A Prince's Princely Library.

A Bonaparte as a Book Gatherer.

To every lover of books the probable fate of the remarkable library collected by Prince Lucien Bonaparte will be a matter of interest. Mr. Victor Collins, as I sat with him in the midst of the library (writes a Chronicle interviewer), fully agreed that it ought to be so.

Many people know the big house with the red streaks down its face, where Prince Lucien lived, in Norfolk-terrace, Bayswater. Here for four and fifty weeks Mr. Victor Collins has been engaged in the very difficult work of cataloguing the prince's literary treasures.

"And now, I believe," I questioned, thus explaining the reason I sought a chat, "you have nearly finished?"

"Yes," said he, "the bulk of the task is done, but there still remains a certain amount of detail work. I need hardly say that my catalogue will not be in the least a full indication of the library. It will merely be a summary, if I may so express it, indicating in a general way what the contents of the library are. It would have taken ten Oxford dons as many years to investigate and set forth the library thoroughly."

"By which I take it that in the high estimate always placed on the library there has been no kind of exaggeration?"

"Indeed, no. I am perfectly safe in saying that such a philological library has never existed. It is hard to suppose that such another could be created, at least by the efforts of a single individual. Take this list which I have prepared, dividing the library roughly into the three classes of languages—monosyllabic, agglutinative, and inflexidual. Just run your eye down it, and tell me if you ever saw such a representation of different languages and dialects. Yet I venture to say, if the library were exhaustively catalogued, if the years of specialist labour were put into it that it would require, the list would come out doubled."

"Do you happen to know if from the first Prince Lucien intended to make his library a philological one?"

"He did. As a young man he was fond of chemistry, and on one occasion he was desirous of reading a chemical work that happened to exist only in Swedish. He learned Swedish for the purpose, and this gave him a taste for languages, very many of which he studied. His object in forming the library was to discover, rather perhaps to show, the relationship of all languages to each other. Nor was it only distinct languages he included in his plan, but their dialects, their corruptions, even slang, thieves' slang—slang of all kinds. In carrying out his idea the prince had, of course, the advantages of exceptional abilities, and until the fall of the Empire, of unlimited money. Some of those bindings you see here, so beautiful, so rich, so luxurious, must have cost a great deal. As to the printing, also so beautiful, the prince for long had a fully-fitted printing office down on the basement floor."

"I have heard that Prince Lucien travelled a great deal in pursuit of what I may call his philological mission?"

"A very great deal. He went through Italy and the Basque provinces of Spain with a list of test words drawn up by himself. He would go from village to village, talk with the people in each, and get them to repeat his test words. Thus he noted the differences in the speaking of the words, and as a result of the inquiry, he made linguistic maps of the Basque provinces and Southern Italy. In a word, there was no end to the prince's enthusiasm and to the labour he undertook. No trouble—in later years no sacrifice, one might almost say—was too much if something new, something at the same time valuable, could be added to the library."

"What was the prince's method of preserving forms of dialect, assuming he did not already find the means in existence?"

"For example, he had—always by the most competent authorities—the Gospel of St. Matthew written in all the Basque dialects. Again, holding that the development of railway intercommunication would soon cause much of our English local dialect to disappear, he had the Song of Solomon written in the English dialects as we know them at present. You know that part of the Song of Solomon beginning, 'I am black but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem.' Listen to it—fine, altogether, I think—in the dialect of the Northumberland colliers:

'A w's black, but bonny, Salem lasses,
Like the Kedar-shows;
Or, like the cortins where wor King
Lies under for a doze.
Noo, divent glower at me se
Becas aw's black as seat;
Becas the sun maw skin hes tann'd
Maw mother's bairns cries 'Slut!'

"Essentially the library is a philological one, but I imagine it must include a variety of rare books not philological."

"Naturally. The prince being a senator of France, a cousin of Louis Napoleon, and a well-known philologist, he had people bring him all sorts of interesting books. Therefore it is not surprising to find that the library includes rare works not present, for instance, in the British Museum. There are three early German Bibles which Mr. Gladstone, visiting the prince once, thought should be presented to the British Museum. To the best of Mr. Gladstone's knowledge one of the three did not exist anywhere else, and either of the three would be worth about £300. They are remarkable specimens of early German printing, and are profusely illustrated. If you notice, the characters in the cuts are habited in the costume and armour, not of Biblical times, but of the times at which the Bibles were printed—the latest 1494. Very valuable are, no doubt, the words for a little book here in Welsh written by Morys Clynoe, afterwards rector of the English College in Rome, under the inspiration of St. Charles Borromeo at Milan. It is a short definition of the Catholic faith, and was prepared to be sent to Wales to preserve the faith there. Some years ago it was
lent to the Cymmrodorian Society of London, and by them printed in facsimile. Again, this account of St. Bridget of Sweden, printed at Nuremberg, 1481, is very curious, especially the illuminated frontispiece, with the 'S. P. Q. R.' of Rome in one corner, and the arms of Sweden in the other. Then the library includes a first edition of Fortunatus's Italian Grammar, is rich in subsequent editions in some of Aldine's, and has a dictionary of 1477 by Adam de Rodula—(? Adam of Rothwell. These are one or two examples, and only that, of the rare books in the collection, quite aside from philology."

"Altogether, how many volumes are there in the collection?"

"At least 25,000, and I should say that fully thirty alphabets are spread through them. The prince, who was his own librarian, had a linguistic scheme in his mind, and arranged his books accordingly. So intimately did he know his books that when ill in bed he could send for one by telling how many it counted along in a given row. Only the prince knew his plan of arrangement, and so when I started to go over the library I had nothing to help me."

Now, it struck me, every volume was about as familiar to Mr. Collins as Charing-cross is to the average Londoner. Even an Esquimo pamphlet—yes, indeed, there exists such a thing—which he went after, he discovered in half a minute.

"If anybody wants to buy the library, say to present to the nation, how much," I queried, "would it cost?"

He told me the value that has been placed on the collection, and it is not a small sum, yet it might be larger.

It is to be hoped that, if the British Museum does not secure Prince Louis Lucien Bonaparte's Library, someone will follow on a smaller scale the splendid precedent Mrs. Rylands set in buying for the public the Althorp collection complete.

This year the Bookbinders' Guild of Leipzig celebrates the 350th anniversary of its organisation, when the annual meeting of Association of Guilds of German Bookbinders is also to convene in the historic city of authors, printers, and volume casers. To fitly commemorate the double event, the Leipzig Guild has resolved to hold an exhibition of binding from August 5th to 12th, 1894. All arrangements are entrusted to Moritz Gohre, the guild master. In this connection the wire and thread sewing machines from Leipzig, which were shown at the Columbian World's Fair in Chicago, must be briefly noted. A real novelty is a thread stitching machine for account books, which sews any ordinary thickness of leaves with a double thread. The sewing is done in such a manner that the book after it is sewed can be cut into smaller books. Thirty oscillations each minute are made by the table; six note or pocket memorandum books being sewed at each oscillation.

In Copenhagen there is open an exhibition of new inventions, organised by the Industrial Society of Copenhagen. The formal opening took place on Friday, January 5th.

Russian Bookbindings.

Recent notes on Russian bindings show that there is among the Muscovites strong evidence of Oriental taste in their book coverings. Great solidity is apparent in the more ancient bindings, and they seem to be indestructible. Time was not counted dearer than skill when those massive old volumes were put together, and substitutes for rag paper were then unknown or scarcely thought of. Glue has been taken from the back of such a binding, and found to be so good that, if dissolved in water, it might readily have been used again. At the beginning of the present century it was a fashion in St. Petersburg and Moscow to ornament church books richly, but the Eastern style had vanished, and there was a tendency to adopt the French tooling. Owing to the importance of the leather trade in their country, Russian binders have had the advantage of obtaining cheap, strong, book covers. Almost all Russian books are bound in leather; cloth is very rarely seen, and even paper bindings usually have a leather back. Pamphlets are uncommon, but the thinnest of them have a cover. Wire stitching, however, is in ordinary use. A unique style in Russia is a white back with the title lettered or blocked in black ink. Special mention should be made of the fact that Russian binders never cut their work down, but always leave the margins as wide as possible, and in this they are right.

The following lines were written by a friend of Montgomery's in 1881. They shew in curious fashion how friendship sometimes links the past and present together:

**Gower and I (1320 and 1881).**

*Father of English poetry, I greet you!*
*Stretching a chain of names (mine last) to meet you:*
*Lydgate you knew, and following him as third,*
*Lydgate knew well the printer Wynken Word:*
*Wynken knew Fraser, he Sir Thomas More,*
*Whose hapless fate he lived not to deplete:*
*Too well Sir Thomas knew the tyrant Harry,*
*Whose daughter Bess the chain will downward carry,*
*To Shakespeare, and to his and Milton's friend,*
*Sir William Davenant, so to Dryden tend,*
*To Pope, Sam Johnson, and to Hannah More:*
*She knew Montgomery, whom with a score*
*Of times I've sat, survivor of a band*
*Connecting near six centuries hand in hand.*

D. WALKINSHAW

"The Printing of Modern Books," a paper read before the Bibliographical Society by Chas. T. Jacoby, the manager of The Chiswick Press, has been reprinted by the author, in a charming old-style manner, with lubricated title-page, "for presentation only."

Mr. W. IRBETSON announces that with the New Year he removes his bookbinders' supply stores from 10 Paternoster-square to 64 Goswell-road, E.C. (opposite to Clarkhouse Buildings).

**Herr W. Krausch**, bookbinder, in Magdeburg, recently celebrated his jubilee (fifty years) as an employing bookbinder.