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ON LIMITED EDITIONS.

Like many other excellent varieties of enterprise, the limited edition has been carried to excess, and is in danger of annihilation from corrupt practices. The primary motive of publishing short editions of thoroughly well made books is that by this means such high prices may be obtained from a few persons fortunate enough to have surplus means to gratify their refined tastes, as to make it pecuniarily possible to put the best paper, ink, printing, illustrations, and binding into a volume. The limited edition is the opposite extreme of the cheap reprint literature with which the country is flooded, and which has driven out of market many of the fairly well made books which abounded formerly. In this regard it may be viewed as the natural operation of the law of supply and demand. Publishers who were forced by competition to print very cheap books, found that there existed still a decided demand for the same works in better form, and that even greater prices than had ever been paid before for certain books could be obtained, were they excellent enough as book manufactures to warrant higher charges. From this condition of trade, together with the pride that some few publishers take in what they accomplish as book-makers arose the limited edition.

It will be seen, therefore, that the idea of the limited edition is above reproach, and that if honestly developed its effect is to stimulate the book-making art, and to supply worthy books to those who appreciate them, and who have some sentiment connected with printing aside from its strictly utilitarian function as a vehicle of information. Unfortunately, this has not been the case invariably, but the limited idea, like many other good devices of honest manufacturers, has suffered from the unscrupulous and dishonest practices of irresponsible publishers, until, in the minds of many, the very idea itself is converted to a synonym for trickery. With regard to a few firms who have, by many years of endeavor, established a reputation for fulfilling their promises and not cheating their customers, this is an exception; but as to the majority of those who announce limited editions there is a strong disinclination to advancing subscriptions to any work before it is seen complete, and is proven to be worth the price asked.

In a surprisingly short time the buyer has awak-

ened to the danger. Experience has shown that there are scores of mushroom publishers and booksellers who do not hesitate to publish an alluring prospectus, take subscriptions and supply an inferior book. If any objections are raised, the publisher coolly insists that the book is good enough, and that there is no redress. Reluctantly the subscriber is forced to admit that he has been duped, and mentally resolves to avoid limited editions in the future. Having been cheated once he protects his purse, even though occasionally it may work injustice to reputable firms which can be trusted.

To such an extent has this form of dishonest practice been carried, that some houses boast of it unblushingly. One publisher of Philadelphia says openly that he cares but little what the book-buying public thinks as long as he makes money, and that until all the credulous fools have been worked for all they are worth he proposes to continue in the business. Annually, therefore, there come from his office address pretentious circulars, followed shortly by a persuasive canvasser with, perhaps, one section of an exquisitely made book. On this showing subscriptions are obtained. With the third or fourth section the work begins to decline in quality and, finally, becomes almost worthless. This is extremely profitable for the publisher, but disastrous to the subscriber, reputable firms, and the procedure of the limited edition.—*The Art Age.*

ANCIENT PLAYING CARDS.—In no part of "Old London" is there greater interest than in Goodall's stall, where "Playing Cards" from the earliest possible period to the present are exhibited. There is an interest here far beyond the ordinary exhibits in "Old London." When one sees the manipulation of new cards, cutting and packing under the modern system, one knows not what is behind. The speed of new manufacture is not so well represented as at Messrs. Goodall's works at Camden Town, but it is sufficient for the purpose of showing the advance of ages, and how playing-cards have been a feature in the past as well as in the present generation. It is difficult to define the exact era when "Playing-Cards" first came into existence, but certainly Goodall & Co. show the Arabic cards of 1470, which were produced from copper engravings, and are unique in