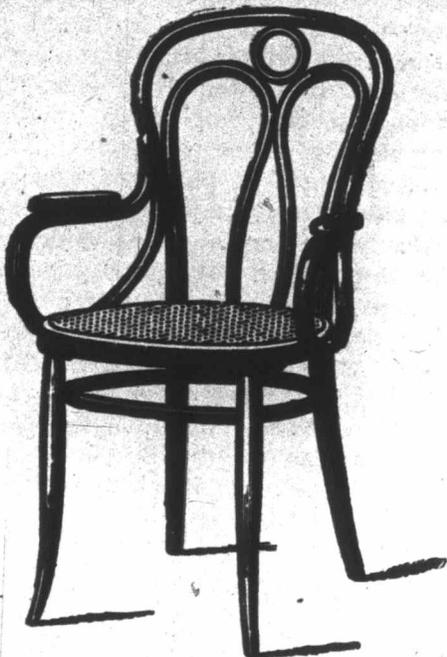


theatre on nights when Lillo's mournful drama was played, in order that flighty and headstrong youths might learn to their edification what would be the probable end of neglecting their arithmetic, embezzling the petty cash and flirting with Mistress Millwood, with her painted face and her hat and feathers. The brief narratives of exceptionally cruel murders, and the last dying speeches and confessions of criminals, issued in profusion from the Catnach Press down to a time within the memory of persons still living, were albeit somewhat defective in their grammar, written in a tone so moral and even so pious that they might have been the production of the Ordinary of Newgate. In the present century, a very long time elapsed before any cheap editions were put forth of such works as "Jack Sheppard," "Rookwood," "Eugene Aram," or "Paul Clifford," and, strangely enough, while the News gate Calendar has always been a costly work, a penny Newgate Calendar projected half a century since in weekly numbers was a disastrous commercial failure. There was not enough readers; but at present, when readers must be reckoned by the million instead of by the thousand, when copies of most of the sensational novels of the past may be purchased for a few pence, and vile twaddling, rubbishy imitations of such novels can be had in periodical form at even a cheaper rate, it behooves us to make the sad confession that the spread of education has been to a great extent counteracted by the absolutely poisonous garbage stolen or adapted from bygone books of a higher but still pernicious class, which is ready to the hand of every boy and girl with a few pence in their pockets. We are glad to believe that a taste for sound, honest, healthy, cheap literature is steadily growing; but at the same time we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that fools are abundant in our midst, and it is precisely the young imbeciles who gloat over sensational stories who are the likeliest to indulge in such a brainless escapade as that of the hobbledehoy of Ramsgate.

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