

# Bibliotheca - Curiosa

## CATALOGUE

OF AN EXTENSIVE COLLECTION OF BOOKS  
RELATING TO

### AMERICA, Variorum Editions of SHAKESPEARE,

DRAMATIC HISTORY AND LITERATURE, ANCIENT AND MODERN  
ENGLISH POETRY, FRENCH LITERATURE, BOHN'S VARIOUS  
LIBRARIES, VOYAGES AND TRAVELS, ETC.

ON SALE FOR CASH BY

## JOHN BRITNELL,

298 YONGE STREET, - TORONTO, CANADA.

*The sentence at top of the page exactly describes the portion of our life which is past. To whom is the following condemnation applicable, reproduced for the consideration of our friends, from MR. RUSKIN'S "Sesame and Lilies."*

Above all, a nation cannot last as a money-making mob; it cannot with impunity—it cannot with existence—go on despising literature, despising science, despising art, despising nature, despising compassion, and concentrating its soul on pence. Do you think these are harsh or wild words? Have patience with me but a little longer, I will prove their truth to you, clause by clause.

I say first we have despised literature. What do we, as a nation, care about books? How much do you think we spend altogether on our libraries, public or private, as compared with what we spend on our horses. If a man spends lavishly on his library, you call him mad—a biblio-maniac, but you never call anyone a horse-maniac, though men ruin themselves everyday by their horses, and you do not hear of people ruining themselves by their books. Or, to go lower still, how much do you think the contents of the book-shelves of the United Kingdom, public and private, would fetch, as compared with the contents of its wine-cellars? What position would its expenditure on literature take, as compared with its expenditure on luxurious living? We talk of food for the mind, as of food for the body; now a good book contains such food inexhaustibly; it is a provision for life, and for the best part of us; yet how long most people would look at the best book before they would give the price of a large turbot for it!—though there have been men who have pinched their stomachs and bared their backs to buy a book, whose libraries were cheaper to them, I think, in the end, than most men's dinners are. We are, few of us, put to such trial, and more the pity; for indeed, a precious thing is all the more precious to us if it had been won by work or economy; and if public libraries were half as costly as public dinners, or books cost the tenth part of what bracelets do, even foolish men and women might sometimes suspect there was good in reading as well as in munching and sparking, whereas the very cheapness of literature is making even wise people forget that if a book is worth reading it is worth buying. No book is worth anything which is not worth *muck*; nor is it serviceable until it has been read and reread, and loved, and loved again; and marked so that you can refer to the passages you want in it, as a soldier can seize the weapon he needs in an armoury, or a housewife bring the spice she needs from her store. Bread of flour is good; but there is bread sweet as honey, if we would eat it, in a good book, and the family must be poor indeed which, once in their lives, cannot, for such multipliable barley-loaves, pay their baker's bill. We call ourselves a rich nation? and we are filthy and foolish enough to thumb each others' books out of circulating libraries!