

## St. Ann's Steam Binding Works.

THE church of St. Ann, Blackfriars, has long since been demolished; but its name is consistently honoured by Messrs. Fisher & Son, whose bookbinding establishment, known as St. Ann's Steam Works, is erected on a portion of the rectory estate, and stands, indeed, within the enclosure of the old burying-ground. The parish register records the burial in this place of Isaac Oliver, the miniature painter, Dick Robinson, the player, Nat Field, the player and poet, and William Fairthorne, the engraver; and it has many entries relating to Anthony Vandyck, who lived for a considerable time in the immediate vicinity.

Messrs. Fisher & Son are the descendants and representatives of a very old family of London binders. Their offices, above which are some small workshops, are in Carter Lane, but the chief works are approached by Church Entry. They are substantially and commodiously built. The rooms are well lighted and ventilated, and are admirably adapted for the convenience of a large number of workpeople and a rapid execution of work. Messrs. Fisher & Son adopt, as far as it is possible, the plan of taking books through the various departments in large batches, and the work is usually conveyed in unbroken order from folding room to packing room by a method which involves the smallest amount of carrying about. This process is rendered all the more simple by the help of numerous well-constructed lifts and staircases. Visiting St. Ann's Works on a recent occasion, we were conducted through the building by Mr. James Fisher, whose wide experience and practical knowledge have enabled him to introduce several improvements in methods and machinery. In the management of their business these binders have advanced steadily with the times. It is well to note, too, that while they are always ready to introduce improvements from outside, they duly appreciate suggestions made by their *employés*, and frequently much to their own benefit. A new kettle-stitch apparatus, which has been successfully adapted to their sewing machines is, we understand, the invention of one of the foremen in St. Ann's Works. The stitch which it produces is exceedingly neat, and it gives great firmness and elasticity to the books; the new appliance, simple in itself, adding nothing to the complication of machinery. We noticed here one of Kampe & Co.'s small automatic wire-sewing machines at work on one of the illustrated magazines, and the operation was performed with surprising rapidity and nicety. Mr. Fisher informed us that they have this season given special attention to the use of caoutchouc in binding books of unusually thick paper, for which purpose, he stated, it is employed with great advantage over other processes. Like most cloth binders, Messrs. Fisher & Son have discarded the rolling machine. Books on being sewn are passed through the Richmond nipping press, a simple machine which effects a very great saving of time and renders almost unnecessary any further pressing in the ordinary manner by the screw or hydraulic press. A very good edge-trimming machine is extensively used in St. Ann's Works; its one great merit being that the gauges are so arranged that one operation serves for the cutting of both the fore-edge and tail of books, and a clean and perfect edge is produced, however little is taken off. As a rule, the men in this bindery are set to work in pairs. This system has a decided advantage for the work of the cutting machines, where one man attends to the fore-edges and his companion to the

