Perhaps there is no shop in London where a greater variety of miscellaneous work is turned out than from the building in White Hart-street, Drury-lane, owned by Messrs. Diprose Brothers, specially designed and built for a bindery, and one of the first buildings in which the frontage is composed wholly of cast iron and glass, a style for which special sanction had to be obtained from the Metropolitan Board of Works.

Large as this business is, the firm is not a very old one. Mr. John Diprose was born in London in 1849, and his brother, Henry Landon, in 1847. Their father, Mr. John Diprose, was a printer and publisher, of the Strand, who attained some degree of literary eminence by the compilation of a work entitled “Some Account of the Parish of St. Clement Danes,” which, besides being thorough and exhaustive, was so interesting that it received many favourable comments, a Times review stating that “no history of London could be written without it.” Although having a good business of his own, Mr. Diprose, senior, determined to give his sons a thorough practical education, and apprenticed his son John to Mr. C. J. Forward in 1855, to have him trained as a bookbinder, and later on Henry Landon was sent to the office of The Economist, where he served his time as a printer.

After John had completed his apprenticeship, he remained with Mr. Forward for three years as a journeyman, when, in 1865, he commenced business for himself in Portugal-street, Lincoln’s Inn. In 1868, the business having grown very rapidly and requiring further assistance, he was joined by his brother, and the premises in Portugal-street had to be vacated as they were wanted for the new building of the Middlesex Registry Office. They then removed to No. 6 Brydges-street, now Catherine-street, Strand, where they very soon had to make further extensions by taking in No. 5. By this time their business was firmly established and in a flourishing condition, but a portion of the house was let to Charles Dickens as a store room for numbers of Household Words and All the Year Round, until his death, in 1870. At that time, Messrs. Diprose were blocked up with work, having, besides other books, 90,000 crown-8vo. copies of Dickens’ works. As soon as the news of Dickens’ death touched the hearts of the people, a sudden rush was made upon his books as if they were relics of the loved one taken away, and it was only with great difficulty that Messrs. Diprose could keep pace with the demand—a difficulty experienced by other binders as well as this firm. For a long time the pressure continued, until the firm was compelled to seek larger and more convenient accommodation, which was not easily found just then, but in 1875 an opportunity presented itself, and the firm purchased a block of warehouses from Messrs. Bell, which had been specially designed for storing books, in White Hart-yard, Drury-lane.

Quite a little history is attached to these buildings—as there is to most of the properties around the Strand—of authors and publishers, some mention of which should prove interesting. Jacob Tonson, when he moved from his old shop, “The Judge’s Head,” in Chancery-lane, close to the corner of Fleet-street, where he had been from 1678, went to “Shakespeare’s Head,” over against Catherine-street, in the Strand. Andrew Millar—who published Thomson’s “Seasons” in 1730, and continued to publish for Thomson,—who took the principal charge of the first publication of Johnson’s Dictionary (1755),—and of whom Johnson’s “I respect Millar, sir; he has raised the price of literature,” is recorded by Boswell under 1755—who published Hume’s “England” and Fielding’s novels,—carried on business at the same “Shakespeare’s Head,” 141 Strand. That No. 141 is now absorbed in No. 142, occupied by Gaze’s tourist offices, facing Catherine-street. Millar retired from business in 1757, and his apprentice, Thomas Cadell, who had become his partner in 1765, succeeded to the business. This was the Thomas Cadell who toasted the four B’s to which he owed his prosperity,—Blackstone’s Commentaries, Blair’s Sermons, Burn’s Justice of the Peace, and Buchan’s Domestic Medicine. Cadell lived at 141 Strand, like his predecessor, and was the host of Johnson and Gibbon; he was the “Mr. Cadell, a respectable bookseller,” of Gibbon’s Autobiography, “who undertook the care and risk of the publication [of the first volume of the history] which derived more credit from the name of the shop than from that of the author.” Old Thomas Cadell resigned his business to his son and to William Davies, jointly, and this was the “respectable house of Cadell and Davies, in the Strand, which,” as Lockhart puts it, “may be said to have first introduced Scott as an original writer to the English public,” by the publication in January, 1802, of the first two volumes of the “Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.” On May 1st, 1803, Cadell was one of the parties in “a contract for the building of a stack of warehouses in White Hart-yard, Drury-lane,”—not quite 150 yards distant from 141 Strand. These buildings, designed for the storage of books, were in 1875, when Messrs. Diprose purchased the north-eastern portion of the property, to which they subsequently added the side in New Church-court. The new building was commenced in 1877, and in 1878 they removed all their plant and machinery into it, placing
everything according to plans laid out by Mr. John Diprose, and so effectively were these plans laid that scarcely any change has since been made.

On the ground floor, besides the counting house, are the store rooms for quires and the packing rooms. As the sheets are required they are sent up in a steam lift to the top floor, where the women fold the work by hand, and where also the sewing—by hand and machinery—is done. The second story is devoted to the forwarders, under the direction of Mr. W. Edy, and here, the extra, cloth, and paper-boarded work is "got on"; the large hydraulic presses being pumped by steam. In the first floor the finishers are accommodated, under the direction of Mr. T. Worsfold; other parts of the floor being set apart for magazine wrapping and the storage of quires. In the basement are the case-making and blocking departments, with large stores of millboards piled up all around. A twelve-horse power boiler supplies steam for a ten-horse power engine, which works all the machinery. The steam is further used for heating the building and glue-pots, and also for melting the glue and making paste. The staff employed consists usually of about 130, male and female, and at the time of our visit we were able to see almost all the operations of bookbinding going on within the same building—from the thick and cumbersome volumes of the new Webster's Dictionary in russia, down to the cheapest paper-wrapped pamphlet or trade circular.

There have been many finer books and daintier editions turned out of this house than those which are in hand at this time. "Fasti Herefordensis," the records of Hereford, by the Rev. F. Havergal, was bound here in facsimile of one of the chained books in Hereford Cathedral. Byron's "Lara," of which he says "'Lara,' I wrote while undressing after coming home from balls and masquerades, in the year of revelry 1814," not the original edition—that one issued without the author's name, which left the readers to conjecture the name of the writer, "the knowledge of which would be of no service in assisting his decision as to failure or success of the attempt,"—but an edition got up by the Art Union of London, with illustrations by Mr. Birch, was another.

Mr. J. Diprose has always taken an active part in all trade movements, whether of an industrial or charitable character. At the time of the nine-hour movement, in 1872, he was honorary Secretary to the Employers' Association, and one of the sub-committee of eight who were appointed to meet the men's representatives. At the present time, he holds the post of Deputy Chairman to the Bookbinding Section of the London Chamber of Commerce, and is one of the sub-committee of nine appointed to meet the Trade Societies' sub-committee upon the eight hours' question. For many years he has evinced the greatest interest in the Pension and Asylum Society—first as a shop collector, and afterwards upon various committees for special purposes, to which he has given a great deal of his time and energy and thereby contributed to their success. Especially was this the case in connection with the Asylum Jubilee Banquet in 1899. He is now holding office both as an auditor and a trustee.

### Our Prize Competitions.

The Seventh Prize of Twenty Shillings for the best original design for a gold hand-tooled side, book, "The Light of Asia"; material, crushed levant—has been awarded to Mr. Thomas E. Caley, 33 Craven-street, Birkenhead, Cheshire, and a cheque for that amount has been forwarded.

Highly Commended:—No. 2, by B. Tompson; No. 3, by "Newcomen"; No. 4, by W. Cross.


Mr. J. Townsend's design was a bold and effective production, but utterly unsuited to our conditions; for a cloth block it was admirable.

Altogether, we are very pleased with the result of this competition. Many of the designs sent in show that careful thought and artistic perceptions have not been wanting; although sometimes the hand that limned out the ideas was defective in skill. We have given the fourth place to Mr. Cross because his design is so good, but it would be very heavy for gold work.

**COMPETITION NO. 8.**

We offer a Prize of Twenty Shillings for the best Lettering Piece, size 4 x 53 inches. The design to be ornamental, and the following inscription to be placed on it: "This set of books was presented to the Rev. Thomas Sweetsecon on the occasion of his leaving the Parish of St. Jude, Sleepyford, by a few of his many friends and admirers, who, having profited by his acquaintance, desire to be remembered. With heartiest wishes for his future welfare. June, 1891."

**RULES.**

1. All designs must arrive on or before July 30th. The award will be made in the August number.

2. All designs must be drawn in ink upon a white ground, or worked with tools and letters in black.

3. All designs may be signed with a nom de plume, but the correct name and address of the competitor must accompany each design.

4. The Editor reserves to himself the right to publish any design which may be sent in, as worthy of honourable mention, besides the successful design.

5. The decision of the Editor must be considered final.

6. The Editor cannot hold himself responsible for the return of unsuccessful designs under any circumstances whatever.

7. All designs for competition must be directed to The Editor, British Bookmaker, De Montfort Press, Queen-street, Leicester, and marked "Prize Competition" in the left-hand top corner of the envelope. A cheque for 20/- will be forwarded to the successful competitor immediately upon the award being made.

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The May number of The Art Workman (The Electrotyping Co., 80 Fleet-street) is one of the best and most interesting yet issued in view of its extended usefulness to those for whom it is specially published. There are eight plates (folio) of artistic designs in wood carving, furniture, ornamental iron work, and wall decorations, by leading artists and draughtsmen. The June number completes the first volume.