the workmanship of the person who executed the decoration of the cover that is commended, and not that of the one who covered the book with leather. Mr. William Matthews, after describing the different steps by which a book is prepared and covered with leather, said: "I now declare that the book in this condition is bound, and he who has skillfully mastered these various processes, through which a volume has passed, deserves the name of binder; he who is called upon to decorate it, finisher. At present, the custom is the reverse: the finisher or decorator is credited with being the binder, whereas he has done none of the binding." In the language of the trade the one who gives the book its covering—the actual binder—is called the forwarder, and he who afterwards decorates it is the finisher.

In France and Germany most of the books are issued in paper covers, merely stitched, and the owner is expected to rebind in leather those volumes which he considers worthy of preservation. In England and America most of the books are issued in permanent cloth bindings, and only those of exceptional worth are rebound in leather. The first thing to be done, therefore, if the book is already bound, is to remove the cloth or the paper cover, take away the glue on the back and the thread by which it had been sewn, and then very carefully to collate the sheets to see that all the parts are in their proper places. The different parts or sections are then sewn with needle and thread to the bands or cords and handed over to the forwarder to prepare for the covering. The work of the sewer is of great importance, as the strength of the volume largely depends upon the care with which every sheet is caught and every stitch made fast. The forwarder attaches the endpapers, has the edges trimmed and gilded—the top edge at all events; many persons now-a-days preferring to leave the other edges entirely uncut—rounds the back of the book to give it shape, glues and lines the back and attaches the millboard sides by lacing them to the book by means of the bands or cords to which the sheets have been sewn. The headbands, and also

the strips on the back for the raised bands, are now placed in position and the book put away very carefully in a strong press to set in order that the shape given it might be retained. The leather for the covering is then stretched very tightly over all and securely glued; after which the endpapers are made fast to the covers, and the book is again placed in the press before being handed over to the finisher.

The work of the finisher is to devise a design for the sides and back and transfer it to the leather, and any artistic merits a volume may have when completed are due to him almost entirely. In the finishing of a book, the size, the subject, the kind of leather with which it is covered, and its probable use, should all be considered. While the design on the cover need not necessarily be symbolic of the contents, it should at all events be in harmony with it. As Mr. Cobden-Sanderson, the leading bookbinder in England at the present time, puts it: "Beauty is the aim of decoration and not illustration, or the expression of ideas."

Something that one still perceives
Vaguely present in the leaves;
Something from the worker lent,
Something mute, but eloquent.

It is also equally true that if a book is to be well finished care must be taken that it is well bound and that the materials used are of the best quality. A book cheaply bound is not worthy of a good finisher's labor.

The art of the finisher is limited by the tools he uses, and every design must be capable of being transferred to the leather by means of the fillets or straight lines, gouges, which make curved lines, and the various other tools which he may have at his command. A "tool" is a brass implement at the end of which is cut the ornament, or part of an ornament, that is to be transferred to the leather. Every leaf, branch, scroll or design, is made up of one or more tools. The finisher, with a knowledge of his tools in his mind, outlines a plan of decoration, and by a combination of these tools imprints the design. *In the proper use of the tools is the secret of book decoration.*

The process of working an intricate design is very tedious. Mr. William Matthews thus describes it: "First the design is made on paper, then impressed with the tools, through the paper, on the leather, then the paper is removed and the design again gone over with the tools to make the impression sharp and clear; then, after washing, sizing and laying on the gold leaf, the design is gone over for the fourth time before one side of the cover is completed. This having to be repeated on the other side of the volume, and the back also tooled, will afford some idea of the labor in executing the finest hand tooling."

Mr. Cobden-Sanderson, in *The Fortnightly Review*, for August, 1895, after describing the binding and decoration of a volume, says: "The description is easy—how easy!—but the craft is difficult. Gold cannot be persuaded to stick as a friend may be persuaded to stay, it must be made to stick, i.e., all the conditions upon which successful gold tooling depends must, in all cases, be observed, and there is the rub! What in each case—and the circumstances are never quite the same—are the conditions? How define them? A little more or a little less makes so much difference. How dry may the leather be, or how dry must it be? How much glair? How hot must the tools be? What is the moment to begin? Then, how difficult it is correctly to manipulate the tools, to keep them even upon the leather! How difficult, finally, to keep the leather, through-