

## CHEAP BOOKS IN ENGLAND.

The recent opening to the public of a free library in the Whitechapel district of London was the occasion of an address by Lord Rosebery on the value and importance of reading, and the gradual growth of the reading habit. "He spoke of books," says G.W.S. in the New York Tribune, "as a man who knows them and loves them, and desires other people to love them. But it is a utilitarian age, and it seemed to him that the most urgent recommendation of books he could offer to the toilers of Whitechapel was their exceeding cheapness. He summed it up in his usual picturesque way: 'For the price of a hat you may now get a library that all the merchant princes of the Middle Ages—all the Fuggers and the Medels—could not have obtained had they given their heart's blood for it.'

"With even more emphasis, Lord Rosebery owned that to him there is 'nothing' so striking as the fact that you can get almost all the great works of the human mind for so very small a sum. The small sum proves to be, for half the masterpieces of literature, three pence a piece. It is a very doubtful boon. The workman had better go to his reading room or library and read them in readable print for nothing at all, and save his eyesight, which is worth considerably more than six cents. The attempt to compress a literary masterpiece into a three-penny volume must result in very small print and very poor paper and ink, worse than the average newspaper. It is time somebody should protest against cheapness for which so high a price is paid, as the readers of these unprofitable cheap issues must pay in the long run. If things go on as at present, the next lucrative profession of the future will be the oculist's. Everybody's eyes in the next generation will be in need of constant repair. 'The whole of Milton for ninepence' is the dearest investment the student can make. When we give our minds to commercial views and the praise of cheapness is sounded from the lips of a distinguished speaker, one likes to hear also what the professional view is; I mean the trade view. I turn to the trade organ, and I read that 'in a time of wonders nothing is more wonderful than the revolution that has taken place during recent years in regard to the production of cheap literature.' Elsewhere has been heard a grumble that the ancients, in their cheap dress, should be extolled and commended to the reading public, while the dear moderns were left unsung. Let us do our trade oracle the justice to say he is wiser than this. He sees and says that whatever stimulates the taste for books must, in the end, be to the advantage of the modern producer of books, be he writer or publisher of them. It is a truism, but nothing is so often disputed as a truism by those who wish it were false."

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6821. *The French Teacher, actuellement en voie de publication par articles dans le Maître de Français, publié à Montreal.* (Droit temporaire d'auteur.) Louis Tesson, Montreal, Que.
6822. *Lecture on Co-operative Dairying and Winter Dairying*. Pamphlet. By Mrs. E. M. Jones, Brockville, Ont.
6823. *Bell Telephone Company of Canada, Ltd., London Exchange Subscribers' Directory, Ontario Department, February, 1903*. The Bell Telephone Company of Canada, Ltd., Montreal, Que.
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