

**THE BINDING OF BOOKS,  
AN ESSAY IN  
THE HISTORY OF  
GOLD-TOOLED BINDINGS**

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The binding of books, an essay in the history of gold-tooled bindings by Herbert P. Horne

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**HERBERT P. HORNE**

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CAESAR.  
GIUNTA, FLORENCE, 1514.

# The Binding of Books

An Essay in the History of  
Gold-Tooled Bindings

By Herbert P. Horne



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TO  
T. J. COBDEN SANDERSON





## Preface

‘LA Reliure est un art tout français.’ Such is the sentence which M. Ernest Thoinan places upon the title-page of his admirable work, *Les Relieurs Français*; and which, in a particular sense, is abundantly true. In France, alone, has bookbinding been continuously practised, and encouraged, as a fine art, since the Revival of Learning; and in that country, alone, does there exist any considerable literature upon its history and methods. In this sense, bookbinding is an art almost peculiar to France: and yet not to France, but to Italy, must be conceded, both the introduction of gold-tooling into Europe, and the origin of the taste, which determined the nature of the designs used upon European tooled bindings, for nearly a century. Indeed, it might be questioned, whether early Italian bindings have yet been surpassed in beauty and decoration, by those of other times or countries: but be this as it may, the literature of the art remains wholly in the hands of the French. The Italians have neither collected nor written anything considerable upon this subject; the Germans, as their fashion is, have been more industrious than discerning: while English works

are, perhaps, numerous enough, but not always very critical, or very conclusive. Some exceptions, however, are to be made in the case of a few scattered essays on particular subjects, and, especially, in regard to Miss Prideaux's excellent *Bibliography of Bookbinding*, London, 1892, which, as she very properly observes in her preface, is the first step towards the methodical study of this subject. But a general history and criticism of the art in Europe still remains to be written: and before this can be done with any completeness, the documents, which relate to English, and especially, to Italian, binders and binding, omitting those of other European countries, must be collected and examined, with the same diligence and judgment, as the documents which relate to the French binders.

In writing the first and last chapters of the present essay, which chiefly treat of the technical methods of bookbinding, I have used a number of authorities. The earliest technical works upon Bookbinding are not easily accessible, and are chiefly known on account of an allusion to them in a later work, entitled: *L'Art du Relieur-doreur de Livres*. This treatise was written by M. Dudin, at the request of the Académie Royale des Sciences to be included in their *Description Générale des Arts et Métiers*, and was published at Paris, in 1772. 'J'avouerais cependant,' says the writer in his preface, 'qu'il m'auroit été impossible de joindre cet art à ceux de l'Académie, si, aux lumières que j'ai tirées, d'un Manuscrit de