

**Syracuse University**

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**From the Selected Works of Peter D Verheyen**

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2015

# The Bone Folder by Ernst Collin (2nd Ed.)

Peter D Verheyen  
Ernst Collin



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*Discard*

*The Bone Folder*

Ernst Collin, translated from the German  
*Der Pressbengel* by Peter D. Verheyen  
2nd English edition, 2015

*The Bone Folder* is presented here in signatures. Instructions for printing:

Print double sided @ actual size - do not shrink

Signatures 1 - 5, 4 folios per signature

Group signatures so sequence (marked at bottom left of 1st 4 folios/  
signature is: 1-i, 1-ii, 1-iii, 1-iv; 2-i, 2-ii, ... for folding to ensure in  
right order

Endsheets of choice can be made as additional signatures or tipped-on  
at front and back.

<http://www.philobiblon.com/pressbengel>

*Discard*

after 1933. However, despite the ever-tightening spiral of restrictions on his work by the Nazis, first in the form of the *Schriftleitergesetz* that removed him from his editorial positions and later by laws that eliminated his ability to work, Collin continued to write for the *Allgemeiner Anzeiger für Buchbindereien* at least until 1936, when he wrote an article on “Otto Pfaffs 25 jähriges Berufsjubiläum.”

Ernst Collin was politically active, and is listed as a contributor to the publication *Die Deutsche Nation: Eine Zeitschrift für Politik*,<sup>31</sup> along with the great bibliophile Graf Harry Keßler. This publication was aligned with the Deutsche Demokratische Partei (DDP), a center-left social liberal party whose members included, among others, Foreign Minister Walther Rathenau, party leader Friedrich Naumann, and Theodor Heuss who would become the first President of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949.

The first issue of the *Allgemeiner Anzeiger für Buchbindereien* published after the war in 1947 included a notice (Randbemerkung) about the Collin family (Wilhelm, Georg, and Ernst). It gave a brief history of these individuals and their work, mentioned that “Ernst had written for this publication for decades, and that as a Jew he had tried to emigrate in 1939, leaving a farewell letter with the publishers. Nothing was heard from him thereafter.”<sup>32</sup>

The *Gedenkbuch Berlins der jüdischen Opfer des Nazionalsozialismus*<sup>33</sup> and Yad Vashem<sup>34</sup> show Ernst Collin and his wife Else as being deported from Berlin- Grunewald to Auschwitz on 9 December 1942 where they were murdered. “Stolpersteine” memorializing the couple were laid in front of their last chosen residence at Cicerostr 61 in Berlin-Wilmersdorf on April 1, 2014.<sup>35</sup>

The list of Ernst Collin's publications began with 44 titles spread between Mejer's *Bibliographie der Buchbinderei-literatur* (1925) and the 1937 volume of the Meister der Einbandkunst's *Jahrbuch der Einbandkunst*, and has grown to well over 240 with significant gaps in the chronology that hint at a far greater professional output.

His first book was *Buchbinderei für den Hausbedarf* [1915], a basic bookbinding manual for amateurs. Based on a review of the literature, this is perhaps one of the first in the German language. The iconic *Pressbengel* was published in 1922, and was followed by his biographical Festschrift *Paul Kersten* (1925) in honor of his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. Kersten was one of the seminal German fine bookbinders, and his *Der Exakte Bucheinband* (1923) helped define German fine binding. Ernst also wrote essays for Festschriften published by highly-regarded trade binderies. These were *Vom guten Geschmack und von der Kunstbuchbinderei* for the Spamersche Buchbinderei, Leipzig (1918) and "Fünfzig Jahre deutscher Verlegereinband" for Hübel & Denck (1925). He was also the publisher and author of numerous articles in *Die Heftlade* (1922-24), the journal of the Jakob-Krauß-Bund: An organization that was absorbed into Meister der Einbandkunst, the group included the most significant names in German bookbinding of the late 19th and early 20th century, among them Paul Adam, Otto Dorfner, Paul Kersten, and Franz Weiße. In addition, Collin edited and wrote in the Jakob-Krauß-Bund's 1921 exhibition catalog, *Deutsche Einbandkunst*. His articles were published in at least 60 periodicals and serials between 1907 and 1936, scholarly and popular, they covered the bookbinding trade, book collecting, graphic and other visual arts, and also economics and politics.

Gustav Moessner's introduction to the 1984 republishing of the *Pressbengel* stated that Ernst Collin had "disappeared"

Hofbuchbinder. The *Berliner Börsenzeitung* of 8 August 1897 reported that Collin was also named court bookbinder to the Czar of Russia with the right to display the Russian coat-of-arms.<sup>26</sup> Georg Collin had three children with his wife Regina: Gertrude, who learned the family trade and carried on the family business, Elsa, and Ernst, born 5.31.1886. After his death on 24.12.1918, Georg's widow Regina continued to manage the firm of W. Collin until Gertrude took over. After 1930 the firm was continued as the Spezialbetrieb für Druckarbeiten, a part of Paetsch & Collin.<sup>27</sup> It was "liquidated" by the Nazis in 1939.<sup>28</sup>

Ernst Collin (5.31.1886–12.1942) initially followed in the family tradition and learned the trade of bookbinder; however, where he apprenticed is not known. In his writings he describes studying in 1904 with Gustav Slaby and Paul Kersten for a semester in the first class of the Berliner Buchbinderfachschule Klasse für Kunstbuchbinderei.<sup>29</sup> Ultimately, Ernst chose to follow a different path, that of writer for the arts of the book and graphic arts among other topics. His first known articles appeared in Volume 3 (1907-08) of *Die Werkkunst: Zeitschrift des Vereins für deutsches Kunstgewerbe* where he was identified in the table of contents as "Ernst Collin, Kunstbuchbinder" (fine bookbinder). He also wrote on topics relating to economics and politics, as well as working as an antiquarian bookseller of fine press books via his Corvinus - Antiquariat Ernst Collin, located at Mommsenstr 27 in Charlottenburg. In addition, he served on the editorial board of the *Berliner Volkszeitung*<sup>30</sup> and *Deutsche Export-Revue*. The *Deutsches Literatur-Lexikon des 20. Jahrhunderts* indicates that he also wrote under several pseudonyms. Interestingly, the obituary for Georg Collin was written by Ernst Collin using "Heinrich Inheim."

in Paris that “... bookbinding has attained the highest level in France. Unfortunately we must stand back and let this happen, because even if we have the strength, drive, and talent to create work at this level, we just don’t have the clients... Germans just won’t pay what the French and other foreigners will.”<sup>23</sup> The article concludes by saying that in binding at the highest levels, the honors go to France and England, with Germany being the leader in publishers’ bindings. Collin and others acknowledge that a significant part of the challenge is redirecting German tastes and collecting habits, something that would not happen until the fall of the conservative monarchy in 1918.<sup>24</sup>

Georg Collin was not just progressive in the craft and aesthetics of his binding work, but also in his advocacy for teaching the trade, in particular for advocating on behalf of women. While many women found work in binderies, they were barred from learning the trade and advancing through the ranks to Meister. Maria Lühr who would become one of the most noted German binders, apprenticed for a time at the firm of W. Collin and became the first to receive her Meister in 1902. It was largely Georg’s connections to the German court that ultimately led to the breakdown of prohibitions (and the resistance of the Journeymen) against women learning the trade and practicing as Meister, something for which Ernst was also a strong advocate. Most notable among the others who worked under him was Paul Kersten, arguably the most noted German binder of the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who studied finishing as a journeyman with Collin.

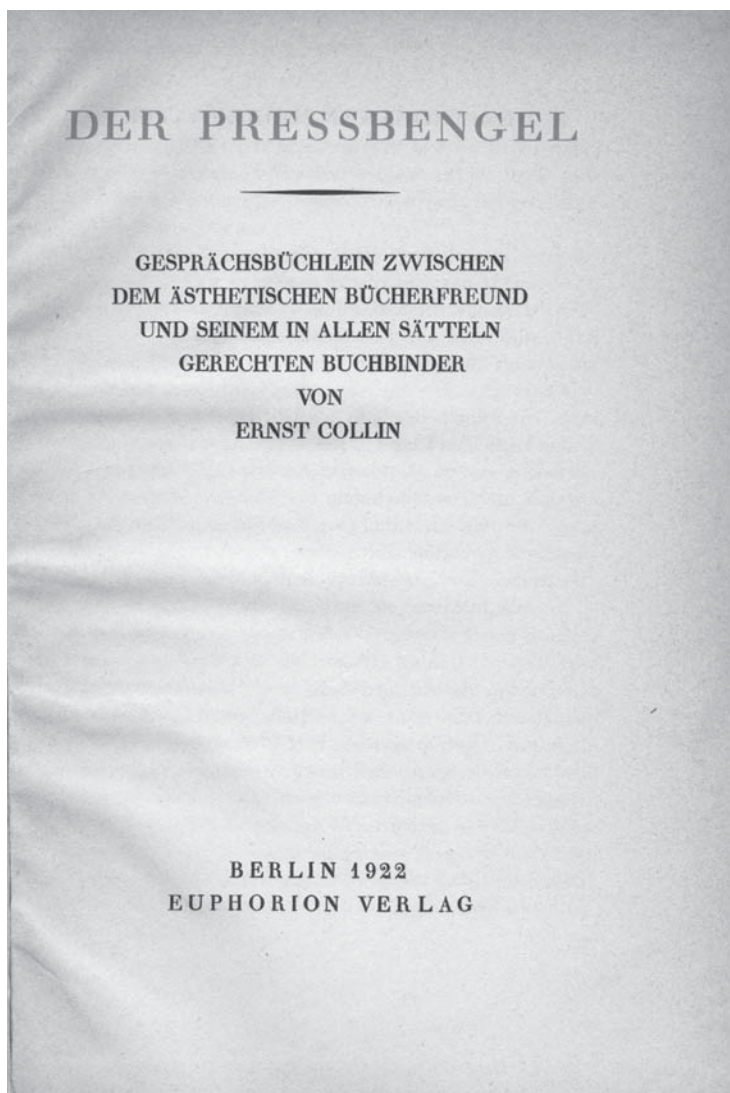
Like his father Wilhelm, Georg was awarded the Preußischer Kronenorden 4<sup>th</sup> Class on 18 January, 1908,<sup>25</sup> and he was the last to carry the title of Königlicher und Kaiserlicher



he worked with materials including painting with leather dyes, something for which he received a patent in 1901.<sup>17</sup> In 1886 he became co-owner of the firm W. Collin with his brother, the businessman Gustav Collin,<sup>18</sup> continuing it after the death of their father in 1893 until 1918. Interestingly, discussed or depicted bindings from this period are generally described as being created by [the firm of] W. Collin with Georg's name largely absent.

Georg Collin was one of the leading binders in Germany, contributing to the revitalization of artistic expression in the craft with his prize-winning bindings and Adressen, presentation portfolios that made use of a wide range of techniques including Lederschnitt (cut leather), coloring, and tooling.<sup>19</sup> He was also a tireless advocate for making significant changes in German bookbinding in training, technique, and design, an attempt to elevate it vis-à-vis its national competitors in France and England. Collin's work itself is "noted for conscientious forwarding, for the careful and workman-like treatment of the leather, and particularly for its original tooling. His mosaic work also, while it has strong German characteristics, is true to the best traditions of this branch of decoration."<sup>20</sup> Beginning in 1898, his work began to exhibit a more "modern" style, something that was viewed with suspicion if only because the staying power of these new styles was suspect and tastes very conservative.<sup>21</sup> His high level of craft earned him the only gold medal for Germany at the 1901 Paris Exhibition for work that was described as "progressive and innovative in style."<sup>22</sup> The bookbinding trade journals of the time, however, made it clear that there was much work to be done to elevate the overall level of German binding, especially "extra" or fine binding to make it competitive with its peers elsewhere. Collin said in a lecture about the 1900 World Exposition

## The Bone Folder



Title page of the original edition

being awarded the Preussischer Kronenorden (Crown Order) 4th Class with Red Cross on 18 March, 1872.<sup>10</sup> Wilhelm passed in 1893 after a brief illness having received many awards and honors during his life.<sup>11</sup> *The Berliner Börsenblatt* noted in its obituary of March 22 that he was not just one of the best in his field, but also served tirelessly with numerous civic organizations until the end.<sup>12</sup>

Ernst's father Max Georg Collin (10.22.1851–12.24.1918) followed in his father's footsteps apprenticing in Berlin with Meister Hunzinger from 1866-1869, a not altogether pleasant experience as many apprenticeships often were. This apprenticeship was followed by journeyman years in Vienna, Paris, and London, with the "most famous German binder," Joseph Zaehnsdorf. His experiences with the latter made English bookbinding an "ideal" to strive for due to the flourishing conditions of the trade and quality of work at the time.<sup>13</sup> By contrast, an article in the *British Bookmaker* titled "A German View of English Bookbinding" presented a less rosy opinion, describing British binding as "robust" but "of decorative style and taste there is a complete absence." a far cry from the work of Roger Payne.<sup>14</sup>

Following his journeyman years, Georg Collin returned to Berlin to work in the family firm under his father. Among his responsibilities was instructing Prince Heinrich (brother of the later Kaiser Wilhelm II) in bookbinding during the winters between 1873 and 1875; learning a trade was expected of all Prussian princes. An anecdote from this experience written by Ernst concerns Georg's response to complaints from the Court about smelly glue: "well we can't put Eau de Cologne in it."<sup>15</sup> From 1878-1881 Georg Collin studied drawing and painting at the Berliner Kunstakademie,<sup>16</sup> an experience that greatly shaped his binding designs and how

and (re)introduces the writings of Ernst Collin, the most important source of information about them all. None of this would have been possible, however, without the digital collections that have come available since 2009, in particular Google Books and the HathiTrust both of which provided either the full text of articles or enough information to make requests through my colleagues in inter-library loan at Syracuse University Libraries.

### *About Ernst Collin and his Family*

Ernst Collin, author of the *Pressbengel*, was born 31.5.1886 the son and grandson of court bookbinders to the Prussian Kings and German Emperors, a legacy that greatly influenced his writings.

His grandfather Wilhelm Collin (7.12.1820–3.22.1893) was the son of Beuthen-/Bytom-born physician Isaac Collin and his wife Blümche who moved to Berlin in 1832.<sup>4</sup> Wilhelm apprenticed in Berlin with the Prussian Court Bookbinder Abraham Mossner in Berlin 1835-1840, and served his journeyman years in Prague, Vienna,<sup>5</sup> and elsewhere. He opened his own bindery under the name of “W. Collin, Buchbinder und Galanteriewaren Arbeiter” in 1845.<sup>6</sup> Galanteriewaren were accessories such as boxes for objet d’art and similar objects, as well as decorative accessories for the home, something that bookbinders often made.<sup>7</sup> In 1859, Wilhelm became Court Bookbinder to the later Empress Friedrich (Viktoria). In addition to leading the work of a trade bindery,<sup>8</sup> Wilhelm became noted for crafting presentation portfolios for royal decrees (Adressmappen) and similar items such as albums. Interestingly, he was also involved in the creation of stage sets and furnishings for the Royal Court Theater in Berlin.<sup>9</sup> All these contributed to his

## The Bone Folder:

*A Dialogue Between an Aesthetically-Inclined Bibliophile and a Well-Versed-in-all-Aspects-of-the-Craft Bookbinder*

By Ernst Collin

Translated from the German by  
Peter D. Verheyen



# Introduction

## *Preface*

Title page illustration of tightening a backing press with a pressbengel from Adam, Paul. *Die einfachen handwerksmäßigen Buchbinderarbeiten ohne Zuhilfe von Maschinen*, page 15.

Contains corrections to the edition of 2015.  
Corrections made March, 2018.

Originally published as *Der Pressbengel* by the  
Euphorion Verlag, Berlin 1922.

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<http://philobiblon.com/pressbengel>

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The introduction to the first edition of this translation in the Guild of Book Workers' *Journal* (2009) left significant unresolved questions about who Ernst Collin was, his background, family, and fate. These questions originated from mentions in Gustav Moessner's introduction to the 1984 reprint of the *Pressbengel*, the edited Wolfskehl correspondence,<sup>1</sup> bibliographies such as Kosch's *Deutsches Literatur-Lexikon des 20. Jahrhunderts*, and antiquarian dealer listings. These sources incorrectly merged the identities of Ernst Collin, author of the *Pressbengel* and other works, with Ernst Collin-Schönfeld<sup>2</sup> (1886<sup>3</sup>-1953), a poet, language teacher, and archivist who also resided in Berlin between the wars, linking both via marriage to Collin-Schönfeld's wife. The latter Ernst was able to escape Nazi Germany in the late 1930s with his wife Margarete Weisgerber-Collin and died in London in 1953. In the spring of 2013, I was contacted by a genealogist who believed she was related to Ernst Collin through the wife of his father Georg. Working together using genealogical resources, requesting official documents, and searching a far greater body of literature we were able to disambiguate these two Ernsts, confirm the family connections, and begin uncovering a much larger body of his writings. This research process was described in "The Tale of Two Ernsts" posted to my *Pressbengel Project* blog,<sup>3</sup> and brought a much deeper connection to a project that had originally focused on Collin's text, the *Pressbengel*, and the state of the bookbinding trade then and now.

This new introduction begins to restore the memory and contributions of this significant family of Berlin bookbinders

the story and gives me the sensations I need when reading. If I were to ask you, Master, could you tell me about your work? Please don't think idle curiosity is my motive or even that I want to steal ideas from you.

I think I will be a better client if I understand your craft and can judge its complexity. My opinion is that a bibliophile who doesn't understand books is following a trivial pursuit. However, someone who isn't interested only in the content of the work but also understands how a book is made—beginning with papermaking and through to titling the finished binding—has embraced book collecting with his heart and soul. So, won't you introduce me to the secrets of your craft in a few short discussions?

**BOOKBINDER:** I would be willing to do that, but you can't expect me to teach you everything, as that would require an apprenticeship of three to four years, plus as many more years of work and experience in order to become a competent master bookbinder. A master binder doesn't appear out of nowhere. Why don't we do it this way: I'll tell you about some of the most important binding styles first, and tell you only enough about the structure so you can visualize it. We'll talk about the specific details that interest you when you bring me your books to bind.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** That sounds fair. So, Master, why don't you start?

**BOOKBINDER:** All right, let's start with the paper case binding, whose covering is made of paper, either plain or decorated. We'll talk about it again later because it is the most beautiful of the simple bindings, and you will certainly have me make many of them for you.



Photo: Hanne Schulten, June 2015.



## *About the Pressbengel*

The *Pressbengel* (1922), dedicated to the memory of Ernst Collin's father Georg, is his best-known work. Shortly after its first publication it was translated into Czech as *Utahovák: Knížka rozhovorů mezi estetickým knihomilem a jeho knihařem na ostro kovaným* for the series *Knihy o knihách*, Svazek 1.<sup>36</sup> It was later republished by the Mandragora Verlag in several editions with an introduction by Gustav Moessner,<sup>37</sup> and translated into Italian as *Dal Rilegatore d'Arte*.<sup>38</sup> The first translation into English appeared in the Guild of Book Workers' *Journal*.<sup>39</sup> A translation into Japanese based on the English translation was published online in serialized form in 2015 by the Research Society for Book History and Conservation.

Conceived as a dialogue between a bibliophile and a master bookbinder on all aspects of the bookbinding craft as well as specific techniques, the original German has a charming if somewhat pedantically formal "school primer" tone, in keeping with the time in which it was written. The question-and-answer format has a long history in pedagogical texts, whether for catechisms such as Nicolaus Cusanus' *Christliche Zuchtschul*<sup>40</sup> or trades, as in Friedrich Friese's *Ceremoniel der Buchbinder*<sup>41</sup> that introduces the reader to all aspects of bookbinding and its traditions. First published in Czechoslovakia in 1937, Oldrich Menhart's *Evening Conversations of the Booklover Rubricius and the Printer Tympanus* is the letterpress equivalent to Collin's *Pressbengel*, and there is considerable overlap between the two as might be expected. *Evening Conversations* was later translated into German (1958) and then English (1980), the latter in a Crabgrass Press edition of 100 copies bound by Fritz Eberhardt.<sup>42</sup>

## **Monday** *A Discussion about Bookbinding*



Folding: From Adam, *Die praktischen Arbeiten des Buchbinders*, page 14

**BIBLIOPHILE** (looking around the studio of the master bookbinder): Master, what is this wonderful tool that you have here? It looks intriguingly dangerous.

**BOOKBINDER:** That, my good sir, is a harmless but important tool. We call it a bone folder. I use it to fold paper, make signatures, rub down the linings on the spine, and work leather and any number of other materials that I encounter every day. With it I can take a collection of papers and craft them into a book. It is an extension of my hands and serves as a continual reminder of the value of good craft work, even if the aura of the trade is no longer what it once was.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Quite right, Master. As a bibliophile I know how to value a finely handbound book. I just can't find pleasure in reading an ugly, poorly-bound book that falls apart as one is reading it. In contrast a well-bound, indestructible book helps bring me to the time and place of

In his 1922 review of the *Pressbengel*, the bibliophile and editor of the *Zeitschrift für Bücherfreunde*, Fedor von Zobeltitz<sup>43</sup> wrote that the book “will become one of the unforgettable texts about bookbinding,” also noting that Collin had “resurrected the of old form of the dialog that had been used during the Reformation to bring together the learned and the ordinary people. In the end, it is a book that is easy and entertaining to read, and from that one can learn a great deal.”<sup>44</sup>

Throughout the work, Collin himself is very frank in addressing the conflicts between quality and cost, as well as the positive and negative impacts of “machines” on the work, all themes he was familiar with through his familial history. In his introduction to the 1984 reprint of *Der Pressbengel*, Gustav Moessner, author of and contributor to several German bookbinding texts, states that he sees Collin’s work in part as a reaction to the growing industrialization of the bookbinding trade and the loss of the skills and techniques connected with this industrialization. In many respects this trajectory continues today, accelerated by the decrease in formal bookbinding apprenticeship opportunities, the increasing simplification of structures, changing aesthetics, and ultimately, changes in the perceived value of books and the general economic climate. Germany’s strong guild system until recently required one to complete a formal apprenticeship and become a master binder in order to open one’s own shop and train apprentices. Unfortunately, this system has been in decline over the past decades, and many shops are closing or no longer training apprentices. A completed apprenticeship and Meister are also no longer required to open a business if no apprentices are being trained. At the same time, a network of centers and alternative programs such as those in the United States or

“master-run” shops offering instruction to amateurs has not developed in a way that would provide the high quality, rigid training critical to sustaining the craft over the long term.

The apprenticeship system declined even earlier in the United Kingdom, another nation with a strong tradition of formal craft training. In other countries the trade system was not as formalized to begin with. Although the United States represents the most diverse environment for the trade, with a blending of the dominant English, French, and German traditions brought over by immigrants, a formal career path like that in the European tradition never developed. Instead, less formal apprenticeships (on-the-job training) became the norm.

Samuel Ellenport’s *The Future of Hand-Bookbinding*<sup>45</sup> provides an excellent if sobering overview of the changes experienced by the hand bookbinding trade in the United States, but leaves out the explosive growth among amateur binders and book artists. The past thirty years have seen a resurgence of interest in all aspects of the book arts, with centers offering workshops springing up across the United States. Formal programs have been developed, including the North Bennet Street School in Boston (a two-year trade model), the American Academy of Bookbinding in Colorado (a series of workshops), and the University of Alabama’s MFA in the book arts (an academic degree). These programs are doing much to preserve many traditional skills, but the contemporary book arts craft risks losing others that may be deemed too anachronistic or, like gold tooling, simply unaffordable and therefore not regularly practiced. Despite the challenges, these programs and centers have contributed to the development of increasing numbers of binders active on the national and international stage.

## The Bone Folder



Like the original German, this translation of the *Pressbengel* in English attempts to remain faithful to the original text. It should not be considered a scholarly translation, nor was it ever intended to be a “technical manual.” Like the German original of 1922, it is intended to be a general introduction to the bookbinding craft and trade as it existed in Germany when the work appeared. The title change from *Der Pressbengel*, an esoteric tool used to increase the leverage when tightening a German backing press (Klotzpresse), to *The Bone Folder*, an iconic tool that represents bookbinding as no other can, was undertaken both because “Pressbengel” has no “clean” English equivalent and to help make the text more accessible to today’s binders and bibliophiles. In a very few other cases, references to brand names have been made more general where this had no impact on the essence of the text. The result, I hope, is in keeping with the spirit and essence of the original German.

*Ernst Collin's original dedication*

—

*To the memory of my father*

Max Georg Collin

(10.22.1851 - 12.24.1918)

Court Bookbinder, W. Collin, Berlin.



Georg Collin †

Image from Heinrich Inheim's (Ernst Collin pseudonym) obituary published in the *Archiv für Buchgewerbe*, Volume 56, 1919.

- 37 Collin, Ernst. *Der Pressbengel*. Münster: Mandragora Verlag, 1984/1989/1992. 1984 and 1989 editions with illustrations by Leopold Reiser, 1992 edition with illustrations by Andreas Raub.
- 38 Collin, Ernst. *Dal Rilegatore d'Arte*. Mendrisio: J. Weiss, 1996. Translated by Barbara Griffini with introduction by Gustav Moessner.
- 39 Verheyen, Peter D. "The Bone Folder by Ernst Collin." *The Guild of Book Workers Journal*, 2009. (48-63).
- 40 Nicolaus Cusanus. *Christliche Zuchtschul. Jetzt zum andern Mahl auff's new bersehen, vnd getruckt mit einem nützlichen Zusatz* [...].Cölln (Cologne): In Verlag Ioannis Kinchii Buchhändlers, 1656.
- 41 Frisius, Friedrich. *Ceremoniel der Buchbinder*. Leipzig: [s.n.], 1712. (This work was reprinted in a facsimile edition – Hannover: Edition "libri rari" Th. Schäfer, 1985.)
- 42 First appeared in the Czechoslovakian journal *Bibliophil* (1937), monographic publication as Večerní hovory knihomila Rubricia a starotiskaře Tympána. Kroměříž: Karel Kryl ml., 1947. Translation into German by Otto Franz Babler as *Abendgespräche des Bücherfreundes Rubricius und des Buchdruckers Tympanus*, Frankfurt a.M: Typographie Herman Zapf, 1958. Translation into English by Philip. L. Metzger and published by his Crabgrass Press, Prairie Village, Kansas in 1980.
- 43 [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fedor\\_von\\_Zobeltitz](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fedor_von_Zobeltitz)
- 44 Zobeltitz, Fedor von. "Buchbesprechung: *Der Pressbengel*. Ernst Collin, Euphorion Verlag, Berlin." *Die Heftlade: Zeitschrift für die Förderer des Jakob-Krauß-Bundes*. Nr. 5, 1922. (62-63) Berlin: Jakob-Krauß-Bundes durch Ernst Collin, Euphorion Verlag, 1922.
- 45 Ellenport, Samuel. *The Future of Hand-Bookbinding*. Boston: Harcourt Bindery, 1993.

## Endnotes

- 1 Blasberg, Cornelia (Ed). *Karl Wolfskehl's Briefwechsel aus Neuseeland, 1938-1948*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand Literaturverlag, 1988. Note in Vol. 1, Nr. 333, page 1215.
- 2 *Guide to the Ernst Collin Collection, 1899-1966*. Leo Baeck Institute, Center for Jewish History, NY. <http://findingaids.cjh.org/?pID=431096>. The collection has been digitized and contains biographical information provided by his wife.
- 3 "The Tale of Two Ernsts." *Pressbengel Project Blog*, 3/14/2013. <http://pressbengel.blogspot.com/2013/03/the-story-of-two-ernsts.html>
- 4 Jacobson, Jacob. *Die Judenbürgerbücher der Stadt Berlin, 1809-1851*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1962. Beuthen/Bytom lies in the former German state of Silesia, now in Poland. See also entry 1222 for Abraham Mossner, pg. 253. Birth date for Wilhelm Collin from the Allgemeiner Anzeiger für Buchbindereien, Vol. 60, Nr. 5., 1947, (68). Deathdate from the Berliner Börsenzeitung of 3.22.1893. (2. Beilage)
- 5 "Der Hofbuchbinder Wilhelm Collin." *Allgemeiner Anzeiger für Buchbindereien*, Vol. 60, Nr. 5, 1947 (-69)
- 6 *Allgemeiner Wohnungsanzeiger für Berlin, Charlottenburg und Umgebungen: auf d. Jahr 1845*. Berlin: Verlag von Veit und Comp. Online at Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin, <http://digital.zlb.de/viewer/resolver?urn=urn:nbn:de:kobv:109-1-137467>
- 7 Galanteriewaren. Duden Online, <http://www.duden.de/suchen/dudenonline/Galanteriewaren>.
- 8 The Leopold von Ranke Collection of the Special Collections Research Center at Syracuse University Libraries holds over 130 titles (re) bound by the firm of W Collin, and identified with his binder's ticket. These were (re)bound between 1871 and 1887 when the collection came to Syracuse.
- 9 Mossner instructed Crown Price Friedrich Wilhelm, later Kaiser Friedrich III in bookbinding. It was tradition that all Prussian princes learned a trade. He also became Court Bookbinder to the Princess of Wales (1864), and the Emperors and Empresses of Germany. From Collin, Ernst. "Hervorragende Berliner Buchbindermeister des 19 Jahrhunderts." *Der Buchbinderlehrling*. Vol. 7, Nr. 12, 1933. (57-61)
- 10 Königlich Preußische Ordensliste (Bibliothekssignatur: 44, 27), Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 7. 22.2014.
- 11 Obituary for Wilhelm Collin. *Buchgewerbeblatt*, Leipzig: Verlag des Buchgewerbeblattes, Vol. 1, 1892-93. (184)

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**BIBLIOPHILE:** I will let you know when I want vellum headcaps on my books. Vellum tips I want in any case, but I'll tell you whether they should be visible or invisible. So, now let's talk about what we want to do with the edges of the text block.

**BOOKBINDER:** They should of course match the dominant color of the decorated paper.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** I'll agree this time, but it is my opinion that one should not try to match colors too slavishly. You can also create contrasts to capture the mood of the text. I have a friend with a paper case binding covered in a paper with reddish and yellowish tones. The edges, endpapers, and label are black. It's a tome by Strindberg, and the binding was supposed to capture the melancholy nature of the poet. He also has an old edition of Schiller that he had bound in dark blue, with the edges and label in a shade of yellow. The endpaper is grayish and matches the text. Now, I'm also of the opinion that the edge and endpaper colors should be the same. That way they look like a harmonious second wrapper around the book. But one should also be flexible, and I would like to have simple endpapers that match the text paper because these are simple bindings. Do you have any plain papers?

**BOOKBINDER:** Certainly. I always keep several varieties in stock. They come in cream and whitish colors with a variety of textures, from smooth to textured, to match the book regardless of whether the book uses machine-made or handmade paper. These varieties meet almost all needs. If by chance I can't match a paper with them, I'll tone the paper myself—coffee works really well.

Next is the quarter-cloth binding, in which the spine and the corners of the book's cover are in colored book cloth. Book cloth is woven from cotton, and we can get it in many attractive textures and colors. The parts of the book not in cloth are covered with plain or decorated paper. These are simple bindings, and I want to emphasize that this style is not as much for the bibliophile as for heavily used items in public libraries.

And now we come to the first of the finer bindings, the quarter-leather binding. What on the quarter cloth binding would be fabric is now covered in leather. It is a finer binding because leather is the most noble of covering materials. Also, the structure as a whole is much more involved.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** I understand completely. If leather is the most beautiful and best material, than the binder is obligated to adjust all aspects of the books to the demands of that noble material. Noblesse oblige!

**BOOKBINDER:** Exactly, and finally we have the best binding structure, the full-leather binding. As the name suggests, the whole book is covered in leather. These are the main binding styles. We also have the quarter- and full-vellum bindings. You could cover books in silk or velvet as well, but that is not something that you as a bibliophile would want.

As you can imagine, the binding of a book is broken down into a sequence of many individual steps that build upon each other. When we are at the conclusion, you will recognize that from the moment a binder takes a text block in his hand until the title is stamped on the spine—how should I say this—all these things occur in a logical sequence. Ultimately, if you miss just one stitch while sewing, it will all come apart.

Particular attention must be paid when preparing to sew. I don't want to bore you with the details, but I will say that we must first disbind books that have been sewn by machine. This includes breaking the book down to the individual signatures, removing the old thread (or, heaven forbid, those awful staples), and then scraping off the glue left on the outsides of the folds. Next, we need to put the signatures in a press in order to compact the text block. Before we do that, though, we may need to refold the signatures and collate them to make sure everything is there and where it should be. If there are plates, they will usually need to be trimmed to size and tipped back in or hinged in with a thin strip of paper or jaconette.

After the signatures have been in the press—like this one, which gets opened and closed using this iron bar—for a good long time, then we will make the endpapers. Endpapers are what we call the folios that come before and after the last signatures of the text block, made of a white- or cream-colored paper that is matched in color and texture to the paper of the text block. There are many styles of endpapers, one of which I will describe for you. We'll start with a double folio of paper as tall as the text block and slightly wider. Applying paste in a very narrow bead to the back of the fold, we attach a five-centimeter-wide strip of paper that will serve as a reinforcing strip. When the paste is dry, we fold the strip around the back of the signature, just as pharmacists once used to attach the labels to medicine bottles. We place the endpapers on both sides of the text block so the strip of paper faces to the outside and put the book in a finishing press in order to determine how to divide the spine for sewing.

We sew over twine that we call cord. The old bookbinders used to place these cords on the outside of the spine, so they were raised and visible under the leather. Today we rarely

and attached to the text block. With a handbound book the cover is crafted on the text block whereas in a machine-made book they are made separately and only joined at the end.

Remember how on Monday when you first dropped in, I stopped working as I was about to cut the boards to size? Well, in order to attach the boards and provide reinforcement at the hinges, we use a technique known as the Bradel binding (gebrochener Rücken). First, we take a strip of thin card the height of the boards and a few centimeters wider on either side of the spine to serve as tabs. To create the tabs, we measure the spine and then transfer that measurement to the center of the strip. Next, we make those two folds and check to see that the strip fits closely to the spine. Then we lightly pare the two long edges of the tabs so they will be less visible under the endsheet when the book is complete. When that is done, we glue out the tabs, fit the piece tightly to the spine, and rub it down onto the wastesheet on which we fanned the frayed-out cords earlier. Then it goes in the press for a quick nip to make sure everything is stuck down well. Only at this point do we attach the boards to the book. We do so by gluing them to the tabs, but set back from the shoulder so the book will open up easily. In this way we create a strong connection between the text block and the cover, and finally we cover it with the paper.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** I'm looking at this paper case binding and can't help but notice these narrow white vellum strips—see, I'm paying attention. I really like them and imagine they add more interest to some of the more monotone bindings.

**BOOKBINDER:** We call those “vellum headcaps.” The headcap helps reinforce the otherwise paper-covered book at its most vulnerable spot. We can also add invisible vellum tips on the corners.

makes it harder to bind the book, because I can't refold the signatures properly if they are misaligned.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Thank you for explaining that, and from now on I will remember that a true bibliophile only reads his books after they are bound. Before we talk about the binding, I just want to mention that the poet wrote a dedication to me in the book and went to the edge of the page. If you need to trim the book, please don't cut into the dedication.

**BOOKBINDER:** We have a trick for that. As you can see, the dedication is only on the right side of the page. The left margin still has plenty of room. What I will do is trim a hair off the left margin and reattach the leaf. As that page will now be slightly shorter on the right margin, it will not be cut when we trim the signature. We do this often, even with plates that are larger than the printed area. On the other hand, if the dedication went across the whole page, our options would be more limited—perhaps we would fold that page as if it were a plate. So, you'd like a paper case binding for this one?

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Yes, but the binding needs to be sound. I have bought bindings in paper-covered cases in the past that left me disappointed.

**BOOKBINDER:** Those were in all likelihood books that were bound by machine. It won't surprise you that as a Master in hand bookbinding, I don't have a high opinion of the machine-made bindings. That said, I know those machines also make books available to the mass of readers. It's not sour grapes if I say that a machine-made book will never achieve the quality of a good handbound one. Aside from the fact that the books are folded and sewn by machines, the more significant difference is in how the covers are created

sew on raised cords. The cords are recessed so as not to be visible, and if in the case of a quarter- or full-leather binding we want raised cords, we will make false ones later out of strips of card.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Master, if I may comment, aren't these false raised bands deceptive and a betrayal of good craft? They are certainly fake.

**BOOKBINDER:** We can debate the pros and cons of this argument for a long time. That said, in the end people just aren't willing to pay for the level of the craft that I love. If you know this kind of simplification need not be at the expense of sound structure, then I see no reason why one should abstain from the attractive appearance of raised cords on principle just because they aren't real. However, if the client wants real raised cords and is willing to pay, I am more than happy to oblige. But let us move on.

First, I need to divide the spine into fields to determine where the cords go. Usually we sew on five cords, and the fake raised cords are placed directly on top of these. With smaller or simpler books we'll reduce the number of cords to three or four. In addition to the cords we also have the kettle stitches that are set back slightly from the head and tail of the spine—that is what we call the top and bottom of the text block. The sewing thread connects the signatures at the kettle stitch with a link stitch that looks like the links of a chain. Next, we saw into the folds of the signatures so that we can recess the cords.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** What? Saw into the text block? You're cutting into paper with a saw? Isn't that barbaric? Paper isn't wood! You're not a carpenter! Master, my bibliophilic conscience can't abide by that.



**BOOKBINDER:** Well, it's like this. I don't have a problem just lightly cutting in to the spine of the book, especially if one doesn't deepen the cut with a rasp as some do. One can also avoid sawing into the spine if one untwists the cords and flattens them so that they don't show when the leather is on the spine. If you wish, I'd be happy to sew your book on frayed-out cords if we aren't sewing on real raised cords, but it will cost more.

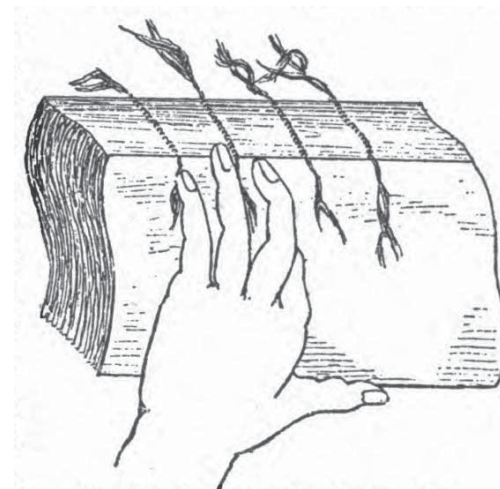
**BIBLIOPHILE:** I will gladly pay if it keeps the saw away from my books.

**BOOKBINDER:** We sew the book on a sewing frame, a tool that is almost as old as bookbinding itself. Here, take a look at my sewing frame—the board upon which the signatures are laid during sewing. At the front are threaded wooden dowels that go through a cross bar, which is slit for the hooks that will hold the cords taut during sewing. Below that, in the board, are nails to which the cord is attached. Sewing is a very important step. You start with the last signature (the back endpaper) and insert the threaded needle through the fold at the kettle stitch, come out and over the first cord, then back into the signature, then out and over the next cord, until you get to the other kettle stitch. Then the next signature is placed on top and we repeat the process, always remembering to connect the signatures. After we are done, we cut the cords so they extend several centimeters beyond the spine on both sides. Then we fray out the ends of the cords, fan them out, and adhere them to the waste sheet. Next, we tip the endpaper signature to the adjacent text signature with a thin bead of paste. Finally, we glue up the spine and round it with a hammer.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Do we have to round the book? I feel that a half-round spine detracts from the overall appearance of the

## Wednesday

### *A Discussion about the Paper Case Binding*



Sewing endbands: From Adam, *Die praktischen Arbeiten des Buchbinders*, page 60

**BIBLIOPHILE (carrying books in both arms):** Master, here are some of my books. I'm especially attached to the one with poems by one of our best. It is an unusual, tempestuous tome that at the same time is filled with melancholy. Using the decorated paper samples you gave me, I selected one that has wonderful colors playing in the background while the main pattern is strangely exciting.

**BOOKBINDER:** But you read the book already!

**BIBLIOPHILE:** What? I'm not supposed to read it? What does my reading the book have to do with binding it?

**BOOKBINDER:** Since the book was originally untrimmed, you had to cut the folds in order to be able to read it. That



made from calf, cow, or sheep. The very expensive and coarse-grained sealskin has not proven itself to be durable. If one wants, there are also the skins of lizards, frogs, monkeys, snakes, fish, and other animals that can be used on bindings. And you have also heard that human skins have been used on books.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** What does tanned human skin look like?

**BOOKBINDER:** It is similar to tanned pigskin, with a grayish tone. As far as vellum is concerned, today we generally use the skins of sheep or calf rather than pig. Just as sheep leather is weaker than calf leather, so too are their vellums. Vellums are also much more expensive.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** What kind of skin does one use to get those beautiful yellowish, mottled vellums that have that antique look?

**BOOKBINDER:** It could be sheep or calf vellum. As you know, vellum is made from untanned skins that are dehaired and scraped clean while stretched on a frame. During this part of the process, the natural colorings of the skin remain. To get white vellum, the skin is further scraped with pumice and then chalk powder is rubbed in. Leather and vellum are prized not just for their durability, but also because on them the gold-tooled décor really shines. We'll need to talk about that another time.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Let's leave it there for today! Tomorrow I shall bring you some books to bind.

book. A square back just fits better with the right angles of the boards. I want only square backs on my books.

**BOOKBINDER:** Then you won't enjoy your book in the long term. I know from experience that with use a square-backed book will have a tendency to develop a concave spine, causing the individual signatures to jut out. That looks very ugly. Can we compromise? I will only slightly round your book so the signatures don't jut out, but it also won't end up with a half-round spine. I can promise you that a lightly rounded spine will not look ugly.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Agreed. I am glad we can combine the expertise of a professional with the ideals of a bibliophile in a sort of marriage of convenience.

**BOOKBINDER:** Next, we back the book, one of the most important steps in giving the text block structural integrity. I'll need to explain this step to you in more detail. First, we replace the book in the backing press, but this time between two boards, with the rounded spine extending beyond the edges by a few millimeters, a distance determined by the binding style and the thickness of the cover boards. Then we tighten the press very securely and begin to work the spine with a backing hammer, so that the signatures begin to fold towards the boards. We call this the shoulder, and the covering board will sit flush with the edge of it. Before hammering on the spine, we use paste to soften the glue we applied earlier, so the signatures will move more easily into their final shape. After backing, we paste up the spine again and smooth everything out before allowing the book to dry in the press overnight. The next day we take it out to trim, add a colored or gilt edge, and cut the cover boards to size.

The text block is mostly finished now, and the next step will be to attach the covers and then cover it in nice paper or leather. Those steps I'll explain to you when you bring me your books, because the next steps are dependent on the desired binding style.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Many, many thanks, Master. I want to continue to be your attentive apprentice. Until tomorrow.

Africa but rather shipped as preserved raw skins to Europe for tanning. In the past, beautiful Morocco leather could only be created in England or France, but a number of years ago we Germans also developed that ability. The French have even had us make some of their Morocco, and perhaps we bought it back as genuine French leather. A more basic leather for binding is an East Indian Saffian. What is known as “bastard leather” is not recommended for binding, and is the skin of cross-bred East-Indian goats and sheep, often with an embossed grain. I also urge you to avoid sheepskin, especially the thin, split skins. A binding in those is even less durable than one out of paper.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** You just spoke of confusion in the naming of leathers. I have an example, too. Recently, a bookseller showed me a book bound in chagrin leather. The poor man had no idea that chagrin referred to the graining and had nothing to do with the species.

**BOOKBINDER:** Yes, those leather names are a real mess. An *écrasé* leather isn't just any crush-grained and polished leather, but crush-grained Morocco leather. Much better is what they do in England and France—rather than pressing and polishing whole skins by machine, they burnish the skins with a polished steel iron on the finished book. Another very beautiful leather is pigskin, identifiable by the fine holes from where the hair was. The creamy color develops a patina over time that gives the binding an antique appearance, especially when it has been blind tooled. I'll tell you more about that later. We also use a lot of white alum-tawed pigskin.

Calfskin is naturally smooth and is also often used on bindings even if it is very delicate. Cowhide is very tough and therefore used mostly for very large volumes that get heavy use. Then there are various rough or suede-like skins

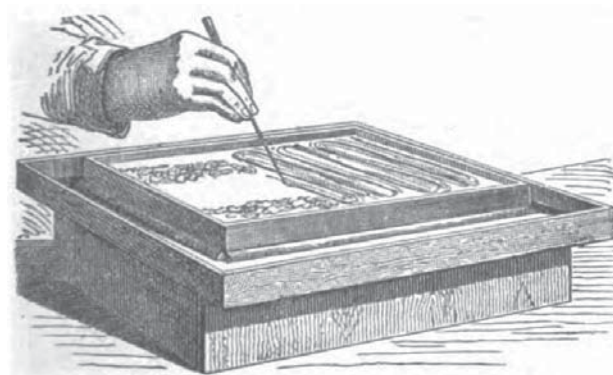
marks, or a piece of wood or similar to create circles and lines. New decorative techniques include using carved rollers or linoleum blocks, brushes, or other implements. There are no limits to what can be used. There are even Expressionist papers. Those are really wild (laughing ironically); perhaps because of that you will choose them to cover your paper case bindings.

**BIBLIOPHILE (laughing):** So, you've figured me out. Why don't you give me samples of all the papers we've discussed so I can select books to go with them at home. I find that these decorated papers express so much atmosphere and emotion that one can always find a book to wrap in them. I'll take my time with the samples at home, because my passion for the book also includes the binding, and one of my favorite pastimes is thinking of the ways my favorite books can be bound. I won't be stingy, either, and as my budget allows I will give you books to bind in your beloved leather. First, though, reveal the mysteries of leather to me.

**BOOKBINDER:** The naming of the different leathers is a mystery and, honestly, not always a pleasant one, because the leather tanneries have created a great deal of confusion in the naming of their skins. This is especially true if the name of the leather is used to indicate its geographic origin, even if it no longer comes from there. Ironically, many avoid using the name of the animal to identify the skin. What we know as Saffian and Morocco, the most useful of the skins, are nothing more than goatskins. Both come from Africa. Saffian takes its name from the town of Saffi in Morocco, and the name of the Morocco skin also indicates its origin. Saffian is very finely grained leather, whereas Morocco is very coarsely grained. Another beautiful coarse-grained goatskin is Cape-Saffian. However, these three skins aren't tanned in

## Tuesday

### *A Discussion about Decorated Papers and Leather*



Marbling: From Brade, *L. Brade's illustriertes Buchbinderbuch*, page 119

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Good morning, Master! I dreamed about your bone folder all night. I saw it as a young apprentice sitting on a stack of books and laughing at me because I already imagined myself as a real bookbinder. I had actually hoped to bring by some of my books today, but thought it might be better if we first agreed on how you will decide which techniques and materials you would use. How do you think we should proceed, Master?

**BOOKBINDER:** A recurring theme will be the decorated papers that we use to cover paper case bindings, as a covering and endpaper for quarter-cloth and quarter-leather bindings, and for endpapers in full-cloth and full-leather bindings. There are many papers that I'm sure you'll consider, even fall in love with. I can't tell you about all of them because decorated papers are appearing very quickly, and there are dozens of workshops that create them. There are even factories being established to produce them, and artists of

both genders are creating fantastically colorful designs to wrap around books.

Our traditional decorated papers, primarily the marbled ones, have become unfashionable. As you are a friend of contemporary bookbinding, you will say rightfully so. However, I think you will still be interested if I tell you how marbled papers are made. To marble, one needs a rectangular tray made out of zinc. Into this we pour the size, a material that must have a slimy consistency. The best size is made from carragheen, or Irish moss as it is also called. Carragheen is a pale yellow or grayish algae that comes from the coasts of Ireland. The marbling colors are sprinkled onto the size with a kind of straw broom, and must contain a bit of ox gall to help them spread on the size. One can also use a mixture of soap and spirits.

There are many different kinds of marbling styles—to binders, marbling isn't a replication of marble but rather any number of fantastic colors and patterns. I will limit myself to describing the combed patterns. After sprinkling the colors onto the size, we first draw a stylus through the colors with a wavelike motion. Then we pull a comb made of cardboard or wood strips, into which needles are placed at regular intervals, through the size with the colors floating on top. Some combs even have two rows of needles, one of which slides and is moved back and forth as it is pulled through the colors. These motions produce the combed pattern. Next, we very carefully lay a sheet of paper on the size, and when it is lifted off, the pattern is no longer on the size but rather on the sheet. We marble book edges in a similar way, except that we clamp the book between boards that are flush with the book edge and carefully place that on the size. If we do so, the book edges and endpapers will have the same colors and pattern.

The contemporary marbled papers aren't as formal as the old patterns. Instead, we put the emphasis on a tasteful and creative combination of colors with more random patterns. In some cases, rather than placing the paper on the size, we moisten the paper and spray several colors on it, allowing them to flow into each other. We can also spray on the colors and then crumple the paper to create unusual veined patterns.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** I've seen those papers and always felt they resembled clouds in the sky. I can look at them for hours and imagine that the colors and patterns move and change.

**BOOKBINDER:** There are also sprinkled papers, where different colors are applied to paper that is hanging or at an angle. This way, the colors run down and bleed into each other.

Today, papers that are based on batik techniques are also very fashionable. I'm told that we learned this from the Javanese. When making batik papers, the pattern is applied in wax either by hand or machine. The wax masks off the areas that are not to receive color, thereby helping to create the design. The paper is then crumpled up before the color is applied, which causes the wax to crack and allows color to seep under the wax. As a result of this process, the batik papers exhibit a fine veininess throughout that also causes the design to float into the background.

But everything old is new. One of our oldest decorated papers is the paste paper, created by applying a mixture of paste and color, generally ground pigments, onto the paper. Once the colors are on the paper, it is very easy to create patterns and other effects. One can use one's fingers to create ribbons by wiping away the color, pieces of cork to create round

a binder's designs are not necessarily inferior even if he has not collaborated with an artist. Here, take a look at the tools I use.

First, the brass roll, into which up to four lines can be engraved: fine ones, heavier ones, or even a combination of those. There are also chains of small circles, dots, and other ornaments that have been engraved onto rolls. Then we have my set of gouges—thirty sections of a circle, each with a larger radius, from two millimeters to twenty centimeters. In this cabinet I have all my decorative handle tools. In the one next to it are my pallets in increasing lengths, some even with dots, dashes, or other decorations like on the rolls.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** I see how by using all these tools you can create an infinite number of designs. Without taking away from the skill and sense of design required, it's almost like a game of chess in that there are nearly limitless combinations that can be used to move the pieces. However, one ought to be able to recognize the enormous amount of work required and differentiate between it and tooling created by machines—the two are often indistinguishable. So, please leave some almost imperceptible imperfections, such as where two lines meet at angles, to accentuate the “hand” in your finishing, something most bibliophiles like to see.

**BOOKBINDER:** Well, even then it might not be possible to avoid using a blocking press to form some larger, more complex designs, for example a coat of arms or some specialized text elements.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** No, Master, under no circumstances. In a work whose distinguishing character is determined by the work of the hands, there is no place for machines. If binders are so quick to switch back and forth between handwork

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Master, I see that you have many tricks up your sleeve and I can entrust my books to you. Another thing, please don't put the label too far from the head. I think if the label is too low it divides the spine into odd panels and detracts from the elegance of the spine. On thicker books, a higher label can have a slimming effect. Oh, and please don't use too large a typeface; preferably match the face to the type used for the text—Gothic with Gothic and Roman with Roman. And finally, add my initials at the tail of the spine!

## Saturday

### *A Discussion about Gold Tooling and Finishing*



Binding design: From Adam, *Die praktischen Arbeiten des Buchbinders*, page 98

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Today I'd first like to ask whether I should have an artist work on the design of my binding. However, dear Master, please don't think I'm asking this question because I don't trust you to do a good job. Although you are a master craftsman, shouldn't the binder be responsible for crafting the book and an artist for designing the book's décor?

**BOOKBINDER:** I'm not the least bit insulted and have worked with artists on many occasions. But you will need to concede that because of the skills required to execute our most challenging form of decoration, gold tooling by hand,



helps protect the book's fore edge. If you'd like, I could also sew the book on vellum slips and lace them through at the joint so they are visible.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** This is going to be a beautiful binding! I can't wait to get it back. When will that be?

**BOOKBINDER:** Perhaps in four weeks.

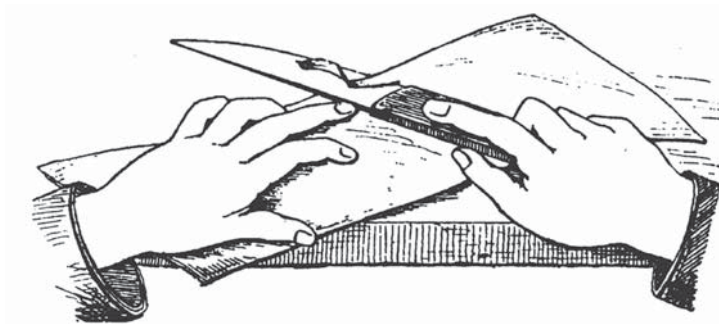
**BIBLIOPHILE:** What, it takes that long to bind a book?

**BOOKBINDER:** Certainly not, but a binding is not just worked on. It also needs to rest. I mentioned at various times that the book needs to go in a press after certain steps. This is because the boards need to dry out under weight for periods of time, and then, when the book is done, it needs to be kept under light weight to make sure the boards don't warp. If I have to make you wait, it is so the covers of your books lie flat, which is as it should be.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** I don't mean to rush you, I'm just very eager to hold the finished books in my hands. Unwrapping a new binding is like unveiling a new monument.

## Thursday

### *A Discussion about the Quarter-leather Binding*



Paring leather: From Adam, *Die praktischen Arbeiten des Buchbinders*, page 69

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Master, today I'd like you to bind this copy of Bachmann. As it's a reference book, I don't think the paper case binding will be durable enough. But since cloth bindings don't appeal to me and the full-leather binding is too expensive, I was thinking of a quarter-leather binding, the one you call the Halbfranzband. Who or what is this "half of a Franz" it refers to?

**BOOKBINDER:** The same reasoning that led you to look for an alternative to full-leather is what led King Francis I of France to commission bindings in which only the spine was covered in leather. Other people believe that the name refers to the binding style originally being French.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** In this style, the connection between the cover and the text block is more structural, isn't it?

**BOOKBINDER:** Yes, you're right in thinking that it is worked differently. The cords that we had cut back to a few centimeters are frayed out, fanned out, and pasted down on

top of the board. Then a strip of wastepaper is put down on top of that, and the whole book is put in the press between tins and wooden boards. Next, the spine of the book receives two layers of strong paper, and the book is placed back in the press overnight to dry.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** May I ask a question? While that double layer of paper on the spine may make the spine stronger, doesn't it also make it more rigid, so the book doesn't open as well? I've often noticed that handbound books don't open well, something I can't have happen with my books.

**BOOKBINDER:** It is a very common superstition that when opened a book must lie flat and stay open. If that is what you insist upon, I cannot guarantee the durability of your book, because the sewing and other elements would need to be so loose that the book wouldn't stay together. The only books that really open flat are very large ones with heavy paper, like springback ledger books. You're a bibliophile and love your books as if they were your children, don't you? You would want the best for your children, why not for your books? Don't you agree that it is better to have a nice tight binding in your hands even if you might have to hold it open a little? And just as you wouldn't use force against your children, you wouldn't want to force your book open by breaking the spine, would you?

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Master, your logic is impeccable and I will keep what you said in mind. Let me ask you another question. A librarian acquaintance of mine once said that the French do a much better job with their quarter-leather bindings than the Germans.

**BOOKBINDER:** That is absurd. What is most likely behind that statement is the difference between the French and

**BOOKBINDER:** Well, you do know that the price of leather has risen a great deal. There is also quite a lot of work involved with doing a full-leather binding, especially with all the paring at the edges and along the joints, where we need to be careful not to make it too thin. When we paste out the leather it gets very soft and is easily damaged, so we need to work carefully and not damage the grain as we put down the leather and complete the turn-ins, making sure the board edges and headcaps are all even and neat. What kinds of endpapers would you like for your volume of Heine? They could be decorated or plain paper. Another option common with full-leather bindings such as this would be using silk.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** No silk, please! For this binding please use a handmade paper in the same yellowed color as the text. Why can't the endpapers of a full-leather binding be plain once in a while? Besides, handmade paper is a noble material in its own right. Please also give the endpapers more pages, like those I have seen with other leather volumes.

**BOOKBINDER:** You mean the English endpaper that is made of two folios stuck inside each other? How should I decorate the binding?

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Can we talk about it tomorrow? For today I'd also like to ask you to bind this copy of the Divine Comedy in full calf vellum. One should always use vellum with an Italian book. Let's leave the vellum untooled, as it is so beautiful, and place a label on the spine in a condensed Roman font.

**BOOKBINDER:** If I may make a suggestion, I'd like to give this vellum binding a yapp edge on the fore edge, something that was common on many of the older vellum bindings. This makes the edge wider when seen from the front and



**BIBLIOPHILE:** You're absolutely right! And because it is such a valuable book, I want to have it sewn on real raised cords. I'd also like to have sewn endbands like on all fine bindings, not those garish stuck-on ones.

**BOOKBINDER:** You mean a handsewn endband? Only a small number of bookbinders know the history of those. I imagine it started like this: the old binders sewed the book and at the ends added cords like those they were sewing around. When they wrapped the sewing thread around them to get to the next signature, the handsewn endband got its start.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** I remember seeing that on more recent bindings, too. In one exhibition I saw bindings like that by Cobden-Sanderson, the well-known English book art reformer who came to bookbinding after being a lawyer. He wrote a wonderful ode to the "Book Beautiful." How do we create endbands today?

**BOOKBINDER:** There are many styles, but I will briefly describe the most common ones. We start with a strip of card or vellum that is as wide as the boards are thick. Around this we wrap a piece of thin fabric, and we glue this to the spine of the book. Next, we wrap around the strip with different colors of silk thread. One color could be that of the leather and the other that of the edge decoration. The sewing itself is more like a wrapping, and requires a great deal of attention to detail to work the two needles so the threads all lie next to each other tightly, without getting twisted, and to ensure that the bead on the front is even.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** I think handsewn endbands are very attractive. Is this going to be an expensive book?

German styles in how the boards are attached. Remember how I described pasting the frayed-out cords on the board to attach it? What the French do is lace the cords through the boards to secure them. Here, let's see what Paul Kersten wrote in his *Exakte Bucheinband*: "It is commonly believed that a book in which the boards are attached in the French manner is more durable than one in which the German method is used. This is false. The boards are attached to the text block via the cords, and in all cases the failure was at the hinge and after many years of use, not because the boards were not laced on..."

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Again, I can't argue with knowledge and experience of a true craftsman like you.

**BOOKBINDER:** Let's move along, shall we. Next, we cut the spine piece that goes between the text block and the leather from a piece of card. Onto this we glue our false raised bands, should those be desired. Then comes the very important yet messy task of paring the leather along the turn-ins so they conform to the shape of the boards and don't have ugly lumps. After that comes the even harder task of covering the book in the leather, a process I must describe in more detail, especially as it relates to the raised cords. For those it is necessary to use what we call band nippers to ensure that the leather sits tight to the raised cords and is even. Then there is also the headcap, which is created by the turn-in of the leather at the head and tail. A well-formed headcap is the mark of a true bookbinder. Finally, we put on the leather corners that we pared along with the other leather.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Please don't put leather corners on any of my books. I know they are traditional with this binding style, but I think they destroy the aesthetic of the book because the elegant rectangular panel of decorated paper becomes

one with six awkward sides. Not having the corners allows the decorated paper to be shown to its full effect.

**BOOKBINDER:** As you wish. However, to protect the corners I will then use the invisible vellum corners we discussed earlier with the paper case binding. What kind of paper do you want for the endpapers and sides?

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Because this a reference book, why don't we use the same sturdy handmade paper for the endpapers and the sides? I'm sure you can choose something appropriate that is either darker or lighter than the leather. How about a nice brown goatskin? Please use the same color for the edges as well. Oh, before I forget—the margins of this book are very tight, so please don't trim too tightly, as that will look unattractive. However, untrimmed it won't look that attractive either. Help me out of this dilemma.

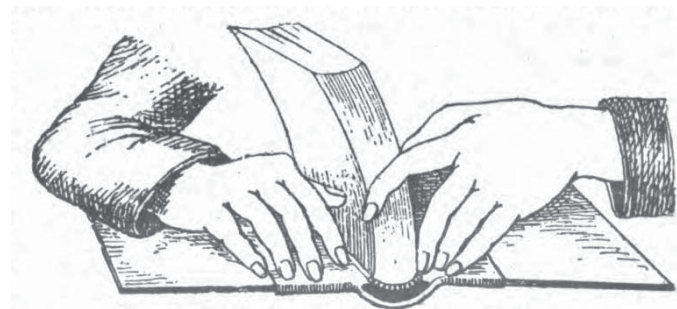
**BOOKBINDER:** That's easy. I'll give your book rough-cut edges, also known as *tranche ébarbée*.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Yes, those. I'm surprised I didn't remember them.

**BOOKBINDER:** When we rough cut the edges we don't do it all at once in a guillotine, but rather trim each signature individually in the board shear – just enough to even up the edges. This creates an even edge, but not a smooth one. Of course, one can't put a colored or gilt edge on if the signatures are trimmed this way. A French bookbinder once said that the secret to rough cutting the edges of a book lies in evening them without compromising the proportions. Rough cutting is extra work, though, because before the signatures can be trimmed on the board shear they must be slit open to determine where the best place is to trim without cutting off too much.

## Friday

### *A Discussion about the Full-Leather Binding*



Turning-in headcaps: From Adam, *Die praktischen Arbeiten des Buchbinders*, page 85

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Master, I am happy! Look what I have here! It's a first edition of Heine's *Book of Songs*. I found it in a bookseller's stall. Do you have any idea how much I paid for it? Two marks and fifty! The seller had no idea what the book was worth. I have to admit that finding the book is as much fun as getting it for such a laughable price. I guess that's how we bibliophiles are. So, as a reward, I will treat myself to a full-leather binding (Franzband). But everything needs to stay as it is, with absolutely no trimming, not even rough cutting. I'd also like you to preserve the paper wrappers by binding them in with the book, even the paper spine.

**BOOKBINDER:** Of course! Here binding in the wrappers is appropriate, especially given the scarcity of the volume, but we also do so in those cases where the wrappers have aesthetic value. However, I think it is excessive to do this with all books, the way the French bibliophiles like to.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** I think I will want this *tranche ébarbée* for most of my valuable bindings.

**BOOKBINDER:** I would like to suggest that on books where there is more margin along the top edge you have it colored or gilt. Even with simple bindings that are only trimmed on all three sides, we often decorate the top edge because doing so helps protect the text block from getting dirty from dust.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** What else do we need to discuss? Yes, I just wanted to say that for this quarter-leather binding I don't want any fancy tooling. The gold on the title is enough.

**BOOKBINDER:** Perhaps some gold lines to either side of the raised cords?

**BIBLIOPHILE:** I'd rather not. I really like the raised cords as they are and don't think it's necessary to emphasize them further. When I have you bind some larger books this way I may have you add lines at the head and tail of the spine.

**BOOKBINDER:** Would you like to have a gold line on the cover leather where the paper overlaps it?

**BIBLIOPHILE:** That would need to be decided on a case-by-case basis. If there is a nice contrast between the leather and the paper then I don't think it's necessary. Otherwise, I'm not opposed to it.

**BOOKBINDER:** How should I do it with other books I bind for you in the future? Do you always want to use the same papers for the covering or the sides?

**BIBLIOPHILE:** I thought about that a great deal at home, and I don't think I want all my books to look the same. I like to see variety in my bindings as long as the differences aren't

too dramatic. For instance, I like the combination of a nice monochrome endpaper with a colorful paper on the sides. So, I think we're in agreement on what I would like for my quarter-leather bindings.

Here are a few more copies of *Eckermanns Gespräche* that I would like to have bound in quarter-vellum (without visible vellum corners, of course). For the sides, please use a nice green book cloth. I can imagine they would look very nice together. By the way, I will ask you to bind a different edition of the book in an identical binding at a later date. Will I need to bring this set with me then?

**BOOKBINDER:** No, that won't be necessary, as I make a template for every better-quality binding I make, on which I note the size, materials, and colors, including samples of the materials. This makes it very easy to duplicate a binding.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** That is very sensible. Good-bye and until tomorrow! (As the bibliophile is on his way out, the Master begins to work, causing the former to quickly turn around and ask) What in heaven's name are you doing there, Master? You're working on the edge of a book with a tool that looks like something a cabinetmaker would use! Doesn't that damage the book?

**BOOKBINDER:** On the contrary, it is supposed to help the edge. I have the book clamped very tightly in the lying press and am working the edge with this scraper to get it perfectly smooth so I can put on a beautiful gilt edge. I'm actually removing almost nothing from the edge of the book.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Is a gilt edge difficult to do?

**BOOKBINDER:** And how! The edge must be prepared extremely carefully, scraped, and finally pastewashed so a

mirror-like surface is achieved. This is especially difficult with the concave surface of the fore edge. An art in itself is the handling of the gold leaf. This gold is extremely thin, and each leaf is kept in a booklet between two sheets of tissue. The gold must be lifted carefully from the booklet and then placed on a chalked leather cushion—the chalk degreases the leather so the gold can be removed easily. It is cut with a gilding knife and tiled on the book's edge, which has already received egg glair with a special device. Then the press is tilted to allow the excess glair to flow out from under the gold. Watch out! I'm about to show you how it's done. See, the glair is dripping and the gold is staying in one piece. Now the book needs to remain in the press for several hours, but not so long that the glair becomes too dry. Next, we begin burnishing the edge. First, we lay on a lightly waxed piece of white paper and begin moving across it carefully with this agate burnisher. Then we remove the paper and continue with the burnisher directly on the gilt edge to burnish it to an even shine.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Is it essential that the edge is polished to a shine?

**BOOKBINDER:** Not necessarily. If we keep burnishing with the paper over the gilt edge we will create a matte finish to our edge.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** I think I will prefer the matte edge on my books so I can tell myself that even dull things can be of gold.

and that of machines, they shouldn't be surprised if their work becomes devalued. The masters of old were able to put large seals or coats of arms on their bindings, too, without resorting to a blocking press.

**BOOKBINDER:** I know that. The old masters had to exert physical efforts that today appear superhuman.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Well, since today's tools are smaller than the ones of old—without sacrificing aesthetics—I don't see why you can't put a little more effort into doing it by hand if a larger design or type is needed. When I was in England, I visited the shop of Joseph Zaehnsdorf, the German binder who made his name there, and was able to see how complete titles were tooled in gold using individual letters. The finisher who did this work was amazingly skilled.

**BOOKBINDER:** Hand lettering, as the English call it, does not exist in Germany. We don't even have any shops that possess the sheer quantities of hand letters in various sizes that are required. What I do is use brass letters in the stamping press or a hand typeholder with which I tool the title line by line on the spine. I use the same typeholder on the cover of the book when I need larger fonts.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** See, Master, you can do it without machines. And, since you told me about your pallets and gouges I know that you can also piece these together if the design calls for it.

**BOOKBINDER:** Of course it can be done, and it is done often, but let me tell you more about the technique of gold tooling by hand. As there are several manuals about this aspect of bookbinding, you will understand if I explain it in general terms and focus on the more important aspects.

However, there are many more very important small details that a finisher must know. Let's take a border design with straight lines and a larger ornament that will require the appropriate rolls to complete. The center ornamental design will be created from two or three simpler ornaments that are arranged together. There are also designs that are built up from an arrangement of several dots but repeated hundreds of times. Some very complex designs requiring thousands of impressions were created using only a small handful of tools.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** I imagine that, similar to the gilt edge, the gold leaf is laid on the leather and then pushed into it using the roll, pallet, or stamp.

**BOOKBINDER:** Well, it's not that easy. First I need to arrive at the final design using the tools and other ornaments. Then I use those tools to stamp the design on a piece of paper. I then copy the design onto a tissue paper that I will lay on the binding. Next, I impress the design through the paper using the specified tools. When I'm done, I remove the tracing paper with the design and carefully brush glair into the impressions made by the tools. When that is dry, I apply a very light amount of grease, such as Vaseline, with a ball of cotton to help hold the gold in place, and then put down the gold, making sure it sits in the impression so the design can be seen. Now I can do the actual finishing with gold. The tools are heated up and impressed into the leather, setting the gold down and binding it to the leather. This can require a good deal of physical effort, but more important is maintaining the tool at the proper temperature—too hot and it burns the leather; too cool and the gold does not adhere. The humidity of the leather also plays a role, as does the dwell time—the amount of time the tool is in the leather. If I hold the hot tool over the glaired impression too

long, the heat can dry out the glair and the gold won't stick, either. A good eye and very steady hand are critical, as one will need to work accurately, yet fast. Of course, not every impression will be perfect—the gold might tear or have gaps. That means we must be able to go into the same impression multiple times, even with complex tools. This is especially difficult with rolls, where the design has no beginning or end. Titling on the spine is also very difficult. One can also achieve rather attractive designs with blind tooling, meaning tooling without gold, especially on volumes with lighter leather, such as natural pigskin. On these the tooling appears dark brown. But achieving an even brown tone is not easy because the leather needs to be dampened evenly, the tool temperature consistent, and uniform pressure needs to be applied so the leather does not get burned.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Is that all on the subject of tooling? I did not mean to imply that tooling was easy, and I appreciate the amount of skill, experience, and steely concentration that are required of the craftsman.

**BOOKBINDER:** And spending all day hunched over tools and next to a hot finishing stove isn't pleasant, either.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** What I really wanted to get at with my earlier question was to learn more about some of the other decorative techniques, like leather onlays and inlays.

**BOOKBINDER:** Hand tooling is the basis of those, too. When the gold-tooled binding based on the techniques of the Arab world arrived in fifteenth-century Italy, that's when design in bookbinding really began. Prior to that, it was the silver- and goldsmiths, the ivory carvers and others, who decorated the bindings. Before gold there was also blind stamping and *Lederschnitt* (called *cuir-cisele* in French;

a technique where leather is cut into and modeled). It was with gold tooling that book decoration became an integral part of the book, and the Renaissance had a great influence. In addition to gold tooling, Arabic bindings also exhibited the first use of onlaid and inlaid leather, the latter being more prevalent. Contemporary binders know and still use both techniques, for which we have to pare the leather tissue-thin. Often we will surround the onlays with gold tooling as well.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Master, when I came to you today I asked whether I should rather have an artist design the décor of my full-leather binding. This question has now been settled between us; think about the comparison with the chess game. So you will understand that I will reserve the right to work with an artist on books that need that certain something that cannot be provided by your tools.

**BOOKBINDER:** We bookbinders are not opponents of creative collaboration. But let me remind you that bookbinders have always created their own tools, too. Think about the fanfare style that we owe to the French master Nicolas Eve, who lived in the sixteenth century. In the eighteenth century, French binders took inspiration from lace and gave us the *fers à la dentelle*. Le Gascon, who lived in the seventeenth century, gave us *pointillé*, a luxurious style of finishing consisting of dotted lines and curves on bindings. Even today, leading finishers are creating tools for tooling. We also know that we owe much of our inspiration to famous bibliophiles. I'm certain you know the name of the sixteenth-century French diplomat, Jean Grolier, the most famous of all bibliophiles, who had Italian bookbinders create a style to his own specifications. Even the books of Thomas Maioli, the Hungarian king Matthew Corvinus, and the French kings of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries and



their wives and famous mistresses, are easily recognizable to bibliophiles. I will even mention a great German bibliophile—Germany was poor in bibliophiles for a very long time, a situation that has fortunately changed—the Elector, August of Saxony, who lived in the sixteenth century and for whom the most famous German binder, Jakob Krauße, created many fine bindings. The Jakob-Krauße-Bund, the most well-known federation of German design binders, was named after him. I could go on and give you the names of further famous French, English, and German binders.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** Master, I thank you, and as a proper bibliophile I will study the history of design binding. However, you have shamed me a bit, as I will not be able to compete with your Groliers and Maiolis. But don't you think it is not just as important for the great bibliophiles but also for the book as art and for you as bookbinder that there are "lesser" bibliophiles who find joy and appreciation in even the simplest binding?

**BOOKBINDER:** I agree completely. The bookbinder needs clients who value his work and think about it. I have learned a great deal from you over these past days.

**BIBLIOPHILE:** We have both learned from and encouraged one another. I have taken everything you have told me over the course of this week and written it down exactly and intend to publish it as a small booklet for the use and enjoyment of bibliophiles and their bookbinders. And do you know what I want to call our book, the one we created through our dialogue over the last several days?

*THE BONE FOLDER!*

## Colophon

Originally written by Ernst Collin as *Der Pressbengel*, this edition was translated from the original German by Peter D. Verheyen as *The Bone Folder* and first published in the 2009 issue of Guild of Book Workers' *Journal*. Design of this edition by Peter D. Verheyen in LTC Bodoni 175, a typeface based on the original 1790 design by Giambattista Bodoni. Illustrations used in the text are from Paul Adam's *Die praktischen Arbeiten des Buchbinders* (1898), *Die einfachen handwerksmäßigen Buchbinderarbeiten ohne Zuhilfe von Maschinen* (1924) and Ludwig Brade's *Illustriertes Buchbinderbuch* (1882). The wrapper on the "print-on-demand" edition is from an original pastepaper made by Peter D. Verheyen.

This edition is available "print-on-demand" and formatted into signatures for binding at [philobiblon.com/pressbengel](http://philobiblon.com/pressbengel).



Ornament from advertisement for the Corvinus  
Antiquariat Ernst Collin



**W. COLLIN**  
**KÖNIGLICHER HOFBUCHBINDER**  
BERLIN W.  
LEIPZIGERSTRASSE 19,

**PARIS, WELTAUSSTELLUNG 1900:  
GOLDENE MEDAILLE.**

**BUCHHEINBÄNDE**

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**JEDER ART**

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**VON EINFACHER BIS KÜNSTLERISCHER  
AUSFÜHRUNG IN JEDER PREISLAGE.**



Advertisement for W. Collin from *Zeitschrift für Bücherfreunde*, Volume. 8,  
Number 1, 1904-05.



**D A S  
CORVINUS-ANTIQUARIAT  
ERNST COLLIN**

**\* G \* M \* B \* H \***

***Charlottenburg, Mommsenstr. 27  
besitzt zahlreiche schöne Bücher,  
die führende deutsche  
Kunstbuchbinder  
mit kostbaren  
Einbänden  
umkleidet  
haben***



Advertisement for the Corvinus Antiquariat Ernst Collin from *Ausstellung  
handwerklicher Einbandkunst im Museum des Güstrower Kunst- und  
Altertumsvereins, 1924.*