Our Portrait Gallery.—No. 4.

James Robert Burn.
NE of the oldest, largest, and best of the cloth binding establishments in London is that of Messrs. James Burn & Co. It was founded in 1781 by Thomas Burn, grandfather of the present head of the firm, who came up to London from Newcastle-on-Tyne, and first started in business in Middle-row, Holborn; but as his trade increased, larger premises were required, and the business was removed to 37 Kirby-street, Hatton-garden; shortly afterward his son, Mr. James F. Burn, was taken into partnership. Messrs. Burn & Son was one of the firms who had the binding of the British and Foreign Bible Society’s work, but they lost it when in 1842 the work was all given to one of the four binders who had previously been employed upon it. During the slackness in 1843 which resulted from this disaster, Mr. Thomas Burn died, but his son carried on the business perseveringly, though under great difficulties. In 1846, however, Mr. Bohn sought Mr. Burn’s help in the production of “The Standard Library,” and prosperity once more smiled on the energetic family. Another great acquisition was the work of Mr. George Routledge in the following year, but perhaps it was in 1851 that the house made their best acquaintance, in the firm of Messrs. Macmillan.

About 1856-7, Mr. James Robert Burn began to bring his natural good taste and refinement to bear upon his father’s business, with the consequence that much of the cloth work began to look more like well bound books in style, and a new era for cloth binding set in. The premises had to be enlarged, steam machinery was introduced, and every means adopted to provide for the ever-increasing demands of a very extended business. Most of the new arrangements were planned and carried out under the personal supervision of Mr. J. R. Burn. In 1868 Mr. William Chapman, who had been connected with the firm since 1834, was taken into partnership, and Mr. Orrinsmith joined the firm as manager of the decorative part of the binding. In November, 1877, Mr. James F. Burn died, leaving upon the memories of his survivors many reminiscences of a kindly, gentle and cheerful nature, which heredity has happily transmitted to his son.

Few establishments in this country can equal that of Messrs. James Burn & Co. for the number of hands engaged solely upon binding—averaging something over five hundred—or the tremendous numbers of books turned out. The work is all executed in the best style of cloth work, both as regards the forwarding and design. The present firm comprises Messrs. J. R. Burn, H. Orrinsmith, and J. R. Mercer, and these gentlemen bid fair to maintain and increase the prestige the house has gained during a century of business transactions. Again at the present time the premises are being enlarged, and until they are completed the work of the house is sadly hampered for want of room.

The shop is and always has been a home for Trade Unionists, the employers believing in paying a fair wage for fair work, and that the Union is a help to employers in the regulation of contract prices. Very few difficulties have ever arisen in this house, and those have invariably been speedily settled by mutual agreement. The reciprocity of kindly feeling existing could not be better illustrated than by the pleasant interchange of compliments on October 2nd, at the Crystal Palace, when nearly the whole of the employees sat down to tea at the invitation of the firm.

The occasion was a memorable one. Previous to last Christmas it had been intended to present Mr. Burn with a suitable testimonial of the feelings entertained towards him, and for that object subscriptions poured in voluntarily from every one employed, boys and girls included. But Mr. Burn was taken ill ere an opportunity could be found for the presentation, and this was the first chance which had since occurred. Business was suspended at one p.m., and everyone made off for the Palace. During the afternoon a cricket match was played between the forwards and a team composed of blockers and case-makers, resulting in a victory for the forwards by three runs and seven wickets.

At 4.45 a knife and fork tea was provided in the south terrace dining room, and 470 sat down to do justice to the meal. At the close of the tea the presentation plate was unveiled, a beautiful three-branched silver epérgne, containing 94 ounces of silver, and a book in white vellum. On the epérgne was engraved: “Presented to J. R. Burn, Esq., by his employés as a mark of their high esteem. Oct. 2. 1890.” The book contains several pages of vellum mounted in cardboard, on which are inscribed the address and signatures of the givers, very beautifully designed and illuminated by B. Jackman. The front page bears a monogram “J.R.B.,” with a floral design and bees worked in. The next is the address, surrounded by a beautiful design: “To James R. Burn, Esq. Sir, We, your employés, desiring to express our high esteem and sincere appreciation of the many kindnesses shewn to us, individually and collectively, and feeling a strong desire that this expression of our thanks should be lasting, ask your kind acceptance of this testimonial in grateful recognition thereof. Earnestly hoping you may long be spared in health. We are, Sir, yours faithfully;” then follow 520 names.
The tea being over, the assembled workpeople and friends of the firm gathered around a little platform, which had been improvised for the occasion, and Mr. Burn's appearance thereon was hailed with loud and prolonged cheering, for it had been doubted whether

he would be well enough to attend. Mr. J. W. Brown, the chairman, then called upon Mr. Bush to make the presentation.

Mr. Bush:—"Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, many persons placed in a similar position to that which I hold this evening, would rather that the lot had

commenced to get up this testimonial, but owing to the indisposition of our employer it has again and again been adjourned. At the time it was intended to present it, I prepared a speech, but owing to the adjournment it appeared to be wasted, and I mournfully looked at it and thought: another effort of genius

fallen to an abler man. It is not an enviable one to anyone endowed with native modesty, nevertheless, I am proud of it, and though not blessed with the eloquence of a Cicero or Demosthenes, shall do my best. It is now nearly twelve months ago since we
last! (laughter). So I spent a few tears on it and put it by in lavender leaves, away in the dark. Well, now the time has at last come, and after all the tempestuous events of the last few weeks, on looking at it again I find that the feelings I have now, exactly correspond to the sentiments written then, and have not altered one jot (cheers). Our employers deserve, and have won our gratitude, for have they not protected us from the tyranny of an incipient Nero (cheers); but he has met his fate. You have all heard of Frankenstein, who created a monster of his own? Well it devoured him! (loud applause).

"Mr. Burn, I am requested to ask you to accept this as a little token of all the gratitude we feel for your kindness and goodness to us (cheers). Working people have very few opportunities of thanking their employers in a worthy manner, but we have tried to do our best. I am told it is a fruit and flower stand! I hope you will excuse my seeming ignorance, as I do not happen to have anything like it amongst my plate (loud laughter). It is only of silver, but in it are enshrined two rare gems, sincerity and gratitude, and it has been given by every grade and shade of labour in your establishment, who have subscribed for it voluntarily and without stint.

"With it there is also in this book a register of the names of your working people at the time. Some have since gone away, and others have gone 'Home,' but they have only gone before with a message that one at least who is left behind is about our 'Father's' business." Sir, we wish you health and increase of prosperity, which has always meant increase of prosperity to your servants. Also we tender our best thanks to your colleagues, and I do not think I can close with better words than 'God bless us all, and keep our memories green.' (loud and prolonged applause).

Mr. Burn, on rising to reply, was greeted with a terrific outburst of hearty enthusiasm. When at last he was allowed to speak he said: "Ladies and gentlemen,—or allow me to say, my friends, I do not know how to express my thanks for this beautiful and costly gift, and the kindly words spoken of me by my old friend Mr. Bush. I am sure you will not think I do not appreciate your kindness if I say that I am sorry that you should have put your hands into your pockets for me. I am very pleased to accept your testimonial in the spirit in which it has been offered, and the way in which it has been given will enhance the value of the gift a thousand-fold. I wish I could express to you my thoughts as clearly and as concisely as Mr. Bush has done for you, but I fear that is impossible. I am reminded of a picture that I saw in Punch some years ago, at the time of some popular agitation about sixpenny cab fares. It was by Leech, and represented an old gentleman holding out a sixpence to 'cabbie.' Underneath were the words, 'Well, the Act don't allow me to say much, but I feel a deuce of a lot.' That, friends, is my position. I cannot say much, but I feel 'a deuce of a lot' (loud laughter and cheers). Friends, I can only say it will always be prized by me, and when I shuffle off this mortal coil, 'it will be preserved as an heirloom by my family, as a token of the good feeling which has always existed, and I hope always will exist, between us and you.

"There is an old proverb that 'One want makes many,' and as soon as I am a bit well I feel I shall have to hobble out and buy a strong safe to keep these valuable and beautiful presents of yours in, and I can promise you that I shall stick to them,—well, not exactly like wax,—perhaps I had better say like patent glue. Many, many thanks! I do not think we ever had a wry word together, and I sincerely hope we shall never (loud applause). I will conclude with three words, more than once expressed, but deeply felt, 'God bless you.'" (cheers).

Mr. F. Lowe proposed a hearty vote of thanks to the firm for the very pleasant entertainment they had provided. Mr. McCarthy seconded and it was unanimously carried. The chairman then announced that the company were free to enjoy the delights of the Palace and the display of fireworks, which brought to a close a delightful day.

LINTON'S LIFE.—Our readers will remember that in our last issue we published an article treating mainly of the works of Linton, the famous wood engraver. We also promised to give in this issue a few notes upon the private life of Mr. Linton and also a review of his poetical works. For this purpose we placed ourselves in communication with him at his present residence in New York, in order to obtain some absolutely authoritative facts from his own pen. We regret these have not come to hand sufficiently in time for the present issue, but we have every reason to believe that we shall be able to stand to our promise in our November number. Linton's new book, "Masters of Wood Engraving," which has just been issued from the Chiswick Press, is now on view, among other works, at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition.

A REMARKABLE COLLECTION OF BINDINGS.—Mr. Tregaskis, bookseller, of High Holborn, has just now a somewhat unique collection of bindings upon his shelves. He has had about twenty-five copies of Kingsley's "Water Babies" bound by various binders —French, German, English, Russian, Dutch, &c., and the result is a very novel and interesting collection. As the set offers an excellent opportunity for a little critical comparison of the value of modern binding all over the world we propose in our next issue to discourse upon the matter in detail.

ERMENGARDE in the current number of the Gentlewoman remarks at length upon the exhibits at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition. Concerning bookbinding the writer says: "Upstairs one might have hung for an hour over the examples of bookbinding. It would be impossible to notice them in detail, but a certain service book, with panels of hammered gilded metal, designed by Mrs. H. Ravensley, shows what beautiful results we are to produce in the future, when we shall make fewer books and think more of them."

ERRATA—two stupid ones—crept into Mr. Peck's notice in our last issue. They are: "£7 10s." for boards instead of £5, and the statement that each book passed through the hands "twenty-two distinct times." Both statements are so obviously wide of the mark that they simply "gave themselves away." Our apologies are due to Mr. Peck for our representatives' carelessness.