

ANECDOTES OF BOOKS AND AUTHORS.

We are indebted to D'Israeli's "Curiosities of Literature" for the following extraordinary calculation of the number of books printed from the first invention of the art. A curious arithmetician has discovered that the four ages of typography have produced no less than 3,641,960 works! Taking each work at three volumes, and reckoning each impression to consist of only three hundred copies, which is a very moderate supposition, the actual amount of volumes which have issued from the presses of Europe, up to the year 1816, appears to be 3,277,640,000! And if we suppose each of the volumes to be an inch in thickness, they would, if placed in a line, cover 6,069 leagues! Leibnitz facetiously maintained that such would be the increase of literature, that future generations would find whole cities insufficient to contain their libraries. "We are, however, indebted," says this entertaining writer, "to the patriotic endeavour of our grocers and trunk-makers, the alchemists of literature; they annihilate the gross bodies without injuring the finer spirits."

Drelincourt on Death.—When Drelincourt first published his work on Death, he was so totally disappointed in its sale, that he complained to Daniel Defoe, the author of "Robinson Crusoe," of the injury he was likely to sustain by it. Daniel asked him if he had blended any thing marvellous with his advice; he replied that he had not. "If you wish to have your book sell," said Defoe, "I will put you in a way;" he then sat down and wrote the story of the Apparition, which is to be found at the end of the book, and which is alleged as a proof of the appearance of ghosts.

Locke's Essay.—We are not aware that any writer, not excepting Lord King, the recent biographer of Locke, has noticed one of the most curious particulars in the history of the studies of our philosopher. It appears that his memorable discovery or development of that new system of the "Association of Ideas" was an after-thought. It did not appear in the first edition of the "Essay on the Human Understanding;" and when he sent it forth to the world, Locke certainly was not aware of the surprising novelty which has immortalized his name. We learn this from a manuscript letter which accompanied the new edition on its presentation to Sir Hans Sloane.

Outes Dec. 2, 1669.

"I took the liberty to send you, just before I left the town, the last edition of my Essay. I do not intend you should have it gratis. There are two new chapters in it: one of the 'Association of Ideas,' and another of 'Enthusiasm.' These two I expect you should read, and give me your opinion frankly upon. Though I have made other large additions, yet it would be to make you pay too dear to expect you should be at the task to find them out and read them. You will do very friendly by me if you forgive me the wasting your time on these two chapters."

Pamphlets of George III.—In the year 1762, the British Museum was enriched, by the munificence of George III., with a most valuable collection of thirty thousand tracts and pamphlets, relative to the history of England during the civil wars. The whole are bound in two thousand volumes, of which one hundred, chiefly on the royal side, were printed, but never published. This collection was commenced for the use of Charles I. by a clergyman of the name of Thompson, and was carried about England as the parliamentary army marched, kept in the collector's warehouses, disguised as tables covered with canvass; and at length lodged at Oxford, under the care of Dr. Barlow, afterwards bishop of Lincoln. These tracts were subsequently offered to the library at Oxford, and were at last bought for Charles II. by his stationer, Samuel Mearke, whose widow endeavoured to dispose of them, by leave of the said king, in 1684; but it is believed they continued unsold till George the Third bought them of Mearke's representative. In a printed paper it is said, that the collector had refused four thousand pounds for them.

Translations.—It has been said that a translation, in general, exhibits the same sort of resemblance to the original as the wrong side of the tapestry does to the right. In some cases it does not even do that. Sir John Pringle published a medical book, wherein he says he cured a soldier of a violent scurey, by prescribing two quarts of the Dog-and-Duck water, to be drunk every morning before dinner. In a translation of this book by a French physician, this remedy is specified to be two quarts of *broth* made of a duck and a dog!

Wakefield's Pope.—One of the grossest literary blunders of modern times is that of the late Gilbert Wakefield, in his edition of Pope. He there takes the well-known "Song, by a Person of Quality," which is a piece of ridicule on the glittering tuneful nonsense of certain poets, as a serious composition. In a most copious commentary, he proves that every line seems unconnected with its brothers, and that the whole reflects disgrace on its author! A circumstance which too evidently shows how necessary the knowledge of modern literary history is to a modern commentator, and that those who are profound in verbal Greek are not the best critics in English writers.

Burns.—Burns, in his autobiography, informs us, that a life of Hannibal, which he read when a boy, raised the first stirrings of his enthusiasm; and he adds, with his own fervid expression, that

"the life of Sir William Wallace poured a tide of Scottish prejudices into his veins, which would boil along them till the flood-gates of life were shut in eternal rest." He adds, speaking of his retired life in early youth, "this kind of life, the cheerless gloom of a hermit, and the toil of a galley-slave, brought me to my sixteenth year, when love made me a poet."

Delrius.—Amongst the various instances of literary precocity, perhaps that of the learned Delrius is the most extraordinary. At the early age of nineteen he published a work illustrative of Seneca, quoting 100,000 different authors.

Pascal.—Pascal, when only eleven years of age, wrote a treatise on sounds. At twelve he had made himself master of Euclid's Elements without the aid of a teacher. When only sixteen he published a treatise on Conic Sections, which Descartes was unwilling to believe could have been produced by a boy of his age. When only nineteen he invented the arithmetical instrument, or *scale* for making calculations.

A French Youth.—The French newspapers of August, 1760, gave an account of a boy only five years of age, whose precocity of talent exceeded even that of Pascal himself. He was introduced to the assembly of the academy of Montpellier, where a great number of questions were put to him on the Latin language, on sacred and profane history, ancient and modern, on mythology, geography, chronology, and even philosophy, and the elements of the mathematics; all which he answered with so much accuracy, that the academy gave him a most honourable certificate.

Spanish and French Literature.—Books were so scarce in Spain in the tenth century, that several monasteries had among them only one copy of a Bible, one of Jerome's Epistles, and one of several other religious books. There are some curious instances given by Lupus, abbot of Ferrieris, of the extreme scarcity of classical manuscripts in the middle of the ninth century. He was much devoted to literature; and from his letters, appears to have been indefatigable in his endeavours to find out such manuscripts, in order to borrow and copy them. In a letter to the pope, he earnestly requests of him a copy of Quintilian, and of a treatise of Cicero: "For," he adds, "though we have some fragments of them, a complete copy is not to be found in France." In two other of his letters, he requests of a brother abbot the loan of several manuscripts, which he assures him shall be copied, and returned as soon as possible by a faithful messenger. Another time he sent a special messenger to borrow a manuscript, promising that he would take very great care of it, and return it by a safe opportunity, and requesting the person who lent it to him, if he were asked to whom he had lent it, to reply, to some near relations of his own, who had been very urgent to borrow it. Another manuscript, which he seems to have prized much, and a loan of which had been so frequently requested, that he thought of banishing it somewhere, that it might not be destroyed or lost, he tells a friend he may, perhaps, lend him when he comes to see him, but that he will not trust it to the messenger who had been sent for it, though a monk, and trustworthy, because he was travelling on foot.

Ingenuity.—A man presented to Queen Elizabeth a bit of paper, of the size of a finger-nail containing the ten commandments, the creed, and the Lord's prayer; together with her name, and the date of the year. The whole could be read with spectacles, which he had himself made.

Doctor Faustus.—The whole library of the Scilly Isles consisted about a century ago, of the Bible and the History of Dr. Faustus. The island was populous; and the western peasants being generally able to read, the conjuror's story had been handed from house to house, until, from perpetual thumbing, little of his enchantments or his catastrophe was left legible. On this alarming conjuncture, a meeting was called of the principal inhabitants, and a proposal was made, and unanimously approved, that, as soon as the season permitted any intercourse with Cornwall, a supply of books should be sent for. A debate now began, in order to ascertain what those books should be; and the result was, that an order should be transmitted to an eminent bookseller at Penzance, for him to send them another *Dr. Faustus*!

German Second Editions.—The London Quarterly Review states a curious custom among the German literati; the second edition of a German work is generally much altered from the first, and admits not only variations of statement, but often direct contradictions to its former self. "We have heard," says the reviewer, "that Jacobi, no inconsiderable man, published a book turning much on a distinction, unknown in this country, between the *reason* and the *understanding*; but the second had appended to it this important erratum for the benefit of those readers who might still wish to make use of their original copies, 'Wherever you find *understanding* read *reason*, and wherever you find *reason* read *understanding*.' This is as bad as the erratum of a military dictionary which said, for "*artillery* read *men*," and for "*mounted rangers* read *drum and fife*."

Value of Books.—Anthony Panormita, a learned Sicilian, in the fifteenth century, sold an estate that he might be able to purchase a copy of Livy. Of this circumstance we have a curious

account in a letter written by Panormita himself, to Alphonsus, king of Naples, to whom he was secretary. It is as follows: "Sir,—You have informed me from Florence that the books of Livy, written in a fair hand, are to be sold, and that they ask for them 120 crowns. I beseech your majesty to cause to be sent to me this king of books, and I will not fail to send the money for it. And I entreat your prudence to let me know whether Poggini or I does better; he who, to purchase a farm near Florence, sell Livy, or I who, to purchase the book written with his own hand, sell my land? Your goodness and modesty induce me to put this familiar question to you. Farewell, and triumph!" It is to be hoped that the king sent him Livy, without subjecting him to the necessity of parting with his land for the book.

Biblio Maniacs.—Among other follies of the age of paper, which took place in England at the end of the reign of George III., a set of book-fanciers, who had more money than wit, formed themselves into a club, and appropriately designated themselves the *Biblio-Maniacs*. Dr. Dibdin was their organ; and among the club were several noblemen, who, in other respects, were esteemed men of sense. Their rage was, not to estimate books according to their intrinsic worth, but for their rarity. Hence, any volume of the vilest trash, which was scarce, merely because it never had any sale, fetched fifty or a hundred pounds; but if it were but one of two or three known copies, no limits could be set to the price. Books altered in the title-page, or in a leaf, or any trivial circumstance which varied a few copies, were bought by these *soi-disant* maniacs, at one, two, or three hundred pounds, though the copies were not really worth more than three-pence per pound. A trumpery edition of Boccaccio, said to be one of two known copies, was thus bought by a noble marquis for 1475*l.*, though, in two or three years afterwards, he resold it for 500*l.* First editions of all authors, and editions by the first clumsy printers, were never sold for less than 50*l.*, 100*l.*, or 200*l.*

To keep each other in countenance, those persons formed themselves into a club, and, after a duke, one of their fraternity, called themselves the *Roxburghe Club*. To gratify them, facsimile copies of clumsy editions of trumpery books were reprinted; and, in some cases, it became worth the while of more ingenious persons to play off forgeries upon them. This mania is considerably abated; and in future ages it will be ranked with the tulip and picture mania, during which estates were given for single flowers and pictures.

Icon Libellorum.—The celebrated Myles Davies, in his "Icon Libellorum, or a Critical History of Pamphlets," has a strange medley of remarks in reference to Pope the poet, which we copy for the amusement of our readers:—"Another class of pamphlets, writ by Roman Catholics, is that of *poems*, written chiefly by A. Pope, himself a gentleman of that name. He passed always among most of his acquaintance for what is commonly called a Whig; for it seems the Romish politicians are divided, as well as Popish missionaries. However, one *Esdras*, an apothecary, as he qualifies himself, has published a piping-hot pamphlet against Mr. Pope's 'Rape of the Lock,' which he entitles, 'A Key to the Lock,' wherewith he pretends to unlock nothing less than a *plot* in that poem against the last and this present ministry and government."

A blunder has been recorded of the monks in the dark ages, which was likely enough to happen when their ignorance was so dense. A rector going to law with his parishioners about paying the church, quoted this authority from St. Peter: "*Paveam illi, non paveam ego*," which he construed, "They are to pave the church, not I." This was allowed to be good law by the judge, himself an ecclesiastic too!

Convenient Arrangement.—The Paisley (Eng.) Advertiser states that a white hen belonging to Mr. Woodrow, of the Railway Wharf Inn, has lately taken a great liking for railway travelling, and for some time has been a daily passenger to Paisley. She has no money, of course, to pay her fare, but she scorns to impose upon the guard. She therefore works her passage faithfully, and pays him in kind by laying him an egg every day she comes to town, an arrangement deemed perfectly satisfactory to both parties.

He who foresees calamities, suffers them twice over.

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