

The latest thing in libraries is the Railway and General Automatic Library, which is about to be issued by a limited liability company. A number of representatives of the press were invited to the Hotel Métropole on May 19th to have the latest invention in automatic machines explained to them. Oblong boxes fitted with eight compartments, each of which will hold a book, are to be placed in railway carriages, waiting rooms, hotels, and on piers; a glass front will allow the titles to be seen, and by placing a penny in the slot of the section where the selected book stands and pressing back a lever, the door opens and the book may be taken out. To prevent robbery, all the books will have a distinguishing binding, and the loss is estimated not to exceed five per cent. from this cause. It is estimated that if one railway passenger out of every hundred would patronise the library, it would bring in the sum of £40,000. The company is to be floated with a capital of £100,000, and has had the option of purchasing a new novel by the Duke of Argyle. Just fancy that! Surely, that is enough to make any company successful.

THE Oxford University Press will shortly issue a "Guide Book to Books," on which a great many well known judges of good books have been for some time engaged. About 6,000 books, on various subjects alphabetically arranged, will be recommended to the student, and if you wish to form a library, we would advise you to buy the lot, and so make sure of a fairly complete library both for reference and amusement. We have had many hints as to what books a man with a limited purse should buy, but never before such a stupendous list of good works. The whole arrangement has been made under the able direction of Mr. E. B. Sargant and Mr. B. Whishaw.

M. LEON VIDAL read a very interesting paper on "Photographic Methods of obtaining Polychromatic Impressions," at the rooms of the Photographic Society of Great Britain, 50 Great Russell-street, on May 12th. A number of chromo printers received invitations to attend and were very pleased with the magnificent illustrations of various processes which hung all round the rooms. The little exhibition will be open until the end of June, and any member of the trade will be welcome.

THE Trustees of the St. Bride's Institute have decided to purchase the wonderful library of the late Mr. William Blades—of the firm of East, Blades, & East,—subject to the final decision of the Charity Commissioners, whose decision is deemed a foregone conclusion. The collection is the result of a life-long search after every link in the history of bookmaking, and it would be a great misfortune to see it dispersed.

THE American Copyright Act is the cause of a certain amount of delay in the publication of some new books which have long been promised. They are being kept back until this wonderful piece of legislative skill comes into force in July.

THE Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society have resolved not to have an exhibition this year, hoping that by giving both artists and craftsmen a little more time, something of exceptional interest may be produced by 1892.

BOOKBINDERS BEWARE! Mr. Walter Besant has had a good prod and cut at the publishers, and seeking some other game—rather high too—which he might devour, he has turned his attention to the reviewers, whom he has been slaughtering with weapons made of their own beaks and talons. When the sun goes down on the fray the question will be "Who next?" It is to be hoped that when our trade has irritated him, the powerful penman will find nothing sharper to use than a crow-quill. Let us hope to survive till the next season of east winds and bad tempers comes round, and may Kingsley's "Wind of God" brace us for the attack.

WHAT a general chorus of "I told you so's!" has been raised all through the trade over Mr. Justice Chitty's order for the compulsory winding up of the Hansard Union.

Curiosities in Bookbinding.



HERE is a Latin manuscript bible in the library of the vatican at Rome bound in the mantle once worn by King Abgarus, the friend of Jesus. A Greek copy of Arelius' "Golden Ass," now in the British Museum at London, is bound in the skin of an ass tanned with the hair on. A book giving the life history of Jeffrey Hudson, the celebrated dwarf, to be seen in the same museum, is bound in a piece of a silk waistcoat which was formerly worn by King Charles I. Of late the fashion of binding works on anatomy, physiology, and kindred subjects in human skin is becoming popular in many European countries, says the *St. Louis Republic*. Some take this for an innovation, but history mentions several books bound in human skin as early as the middle of the sixteenth century. At the Bury St. Edmunds public library may be found a history of the life and trial of a murderer, bound in his own skin!

The French revolutionists, who seemed to delight in the fact that they were marking an epoch in the history of mankind, revived the human skin book-binding fad of the sixteenth century, and took great pleasure in presenting some brother revolutionist with copies of Volney and Voltaire done up in the cuticle of some enemy. The writer owns some evidences of a bookbinder's pleasantries in copies of Bacon's works bound in pig skin (bacon rind), and Fox's historical works done up in the skin of a sly reynard.

BOOKBINDERS on the look-out for new ideas in styles of ornament and letterings will find them in plenty in the new edition of the De Montfort Press Specimen Book of Fine Letterpress Printing announced on another page to be ready early in July. Many binders bought copies last year for the use of their finishers, and found it so useful that there have been already numerous enquiries for the next edition. There will be about fifty pages of designs in the newest and most tasteful style, most of them in colours and tints, some in gold also, and the collection will afford an almost endless variety of ideas in combinations of ornament and lettering.