

the masses. I cannot see that it has materially affected the trade in cloth-bound novels. A great many more people read to-day in America than ever before. When a man of moderate means starts on a railroad journey he buys a twenty or twenty-five-cent book to read on the way. If he had to pay a dollar for a novel ten chances to one he would content himself with a newspaper."

In regard to the reprints of classics and standard novels, Mr. Harper continued, "People who want them must want them in a good binding for their libraries. The other class of people who buy the cheaper form of literature could not afford to get it in any other shape, and they thus make the acquaintance of a number of celebrated writers that they would otherwise be ignorant of."

"Do you think the publication of cheap literature will increase?" Mr. Harper was asked.

"No," he replied, "I think it is now at its height. Twenty or twenty-five years ago there was just the same rage for cheap books. Every publisher, almost, went into the business of issuing paper bound volumes but it was not long before the more expensive books came again into favour. Our business in cloth-bound novels has decreased since publishers have taken up cheap works, if at all, because it is almost impossible under the existing circumstances to sell a reprint of an English novel for a dollar or a dollar and a half. People have come to the conclusion that if they wait a few weeks after its publication abroad they can get it here for 20 or 25 cents."

Charles Scribner, of the firm of Charles Scribner's Sons, being questioned on the subject, said that he thought that the publication of cheap books has been decidedly overdone.

"Then you do not think that these low-priced books have an influence to raise the tastes of the people, and stimulate the desire for good reading?" Mr. Scribner was asked.

"Decidedly not. If all the cheap books were of a wholesome and improving character, such would undoubtedly be the case. But they are not. As proof of this the publication of the classics at low cost has not injured the sale of the expensive editions to any extent that I can see. Even a mechanic, if he buys a volume of standard literature, wants it durably bound. Books are great luxuries to a poor man, and when he buys one it is not to gratify the fancy of the moment, but to keep after he has read it for his children."

"We have lately issued paper-bound works," said Oliver Bunce, of Appleton's, "but it is more with a view to advertising other works on our catalogue and to keep our name before the public than for anything else. The profit is insignificant even if a large number are sold, but as nearly all the other publishers are doing it we wish to conform with the spirit of the times."

"Have you found the sale of the cheap editions affect the higher priced volumes?" Mr. Bunce was asked.

"Not to any noticeable extent," he replied. "In March we sold more encyclopedias than we did in any previous March since the work was published, and the sale of other standard works has been uniformly large."

"Do you think the sale of cloth-bound novels has fallen off since publishers have gone so extensively into the cheap editions?"

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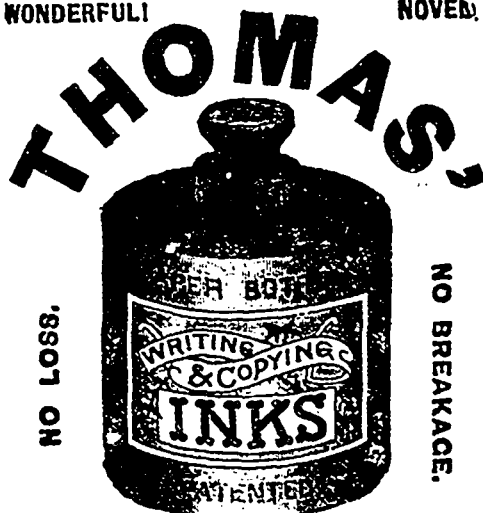
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