The Edinburgh Exhibition.

VIEWING it as a whole the citizens of Edinburgh have many reasons to be proud of the Exhibition which they have organized under the able direction of Mr. S. Lee Bapty. It is respectable in proportions, well filled, and internationally fairly representative, but of all the various departments, the least attractive, and perhaps worst as a representative collection, is the Binding department. Not a single really first-class modern binding tells its story of the existence of an art which delights the luxurious few; everything bearing testimony to the keenness of competition in producing cheaply for the utilitarian many, so that the standard of excellence must be purely a commercial one. The practical binder of to-day must study the exigencies of the market and measure out the quality of his work in accordance with the scale of prices, unless he can get a temporary advantage by improved machinery.

The one redeeming feature in this exhibition, from our point of view is the cases of the Oxford University Press. It would be difficult to get together a more varied exhibit of work in any one class than that of the Gold Medalist of the last Paris Exhibition, but here Mr. Froeide has outdone himself. As a study for our provincial binders it is unique, for, with a fairly wide experience, I have never seen its equal. There are upwards of £2,000 worth of work in the cases and in every style of Bible work possible. The resources of nature have been well nigh ransacked to provide covers. The skins of sheep, lambs, calves, goats, buffaloes, kangaroos, monkeys, seals, lizards, alligators, crocodiles and snakes, and the fur of bears, lambs, beavers, opossums, sables, chinchillas, squirrels, and seals, besides ivory, tortoise-shell, mother-of-pearl, and silk have all been brought into service.

Now as to the Books—In the centre of the largest case is a pile of bibles, pyramidal in form, of all sizes, from the folio to a little book in two volumes like a square 48mo—the name of the size is unknown to me—in plain morocco; the workmanship generally, very good—opening easily, laying flat, and yet with a good solid feel. In the corners are smaller piles of limp padded, yapp and circuit bibles, in morocco, calf, Russia, and levant grained seal. The Oxford Teacher's Bible, in yapp (Fig. 1), printed on thin opaque India paper, is a marvel of lightness, and really flexible binding. It is sewn with silk and opens right back or folds in half without injury, the cover is apparently of morocco, and calf, rolled up to give it a slight grain, joined together with caoutchouc, the lining extending to within one sixteenth of an inch of the edge of the cover, that is, coming out on to the flaps beyond the edges of the book, the join concealed by a very fine line. The books have round corners—the general style in bible work just now—and red under gold edges. This book is extremely popular, and deservedly so, as far as the binding is concerned, for a more useful book for carrying about it is impossible to conceive. To show their strength two books of this class, a nonpareil 8vo and a burgeois 8vo are hanging, doubled right back, the whole weight depending on a single leaf of the thin paper. They had been so hanging for two weeks when I saw them, and seemed likely to remain so without injury during the remainder of the Exhibition.

Another extremely nice and useful binding is that of the levant grained seal, limp, with loose kid lining grained; very plain and sober in appearance, it is nevertheless an elegant and really fine binding, the fine cut gold roll edged with a mitred blind line inside, and the kid fly-leaf giving a handsome finish, which betokens better class work.

To save trouble in carrying, the Combination Yapp is useful. Fig. 2 shows the outer case in morocco yapp; the lining is of calf, having a pocket on each side, into which the front board of the hymns, and the back board of a prayer are placed, and thus the books held in position; two bound volumes in a single cover. Fig. 2 shows the case open with the call bound books inside.

Of the Fur work I can only say that it was very handsome, a small quarto in bear skin looking very
fastened down, but there are two books in the skins of a smaller snake, almost transparent, to which a slight colour is given by the mounting on a stouter coloured leather, on one a black cross and on the other a gold cross is blocked, which shows through the snake skin and is at first sight a little mysterious. There are a great many varieties of boxes for sets of prayers and hymns, which have become a special feature of binders' work in the bible trade for some years past. I must notice a very neat square cut oblong thumb case, in rolled calf, with telescope strap handles (Fig. 6). Rolled calf in the divinity brown colour, is a very neat style and quiet. Another very pretty case is a fancy-cut upright, in red Russia with deep crimson silk knotted handles (Fig. 7).

Loose sides are one feature of much of the work, only the turning-in being fastened down, and in much of it the sides are padded, giving the appearance of cushion-bevelled boards without the heavy weight. Two or three ruby bibles in the new Rutland roan are thus treated. Some of the Russia circuits are also padded, and with beautifully watered silk ends and flys make rich looking books. The silks are so placed that the fly and the end fastened down match, probably each pair being watered together.
A nonpareil Bible, bound in green "ooze" calf "yapp" style and lined with the same material, is probably the most pliable specimen in the collection. The calf is especially useful for heavy blocking, to imitate stamped velvet, but this book was only lettered, and gold work does not show up clearly on it.

A copy of the thin Parallel Bible with the versions of 1611 and 1881 side by side, bound in citron crushed levant, red under gold edges solid, round corners, loose sides padded, the leather being turned Celtic cross, but of the palest blue calf, with silk handles and tassels, is very dainty, though the colours are too delicate for ordinary use (Fig. 8). The same style, however, is carried out in a variety of colours and materials, and will no doubt prove attractive to the ladies.

The pulpit sets and the large quarto and family bibles are all good substantial but plain tomes, crosses being very sparingly used, probably to suit Scotland; but some of the edges are elaborately tooled.

The work generally may be pronounced excellent, as far as the forwarding is concerned, while the finishing and blocking are clean and bright, the designs being very tasty although simple; plain lines, corner pieces or monograms, and the choicest of new types for the letterings being all the ornament. Perhaps it is the chaste simplicity that is so effective an attraction.

The Oxford University Press notice will be concluded in the next number, and the rest of the bookbinding exhibits receive attention in the following issue.
SINCE writing the report published in our last issue, MESSRS. EVRE AND SPOTTISWOODE have completed their exhibit, so that we must add another redeeming feature to the Binding department of this Exhibition. The cases of this firm contain some very good samples of Bible and Prayer work in the newest styles, both of cover and ornamentation. Judging by the exhibits of the Oxford University Press and this firm, it would seem as if an effort was being made to reintroduce the fur work for the winter season and, as far as attractiveness goes, with every chance of success. Both firms have a splendid variety only differing from each other in the choice of material; and, although the main point is the cover, the books are well bound and not merely thrown into fur jackets, to drop to pieces after a few weeks of wear like so many books in fancy bindings.

to turn in. I do not think the style will ever become popular; shark is not nice to think of nor to look at, but the feel is decidedly unpleasant, being rough and furry; the grain is large and decided, and looks far better on morocco than the real thing. A set of Prayer and Hymns in armadillo grained Persian is effective; they are fitted into a new registered spring box of the same material; (Fig. 1) shows the box closed, but on pushing open the lid the books rise up so that they may be easily withdrawn. (Fig. 2).

The large pulpit Bibles and sets in red morocco are well bound solid volumes, exceedingly plain, having only a broad one-line square-mitred tie round the bands, but the black varnish spoils the appearance of the books making them look like cloth work.

The crushed leavens are very tasty and should prove an acceptable change from the more ordinary styles. Hitherto, crushed levant has been but very sparingly used in Bible work, being generally reserved for the relire moderne, but it is now being actively pushed, and several new shades of a sober kind introduced.

The following are the principal ones worth notice:—two small quartos, one in curled Llama, the other in small grey curled lambswool; one in seal and one in bear fur. A pile of seven sizes of Prayers are in white curled lamb, very delicate. Several sizes of Bibles are in Japanese fox, sheared, and a similar set in the same fur left long. For preference I would choose the long hair which is beautifully shaded, while the sheared has a ragged look though a smoother feel, and of course lays closer to the book. Some others are in natural musquash, natural raccoon, and Australian oppossum, besides furs mentioned in the Oxford exhibit.

The fancy hides used consist of South American lizard, with very small beautifully marked scales; golden crocodile, boa constrictor with scales set, and a green snake. There are also some Bibles in red, white and slate coloured shark sides, stiff boards. The edges are covered with rims as the skin is too hard.

A set of seven sizes in this material have full gilt sides, and deep margins on the inside, with leather joints richly tooled, and brocade silks or brocade papers let in.

One of the new Variorum Bibles is also elaborately mounted. The new style of mount is a skeleton scrollwork corner or clasp, mostly in silver. There are also some plain bevelled-edged round-corner mounts, rather heavy looking, in gold.

Besides the armadillo case, there are a large number of boxes for sets in many styles. One is a registered collapsible case in German calf. (Fig. 3). The sides are made to fold like the gusset of a purse, so that it lies flat when the books are taken out. (Fig. 4). The Russian flap lock-case (Figs. 5 and 6) completely closes in the books, protecting them from the weather; while the skeleton case (Fig. 7) shows off the binding and may be in contrast with it.
Of the large variety of Yapps I cannot say much. Many of them have pockets for notes, but they look bulgy, and the lines on the inside are much too coarse for neatness.

Some of the nicest work is the sets of grained calf in cavendish blue, terra cotta, and red, the terra cotta with black letterings; and the new cross-grained and straight-grained Russians, limp, with padded sides. These covers have an exquisite finish that will immediately recommend them to all lovers of dainty work and are destined to become prominent in the trade of the coming season.

A part of one of the cases is taken up by some specimens of library work, and some albums with an elaborate pattern in Japanese style over the front sides of which are some hand-painted female figures. The painting was splendidly done and is the main attraction, for on examining the cover I found it to be a thick enamelled paper, and the book probably of German workmanship.

A Grieve (Edinburgh), has a good case full of extra work, some of which is elaborately inlaid, but there is no definite style about any one of the many books exhibited. The tools used, belong to all the styles, but they are worked up in an indiscriminate manner to suit the shape desired, without any perception of the organism of design. Of one book however I would say a good word, assuming it is an old work, for I had no opportunity of inspecting it except as it lay in the case: “Goligrus and Gawane” seemed to be bound in a quaint and fitting manner. The leather appeared to be a browned calf, soaked and puckered up so that when dry it was creased and wrinkled in all directions, with here and there a definite form. It looked like a highly polished geological specimen with the fossilized footprints of a Pterodactyl or some other pterribly-hard-spelt-but-happily-extinct insect. It caught my attention the more because I never remember seeing anything like it before, and oh how one does long to see anything really and absolutely new. I can almost believe King Solomon must have had some experience in examining books when he bewailed the absence of anything new under the sun.

The great feature about all the work here is that it is a miracle of cheapness, in spite of the enormous price of leather, and some of it runs to two hundred and twenty-five shillings per dozen. This has been brought about by the competition amongst rival firms quickening the methods of production, not merely in turning out a respectable looking article but one that will bear the wear and strain, and do as much service as the more expensive books of past times, and every exhibition held bears this out.

The National Bible Society of Scotland has a large stall adjoining the Oxford exhibit, but the work is nearly all from the Oxford warehouse, the rest being made up from other Bible houses.

W. & R. Chambers have a collection of educational books chiefly in cloth with some very good designs in colour printing. A few of their best works, such as the “Book of Days” and the Encyclopaedia are bound in library style, the best being in red morocco extra and tree calf.

Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier have an exhibit mainly of cloth work, with some in library style interspersed.

A neat tooled edge.

The Italians were probably the first to ornament books with tooled gilt edges, and the sample shewn dates back to 1500, but the braided work is pretty and effective and might well be revived at the present day. Like most of the older Italian work the origin of its inspiration appears to have been Arabic. It is composed of a set of three pieces which may be used for working up a number of designs, and are in fact a set of puzzle tools for finishers. We shall be glad to record the success of any craftsman trying them and producing the best greatest variety of patterns. Any tasteful little ornament may be used to fill in the interstices, but the one chosen should invariably be used throughout the patterns.