

Books and Notions.

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THE PAST AND THE PRESENT.

THE old-fashioned bookseller is a difficult man to find. He is, much to our regret, out of date. Here and there we discover one gifted with all the lore of well-nigh forgotten days of yore, and capable of instructing the buyer (for that was his mission) in his purchases, and particularly giving advice to the young as to what was the best mental food. Nothing will tend more to still decrease the proportion of well-read booksellers, than the great flood of cheap publications that flood the market. A cheap, poorly-got-up book is not a book in the sense that was ever understood by the generation passing away. It was not only the literary merits of the work—and these were dwelt upon with emphasis—the binding, the stamped cover, the wide margin, if there would be, and the uncut edges would come in for their share of criticism. It was a pleasure to loiter in the shop and talk books with the intelligent dealer, and when you had paid your dollar, or two dollars, you felt that you had more than the simple volume in your hands; you had a fund of knowledge that was an intellectual profit.

And now who wants to "talk shop" over a twenty-five cent book—the volume is stuffed into one's pocket, the money paid, and in perhaps less than five minutes from the time of entering the purchaser passes out—hardly a word exchanged.

But cheap books have come to stay, at least for the present, and we must do what we can to get an intelligent idea of the great quantity.

We copy elsewhere accounts of interviews with New York publishers of experience. It will be seen that they widely differ as to what the future will be, and as to what at the present time is the influence on the reading public.

There is no doubt a good, life-energizing book is healthful mental food, and the cheaper (within reason) that it is published the wider must be its influence, reaching many a hamlet where reading has been almost unknown.

BOOKS, CUT OR UNCUT.

SOME years ago a comparatively large buyer of books gave orders to his bookseller that every book and magazine must be cut before being delivered. This man certainly did not take the pleasure in a book, as a book, that he should. He was wanting in at least one fine sense of appreciation of literature.

Why, to buy an uncut book and have the pleasure of cutting the leaves section by section, is a charm that no one who has not tried it can appreciate.

We picked up to-day, at Britnell's, a choice copy, only a little shop-worn, of John Hill Burton's *Book Hunter*. We are almost glad that our forgetful friend, to whom we lent our former copy, neglected to return it, so that we may have the pleasure, later in the evening, of peeping into it by cutting by degrees the thick, creamy leaves of our new purchase.

Periodicals are of the same nature.

Take *The Atlantic*, for instance. What charm there is, having picked up the newest number, in getting comfortably into your easy chair, paper cutter in hand, What a musical rhythmic sound the thin blade of ivory makes as it opens to your eyes the prized contents.

You probably pass without stopping only to note the name of the first article—likely a part of a continued story. If it is James's *Princess of Casamissima*, you pass it for all time, wondering the editor was so gullible as to agree to spoil the pages with such a tale. But the next is probably a *short poem*, and you read it, it is sure to be at least fairly good, and then proceed. Soon you come across the ever green Holmes, in his delightfully quaint, personal narrative, a portion of his queer theory stories, or, mayhap, a charming bit of poetry. But we must go on. The Contributors' Club comes last, generally a feast of good things, and you peep into it for a moment before settling to read in good earnest from your scholarly old friend.

Try our prescription once, and if you do not repeat the dose (the good doctor we have written of would approve of it) we are very much mistaken.