



BOOKS and NOTIONS
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THE ORIGINAL BLACK LETTER.

Black letter is the term applied by printers and others to the old English type, which is otherwise called Gothic, and bears a close resemblance to the German type of the present day. Astle denounced the modern Gothic, and contended that it did not originate with the Goths, but with lazy calligraphists whose bad taste prompted to deteriorate the Latin writing. In the old English records, Roman characters, very similar to those now in use, preceded the black letter, as they have followed it, but when Caxton commenced the first English books, black letter was the fashion, and so continued until a purer taste restored the Roman characters. Even as late as 1784, the English statute books were still printed in Gothic or black letters. The Dutch used it in their devotional books long after they had discontinued it in ordinary publications; and the Germans are now substituting in some of their publications the Roman for the Gothic characters.

The old black letter, and more especially that form called Secretary, was used by Caxton in printing "The Game of Chess," and other early books, copies of which may be seen at the British Museum. Better black letter, however, was subsequently made by the English type founders. The character has served their successors as the ground work and title of a number of job and fancy founts, called by such names as—Black Condensed, Black Ground, Black Open, Black Ornate, Black Ornate Shaded, Black Outline, Black Shaded, etc., in addition to series called "Anglo-Saxon," "Old English," "Elizabethan," etc. The names given are purely arbitrary, but the origin of all such styles is identical.—*The British and Colonial Printer and Stationer.*

MARGINS FOR BOOKS.—The tendency of the earlier part of the century, by which we were given liberal margins to books, now seems to be much altered, and the width of the pages has been materially diminished. It would seem that publishers are now anxious to get as much upon the leaf as possible, and every expedient is resorted to for that purpose. This is not only the case with publications like magazines, or with heavy volumes like cyclopedias, but has also become the rule with histories, biographies, and critical

works. It deprives the binder of the paper necessary for him to use to make the appearance of the book symmetrical, and forces him to place the reading matter so near the back of the leaf that it is with difficulty the book can be opened wide enough to allow it to be read. This is not as it should be. No book should be imposed or worked without allowing sufficient space between the pages for all of the exigencies of the binder, and except in very small or thin books the half inch or so which is allowed is entirely insufficient. The calculation for space must be made when the plan is first laid out, and no considerations of economy should be permitted to interfere with a liberal allowance. The proportion which good books ought to have was settled by the early French, Italian, and Dutch printers two centuries ago, and has since been always followed by those who knew anything of their business. The top margin and inner one are comparatively smaller than those at the outside of the page and its bottom, which are very liberal. In this way the shears of the binder occasion no great destruction, and to this action of the celebrated typographers and binders of early days we owe the preservation of the works upon which they bestowed so much care, which by our modern careless usage would have tumbled into pieces of themselves in a few years.—*The American Bookmaker.*

PERFUMED BOOKS.—"Why may not some of our books be perfumed? Especially a dainty summer edition for seaside and mountain top. Paper very readily absorbs and very persistently retains a perfume. Just fancy opening a novel from Cable's, Howell's, or James' pen printed on delicately-tinted paper in old-gold binding, and then detecting just a suspicion of some rich perfume as you turn over leaf after leaf. It would be a genuine 'novelty,' and ladies would read who never read before." Our esteemed contemporary, the *Art Age*, sees no reason why a book may not be perfumed, but there are reasons sufficient why it should not. Primarily, the best perfume a book can have is the clean, sweet odour of good paper and good ink. That is honest. Nor is it the custom of those of the highest rank and station of our day to indulge in perfume to any considerable extent. Certainly ladies do not, except those of unenviable social standing. Readers attracted by perfumed pages, would not be likely to stimulate liter-