The Bibliothèque de La Providence.

EASTWARD and ever eastward, leaving far behind the great Art Library at Kensington, passing by the countless treasures of the British Museum, and journeying even beyond the noble collection of books at Guildhall, I ask my readers to accompany me to a library, modest indeed in the number of its volumes, but yielding to few in the beauty and historical associations of the building in which they have found a home.

The Bibliothèque de La Providence is probably not known, even by name, to many besides those who have aided in its formation, and it has occurred to me that a short account of it may for that very reason be not unacceptable in the pages of a magazine specially devoted to libraries and everything appertaining to them.

The French Hospital, or "La Providence" (to use the name formerly given to it by those to whom it afforded the welcome shelter of a home in a strange land), owes its origin to M. de Gastigny, a French Protestant refugee in the service of the Prince of Orange, who left by his will the sum of £1,000 for the purpose of founding a hospital, or hospice, for his necessitous fellow-countrymen and co-religionists in England. Others were not slow in contributing to the good work, and in 1718 a Royal Charter of Incorporation was obtained for the Hospital for Poor French Protestants and their Descendants in Great Britain.

The original hospital was in the parish of St. Luke, but after a lapse of years it was found desirable to abandon it, and in 1866 the present beautiful building was erected in a more open situation close to Victoria Park, and in its own extensive garden, from the designs of Mr. Robert Lewis Roumieu, one of the directors at that time. In this new "Providence" is housed the library of which I propose to give a brief description.

The first thing to be remarked is that the collection has been formed almost entirely by donations of books from the directors and their friends, the additions by purchase being necessarily very few, whilst another noteworthy peculiarity is the large proportion of

privately-printed books contained in it. These, as may naturally be anticipated, are for the most part works of a genealogical character, treating of the Huguenot families in France in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and of their descendants, not only in the United Kingdom, but in the various Continental states, in the British colonies, and in America.

Although containing several very scarce and valuable books, the library is not mainly composed of such as are prized chiefly for their rarity, the aim of its founders being to make it a good working collection for the student of Huguenot history and genealogy. But, needless to say, this by no means involves the exclusion of rare books, rather, perhaps, the contrary, and the following may be taken haphazard as instances of several different classes :

An unusually fine specimen of Morland's *The History of the Evangelical Churches of the Valleys of Piemont*, London, 1658, 4to, containing the dedication to Cromwell, the map, and the portrait, the three requisites to a perfect copy which are so seldom to be found united. This copy is additionally interesting from having apparently been the author's own, his name, "Samuel Morland," and the date, "1658," being written in it.—A volume, in small quarto, of exceedingly scarce tracts relating to Church government in England in the seventeenth century ; amongst them are pamphlets setting forth the views of ministers in the counties of Lancaster, Worcester, Cumberland, Westmoreland, Essex, Southampton, Norfolk, and Cork. Many of these are not in the British Museum, and are *presque introuvables* in any collection.—A copy of one of the few books printed at Herford, in Westphalia, viz., Jean de Labadie's *Traité du Soi*, 1672, 12mo, a work of very considerable rarity. Also the *Presages de la Decadence des Empires*, with the dubious imprint "Mekelbourg, 1688."—A fine specimen of the Rouen press is the *Inventaire de l'Histoire de Normandie*, 1646, 4to, and the *Histoire du dernier Siège de La Rochelle*, 1648, 12mo, by Pierre Mervault, may be mentioned as a scarce book also printed at Rouen. Another little volume of military history of later date is Devize, *The History of the Siège of Toulon, with a most exact and curious plan of Toulon never before published. Done into English by Mr. A. Boyer*, London, 1708, small 4to, a translation of very uncommon occurrence, especially with the plan intact as in the present copy.

A bibliographer can scarcely embark on a more hopeless undertaking than that of forming a complete list of all the multifarious unacknowledged writings of Daniel Defoe ; but he would probably be safe in ascribing to that author of many fictions the fictitious

Minutes of the Negotiations of Monsr. Mesnayer at the Court of England, of which the first edition (London, 1717, 8vo) has long been at the French Hospital, though the Bodleian did not possess a copy until so recently as 1886. Readers of the *Reliquia Wottoniana* will be glad to have their attention drawn to Sir Henry Wotton's *The State of Christendom; or, A most Exact and Curious Discovery of many Secret Passages and Hidden Mysteries of the Times*, London, 1637, 4to, whilst a passing mention must be made of Strada, *A Generall Historie of the Netherlands. Newly renewed, corrected, and supplied with sundrie necessarie observations omitted in the first impression. By Ed. Grimeston, Sergeant-at-Armes. Continued from the yeare 1608 till the yeare of our Lord 1627, by William Crosse, Mr. of Arts. The second impression.* London, 1627, folio. Amongst the seventeenth-century French books in the library, one of the rarest is *La Discipline des Églises Réformées de France. Ou l'Ordre par lequel elles sont conduites & gouvernées: Avec un recueil des Observations & Questions sur la plus part des Articles d'icelle, tiré des Actes des Synodes Nationaux.* (Sans lieu) M.DC.LV., small 4to, a detailed account of which is given in the *Bulletin* of the Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français for September, 1886; also a volume of Arrests, Declarations, and Edicts, among which the *Edit du 22 Oct. 1685*, is an exceedingly scarce specimen of the Marseilles press of that period.

Dear to all who love the humour and pathos of English literature is the name of Oliver Goldsmith, yet few, perhaps, even of those who love him best would recognise in "James Willington" the author of *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *She Stoops to Conquer*. But one of the gems of the Bibliothèque de La Providence is the little book in two duodecimo volumes bearing on its title that pseudonym under which Goldsmith issued this his first published work. *The Memoirs of a Protestant condemned to the Gallies of France for his Religion. . . . Translated by James Willington*, London, 1758, contain the Memoirs of Jean Marteilhe originally published at Rotterdam in 1717, and form one of the scarcest books printed in England during the eighteenth century—so scarce, indeed, that the British Museum was without a copy until it obtained one at the sale of the late Mr. Halliwell-Phillips's collection. The copy at La Providence is a singularly fine one in very neat and suitable, though not the original, binding.

In 1887 the directors issued the first printed catalogue of the library, entitled *Bibliothèque de La Providence*, and compiled by the present writer. This was composed of some 500 titles, the books being entered, as far as possible, under the authors' names in alpha-

betical order, and a classified index under subject-headings being given at the end. During the past three years, however, the accessions have been so numerous that a new edition of the catalogue¹ has lately been printed, the library containing on the 1st December, 1890, 983 works in 1,084 volumes, and 70 unbound tracts. The new catalogue, which is on the same principle as the former, is, of course, considerably larger, and has been in several ways improved. The books themselves, too, have been entirely rearranged, and new press-marks have been given to them and printed opposite each entry in the catalogue. A very minute division and subdivision has seemed needless in a collection which is at present so limited, and the following classification has been adopted as the simplest and most efficient: I. History—(i.) General History of France and other countries; (ii.) History of the Huguenots in France; (iii.) History of the Huguenots in the United Kingdom and British possessions abroad; (iv.) History of the Huguenots in the United States; (v.) History of the Huguenots in other countries; (vi.) History of the Vaudois. II. Biography, including Church Registers. III. Theology—(i.) The Bible and parts thereof; (ii.) Liturgies and Hymnals; (iii.) Doctrinal and Devotional Works. IV. Transactions of Societies and Periodicals. V. Works of Fiction based on incidents in the History of the Reformation. VI. Books not falling under any of the above heads.

Small as this library may appear, it has already been most helpful to many engaged in studying the period of history to which it chiefly relates, and the genealogy of the numerous Huguenot families settled in England and elsewhere. The Bibliothèque de La Providence has not seldom furnished to foreign inquirers information which they had failed to find even in France itself, and if the additions to it are as numerous and important during the next few years as they have been in the past, its value and usefulness will become more and more apparent. This brief notice of the library is necessarily confined to the printed books, its principal feature; but it also contains several MSS. of interest and importance, and I must not conclude without mentioning that it possesses a growing collection of engravings and medals illustrative of Huguenot history, which form not the least attraction on the walls and in the cabinets of La Providence.

REGINALD S. FABER.

¹ Bibliothèque de La Providence: Catalogue of the Library of the French Hospital, Victoria Park Road, London. By Reginald Stanley Faber. With an Introduction by Arthur Giraud Browning, F.S.A. Revised and enlarged edition. London, 1890. 8vo. (Only 300 copies, privately printed, of which 50 are on large paper.)