

treasures is sometimes reprinted; but if this is done in the hope of a renewed popularity, the speculation is sure to fail. Curious and studious men, it is true, are gratified by its reproduction; but the general reader would prefer a book of his own generation, using the former as materials, and separating its immortal part from its perishing body.

And the general reader, be it remembered, is virtually the age. It is for him, the studious think, the tuneful sing; beyond him there is no appeal but to the future. He is superstitious, as we have seen, but his gods are few and traditional. But how voracious is this general reader in regard to the effusions of his own day! What will become of the myriads of books which have passed through our own unworthy hands? How many of them will survive to the next generation? How many will continue to float still further down the stream of Time? How many will attain the honour of the apotheosis? And will they co-exist in this exalted state with the old objects of worship? This last is the most important question; for each generation will, in all probability, furnish its quota to the great books of the language, and if so, a reform in the superstition we have been speaking of is no longer a matter of mere expedience, but of necessity.

We are aware that all this will be pronounced rank heresy by those who make a great outcry when a favourite author is lightly spoken of. Such critics usually take credit to themselves for a peculiarly large and liberal spirit; but there seems to us, on the contrary, to be something mean and restricted in views that regard the man as an individual, not as a portion of the genius which belongs to the world. The true question simply is:—

Are great authors to be allowed to become practically obsolete—and many of them have become so already—while we stand upon the delicacies and ceremonies of book-worship?

One other kind of book we desire to say a word about *en passant*. We mean the ephemeral book of the hour.—This is a book-making age, and every man rushes to the press with his small morsel of imbecility, his little piece of favourite nonsense, and is not easy until he sees his impertinence stitched in two covers. Some one possesses the vivacity of a harlequin—he is fuddled with animal spirits, giddy with constitutional joy; in such a state he must write a book or burst; a discharge of ink is absolutely necessary to avoid fatal and plethoric congestion.

A musty and limited pedant yellows himself a little among rolls and records, plunders a few libraries, and lo! we have an entirely new work by the learned Mr. Dunce, and that after an incubation of only a month. He is, perhaps, a braggadocio of minuteness, a swaggering chronologer, a weather prophet, a man bristling with small facts, prurient with dates, wantoning in obsolete evidence. No matter, there are plenty of newspapers who are constantly lavishing their praises upon small men and bad books. A mendacious press will puff the book through a brief season, and then—it will go to feed the devouring maw of the past.

But these are not authors; these are as Douglas Jerrold christened them, "paper-stainers." It must have been such a personage, who, meeting Jerrold, accosted him with, "I am told you said my last book was the worst I had written," and met with the courteous rejoinder, "No! I said it was the worst book ever written!"

Perhaps the best books to read for information (they should be so!) are such as were written in the times and among the events which they relate. We thus get a picture from sight, whilst in compilation, we have caricatures cut from hear-say. But few productions, however, that in their nature belong to passing events and interests are worthy to live beyond them, yet ever since the press began its work in Europe, some few have escaped that general doom, because of the salt which never loses its savour. The Drapier Letters have long survived William Wood and his patent for copper coinage against which Dean Swift wrote them. Much older works might be instanced; but, strange to say, these outlivers of their times are all "against something," and amongst their numerous congeners yet written, or read by our own generation, those that have appeared against Louis Napoleon will be found the most enduring, because the cleverest books of the hour.

The habit of studying old books is, we fear, dying out. There is too much that is fresh and fair, and foolish to occupy our minds, and we are losing our grip of the substantial past, to grasp at the foolish of the fashionable present.

(To be Continued.)

A FEW WORDS ABOUT AN INTERESTING, BUT NOW EXTINCT RACE.

At the present period of the world's history we are so well acquainted with the human form, and all its varieties, that we can find little or nothing to excite our wonder, either in the course of our travels, or in the range of our reading. Nature seems to have grown as solemn, tame, and regular as a priest in a procession, and the lovers of prodigies have to regret that she sports no longer as in the days of yore. In colour, shape, size, or number of parts, we seldom find any animal that deserves the name of a *lusus*; and were it not that Barnum and other enterprising showmen occasionally treat us to the sight of dwarfs, giants, mermaids and woolly horses, we might suppose that Nature is now too old and sober to indulge in her youthful frolics. What additional zest was given to life, and what fresh interest to knowledge, by the narratives and cabinets of former ages! Let any one dip into the pages of Pliny's *Natural History*, that great magazine of ancient gossip and credulity, and he will there see how Nature trifled, and Naturalists were amused in primitive times. He will there see how she tried her freaks with the human form, not only in individual instances, but also on the scale of whole nations. Previous to the extraordinary information with which Pliny favours us in the 2nd chapter of his 7th Book, he solicits our belief in the following words: "In most points I shall not be content to pledge my own credit only, but shall confirm it in preference by referring to my authorities, which shall be given on all subjects of a nature to inspire doubt. My readers must make no objection to following the Greeks, who have proved themselves the most careful observers, and are, moreover, of the longest standing."

With these preliminary remarks he at once dives into his subject, and introduces us to the Arimaspi, "a nation remarkable for having but one eye, and that placed in the middle of the forehead." This race appears to have had an eye to business, for, as Pliny continues, "they carry on a perpetual warfare with the Griffins, or winged monsters, for the gold which they dig out of the mines, and which these wild beasts keep watch over with singular cupidity, while the Arimaspi are equally desirous of obtaining it."

A second nation, who dwell beyond the Scythian Anthropophagi, in a certain great valley of the Imaus, "are a savage race whose feet are turned backwards, relatively to their legs; but who possess wonderful velocity, and wander about indiscriminately with the wild beasts." Their neighbours are a tribe of men who have the heads of dogs, and clothe themselves with the skins of fierce animals. Instead of speaking they bark; and, being furnished with long claws, they live by hunting and catching birds. Ctesias, on whose authority Pliny here relies, states that they are more than 120,000 in number; and at the same time speaks of another race of men known as Monocoli, who have only one leg, but are able to leap with surprising agility. The same people are also called Sciapodes, because they lie on their backs during periods of extreme heat, and protect themselves from the sun by the shade of their one foot. At p. 157 of "The Voiage and Travails of Sir John Maundevile, Kt.," printed from a quarto on vellum, written about the year 1400, and now in the Cottonian Library, the worthy Knight gives the following account of this strange race. "In Ethiopie ben many dyverse folk; and Ethiopie is clept Cusia. In that Contree ben folk that han but a foot; and they gon so fast, that it is marvayle; and the foot is so large that it shadowethe alle the Body aen the Sonne, whanne they wole lye and reste hem." Pliny informs us they live not far from the Troglodytes, or dwellers in caves, to the west of whom there is a tribe who are without necks, and have eyes in their shoulders. Omitting all mention of other marvellous races, I hasten on to the Astomi, the interesting, but extinct tribe, to