

**A SHORT HISTORY OF BOOKBINDING AND A  
GLOSSARY OF STYLES AND TERMS USED IN  
BINDING, WITH A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE  
CELEBRATED BINDERS AND PATRONS OF  
BOOKBINDING FROM WHOM  
THE VARIOUS STYLES ARE NAMED,  
DESCRIPTION OF LEATHERS, ETC.**

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A short history of bookbinding and a glossary of styles and terms used in binding, with a brief account of the celebrated binders and patrons of bookbinding from whom the various styles are named, description of leathers, etc. by Joseph William Zaehnsdorf

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**JOSEPH WILLIAM ZAEHNSDORF**

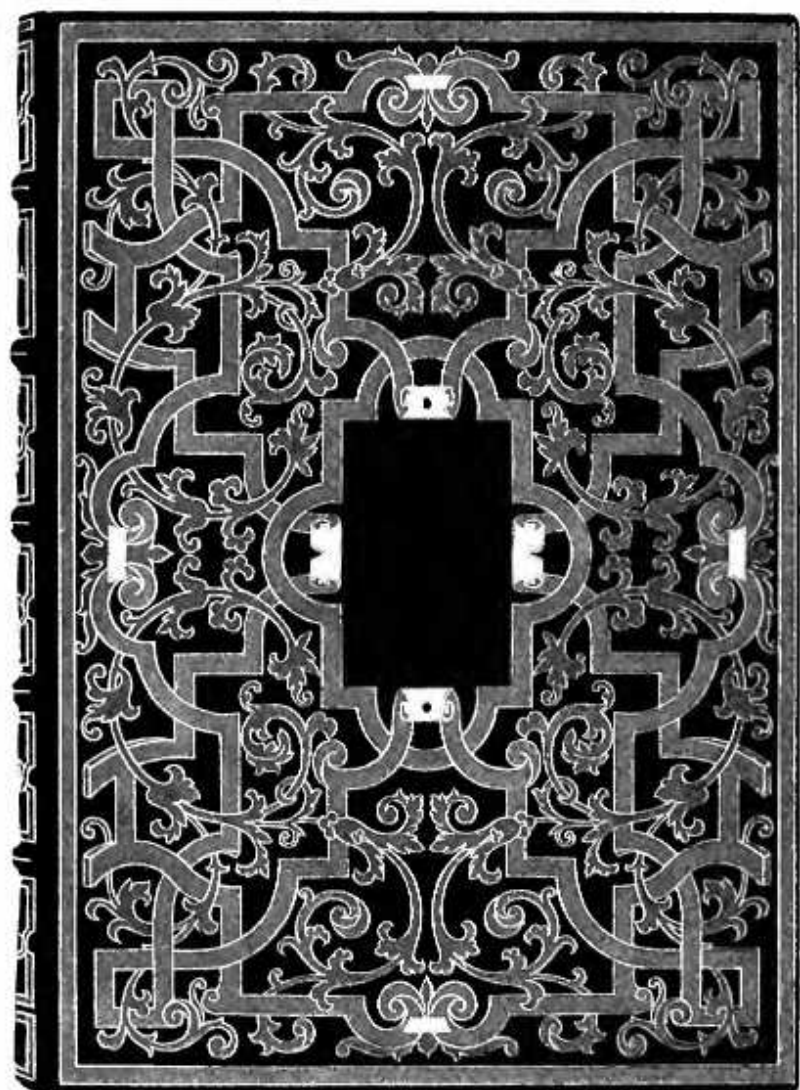
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A Short History of Bookbinding.





ATALA PARIS, 1898, BLUE MOROCCO SUPER EXTRA, INLAID WITH  
ENTWINED RED RIBBONS IN THE EARLY ITALIAN STYLE; RED  
MOROCCO DOUBLÉ TOOLED WITH DENTELLE BORDER.

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Etc.

*Lancaster, 1810, bookbinders, house*

LONDON -

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## A SHORT HISTORY OF BOOKBINDING.

**B**OOKBINDING carries us back to the time when leaden tablets with inscribed hieroglyphics were fastened together with rings, which formed what to us would be the binding of the volumes. We might go even still further back, when tiles of baked clay with cuneiform characters were incased one within the other, so that if the cover of one were broken or otherwise damaged there still remained another, and yet another covering ; by which care history has been handed down from generation to generation. The binding in the former would consist of the rings which bound the leaden tablets together, and in the latter, the simple covering formed the binding which preserved the contents.

We pass on from these, and make another pause, when vellum strips were attached together in one continuous length with a roller at each end. The reader

unrolled the one, and rolled the other as he perused the work. Books, prized either for their rarity, sacred character, or costliness, would be kept in a round box or case, so that the appearance of a library in Ancient Jerusalem would seem as if it were a collection of canisters. The next step was the fastening of separate leaves together, thus making a back, and covering the whole as a protection in a most simple form; the only object being to keep the several leaves in connected sequence. I believe the most ancient form of books formed of separate leaves, will be found in the sacred books of Ceylon, which were formed of palm leaves written on with a metal style, and the binding was a silken string tied through one end so loosely as to admit of each leaf being laid down flat when turned over. When the mode of preserving MS. on animal membrane or vellum in separate leaves came into use, the binding was at first a simple piece of leather wrapped round the book and tied with a thong. These books were not kept on their edges, but were laid flat on shelves, and had small cedar tablets hanging from them upon which their titles were inscribed.

The ordinary books for general use were fastened strongly at the back, with wooden boards for the sides, and simply a piece of leather up the back.

In the sixth century, bookbinding had already taken its place as an "Art," for we have the "Byzantine

coatings," as they are called. They are of metal, gold, silver or copper gilt, and sometimes they are enriched with precious stones. The monks, during this century, took advantage of the immense thickness of the wooden boards and frequently hollowed them out to secrete their relics in the cavities. Bookbinding was then confined entirely to the monks, who were the *litterati* of the period. Then the art was neglected for some centuries, owing to the plunder and pillage that overran Europe, and books were destroyed to get at the jewels that were supposed to be hidden in the different parts of the covering, so that few now remain to show how bookbinding was then accomplished, and to what extent.

We pass on to the middle ages, when samples of binding were brought from the East by the crusaders, and these may well be prized by their owners for their delicacy of finish. The monks, who still held the art of bookbinding in their hands, improved upon these Eastern specimens. Each one devoted himself to a different branch—one planed the oaken boards to a proper size, another stretched and covered with the leather; the work was thus divided into branches, as it is now. The task was one of great difficulty, seeing how rude were the implements then in use.

In many of our Cathedral towns, notably Durham and Winchester, there are to be found examples of