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THE CIRCULATION OF MODERN LITERATURE.

ACCORDING to the *Bookseller*, the leading organ of the publishing trade of Great Britain, the press of that country brought forth during the last twelve months, from the commencement of December, 1861, to the end of November, 1862, no less than 4,828 new books, including reprints and new editions. Of this number—to follow the classification adopted by the *Bookseller*—942 were religious works; 337 represented biography and general history; 673 belonged to poetry and general literature; 925 were works of fiction; 216 annuals and serials, in book form; 61 were illustrative of art and architecture; 60 commercial; 278 pertaining to geography and travel; 283 law and parliamentary publications; 129 medical and surgical works; 243 oriental, classical, and philological books; 191 works on grammar and education; 81 naval, military, and engineering publications; 157 books on politics and questions of the day; 104 works on agriculture, horticulture, and field sports; and 148 books devoted to science and natural history. Consequently, religion stands at the head of English literature, and next to religion fiction; while commerce is placed at the very bottom. The conclusion lies near, that either the great Napoleon has said something extremely stupid in calling us a nation of shopkeepers, or that we have very much altered since the days of the great Napoleon. It is not every nation in the world that publishes between two and three religious works and as many romances per day; not to speak of poetry at the rate of thirteen new volumes per week, with an extra quantity hidden in annuals and serials, in crimson cloth and gilt edges.

The flow of this vast stream of literature is very unequal;

sometimes rapid, like a mountain torrent, and at other periods slow as a caravan creeping through the desert. There is, however, a constant rise and fall of the tide, returning with annual regularity. It is high water at Christmas, and neap tide during the greater part of the summer and autumn; but the ordinary flood sets in about the beginning of September, and lasts far into the new year. During the last twelve months, there were published in the month of January 354 new works; in February, 387; in March, 375; in April, 426; in May, 389; in June, 415; in July, 337; in August, 264; in September, 169; in October, 423; in November, 432; and in December, 848. The greatest variation is caused by novels and religious works, which fluctuate more than any other description of literature. Whereas 169 religious publications were issued in December, the number fell to 41 in the month of August, and to 33 in September; and in works of fiction, including juvenile stories, the variation was still greater, sinking from 233 new books in December to 46 volumes in August, and 41 in September. So that when the snow lies on the ground—or, within the shade of St. Paul's and Pater-noster Row, the fog and mud—the great workshop of literature produces seven new books of fiction *per diem*; after which supreme effort the labor of the machine begins to flag, and sinking lower and lower every month, at last gets reduced to the bringing forth of a single book in the twenty-four hours. Unlike fiction and religion, the current of science, law, and commerce continues its course in perennial order. Science flows at the rate of twelve publications a month; law and blue-books run at the speed of twenty-three volumes in four weeks; and commerce creeps along in the most regular fashion with five monthly works. In the latter respect, the fitful vitality of the "Row" is evidently overcome by the tideless force of Cornhill and the Stock Exchange.

There seems a certain connection, not applicable, however, in all points, between the number of books, reprints, and new editions published annually, and the absolute sale and circulation of the various classes of literature. Religion and fiction again stand high in the latter list; but history and biography follow closely, and works of geography and travel in general hold a far larger share of importance than is shown by the annual numbers of this class of books. Mr. Murray sold 30,000 copies of Dr. Livingstone's *Travels*,* at a guinea

* The books marked thus * are supplied from the Depository of the Educational Department to Public School Libraries in Upper Canada.