

JEAN ENGEL, the founder of the great Parisian bindery in the Rue de Cherche Midi, died on July 12th at Saint Gervais-les-Bains, aged 81. He had been accustomed every year to go to these baths, attracted by the medicinal virtues of the thermal springs which rise in the wooded ravine of Montjorie, through which the Bon Nant, or "good stream," passes on its way to the river Arve. On July 12th, at about half-past two in the morning, the lower end of the Bionnay glacier broke away and dashed down the sides of Mont Blanc, carrying with it the wreckage of the village of Bionnay and a mass of rock and débris, which was hurled against the Etablissement des Bains, completely obliterating it, and crushing some two hundred persons altogether in its course; amongst them was M. Engel, whose body was not recovered until the 18th, when it was transferred to Paris for burial.

M. Engel was a wonderfully successful man. He arrived in Paris from his Suabian home almost penniless, but soon found employment in a small but good binding house under M. Schaek. There he grew in the esteem of his employer, until he was entrusted with the conduct of the business, which afterwards came into his own possession through marriage. At the time of his death it was the largest in Paris and one of the largest in France, employed eight hundred persons, and the buildings were fitted with large and powerful machinery, which M. Engel was one of the first to introduce in the trade; it will pass into the hands of his son Michel.

The Althorp Library.



THE old maxim about its being an ill wind which blows nobody any good has never been more completely verified than in the case of the Althorp Library, and the national calamity which we were preparing to mourn has turned out to be a cause for rejoicing. That this magnificent library would be sold, sooner or later, there has been for a long time very little doubt; that it would be purchased *en bloc* and given to the nation seemed beyond even the vagaries of the dreamer of dreams. Such, however, is unquestionably the case, and the transaction will certainly rank as most important and unique since books became objects of sale and purchase. Before the whole of the arrangements are completed, Mrs. Rylands, the actual purchaser, will find her banking account close upon half a million sterling less than it would otherwise have been, but she will be more than compensated for this by the reflection that she has done a noble deed, and that for all time her name will be associated with the finest collection of books ever collected together by one man.

Briefly—and we are not writing without the best authority—the history of the transaction, or rather movements, is this:—When the late Mr. John Rylands, of Manchester, died in December, 1889, and left his widow (and second wife) an enormous fortune, this generous lady formed a determination to perpetuate in some manner her husband's memory, and the gift of a great library to Manchester (for, although the

rumour of its destination has not been either officially confirmed or denied, there is, we think, very little doubt about its being Cottonopolis), where the greater portion of this wealth had been accumulated, seemed the most desirable method of doing this. Whilst president of Rawdon College, at Leeds, the Rev. S. G. Green, D.D. (now secretary of the Religious Tract Society), became acquainted with the great Manchester merchant, and this ripened into an intimate friendship, so much so in fact, that the late Mr. Rylands left Dr. Green a very substantial legacy, amounting, we believe, to something like £5,000.

When Mrs. Rylands had decided upon forming a library she secured the valuable assistance of Dr. Green's son, Mr. J. Arnold Green, who is his father's private secretary. Mr. Arnold Green has a very wide and sound knowledge of books, and since the beginning of 1890 has been purchasing and placing commissions in all quarters. For some months he was scouring the Continent for rarities, the greatest acquisition being a copy of the "Biblia Pauperum," a beautiful example, with the illustrations uncoloured, of the first edition executed between the years 1440 and 1450. We believe we are correct in saying that this copy is from the Borghese Library, the sum paid for it being 15,800 francs, or about £632. The utmost secrecy had to be observed in connection with this work, which was bought through a bookseller of Venice, owing to the jealousy of the Italian Government lest a national treasure should slip entirely out of the country. This difficult and delicate task of transmission was at length effected with the co-operation of a firm of English bankers. It may be pointed out that this copy is of the same issue as those in the British Museum and Althorp collection, so that, in spite of the minute differences which exist between the three copies, we trust that the duplicate will be either given or sold to some great local library which does not yet possess an example of this truly wonderful *incunabulum* "picture Bible."

In the section of modern works—in which, of course, the Althorp Library is very deficient—there are very many rarities, and not a few which are unique. In the latter category comes a copy of the first edition of Ruskin's poems—a present, with autograph inscription, from the great art critic's mother to a friend. The uniqueness of this particular volume arises from the fact that it contained a poem to the author's sweetheart of which Mrs. Ruskin disapproved, and which, therefore, she ruthlessly removed. This deficiency is, however, now supplied, and, practically, the volume is complete, but its abstract interest is not in any way lessened.

The infinity of treasures and rarities, which will at no distant date be housed under one roof and open to the inspection of all, cannot be enumerated in this article, and we must content ourselves for the present in giving a few facts which have not until now been made public. The conditions upon which the collection will be given to the nation, and its exact location in Manchester, are matters which it would be premature to discuss, but we may say this much—that there is very little fear of a repetition of the disgraceful fiasco which recently attended Mr. Tate's generous offer.

