

# THE TASTE OF THE READING PUBLIC.

**S**PEAKING of cultural progress, it is pleasing to be able to record a distinct advance in the taste of the American reading public. For some little time the publishers have been remarking a growing demand for works of serious interest, biographies, histories, economic treatises, and the like, and have responded to this demand by a greater output of such publications. In the case of heavy importers, like the Macmillan Company, Charles Scribner's Sons, and E. P. Dutton & Company, it is noteworthy that, among their importations, works on art and music and books of a historical or biographical character predominate, fiction being relegated to a wholly subordinate position.

In fiction more discrimination is displayed. The demand for the purely amusing continues, of course, as it needs must in a sound organization of society, and such writers as Harold MacGrath and George Barr McCutcheon may confidently look forward to a prolonged lease of favor. But there has also appeared a wider recognition of the value of novels which instruct while they entertain, in evidence of which may be cited the hearty reception accorded works on the order of "The House of Mirth" and "The Marriage of William Ashe." No longer a complicated plot, a clap-trap sentiment and vapid dialogue suffice. There need be no didactic purpose, but there must be strong characterization, a realistic idealism and clear visualization. All in all, growth is plainly manifest.—Success.

## COMIC JUVENILES.

**T**HE various amusing characters which appear in the comic supplements of the big American Sunday papers are now introduced to the public in a series of books published by the Frederick A. Stokes Co., of New York. This year nine new volumes have been issued supplementary to the Buster Brown and Foxy Grandpa books of last year. In the new series there are two new books on Buster Brown and Foxy Grandpa, respectively, while we are introduced for the first time to Happy Hooligan, the Katzenjammer Kids, and several others. The retail price of these books is only 60 cents, from which there is a liberal discount to dealers. Copies of any of these books once shown will be sure of an immediate sale, as nothing funnier has been published for many years.

## NEW ITALIAN NOVEL.

The Copp, Clark Co. announce for early publication "The Saint," by Antonio Fogazzaro, the Italian novelist, author of "Malombra" and other novels.

The biggest book in the world has just been found in the British Museum, where, in the National Gallery, it lay unnoticed many years. The huge volume is a Dutch tome containing maps and descriptions of the world as it was known to the Dutch geographers of 1650. It is as tall as the average man, being 5 feet 10 inches high and 4 feet 8 inches wide. It is superbly bound and decorated with gilt tooling and gold clasps. The gigantic title page is hand illuminated, the initial letters being of gold. The great volume was presented to King Charles II before his departure from Holland to come to England to claim the throne in 1660. The book came into the possession of George III, who presented it with his library to the British Museum.

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