

sation. These are the stuff upon which the vast majority of Englishmen chooses to starve its brain. In every one the same note of commonness is struck. The editor of the old-fashioned magazine—whereof, happily, there are a few examples still left in Great Britain—was (and is) anxious to discover the best talent he might. He would print only such literature as he was proud to see in type, and he was so shamefully lost to the commercial sense that he announced a policy from which no motive of interest could drive him. Now and again it was his good fortune to bring before the world an unknown novelist or a disregarded wit, and he took a very proper pride in his performance. Above all, he kept ahead of his readers, whom he forced to accept the good things he found for them, and he would have thought it shame to bow the knee at their dictate. Thus he produced (and still produces, alas! too rarely) a review which had a life and character of its own, and which, being always sincere in opinion or preference, had the right and faculty to exert an influence.

The editor of the new fashioned magazine, which is manufactured by the ton, and which threatens to drive all competitors from the field, has other aims and other qualifications. He has no interest in literature or politics; he has little taste in wit or humor; but he knows precisely what the people want, and he is prepared to give it to them. Not for the world would he anticipate his readers' taste or influence their opinion. His sole chance of success is to follow in their wake, and to satisfy with promptitude and resolution their advertised desires. He is almost as well skilled as the novelist in that delicate operation of feeling the public pulse; and though to us his methods are as mysterious as

they are deplorable, we regard him and his achievement with awe and admiration. He is "up-to date" (to use his own jargon), he is brisk, he is superficial. His contributors tell their readers exactly what they want to know; and if you wonder that any sane person should demand such knowledge your wonder proves that you are unfit to fill the sacred office of a popular editor. Then, having sated his "public" (the word is sacred) with superfluous knowledge, he displays to its ravished gaze the photographs of exalted personages whom it will never see, and pictures of ancestral halls which it will never visit. This amiable snobbery is highly seasoned with a fine selection of stories, short, crisp, and to the point, of which every page contains a sensation, and every line a violation of taste and common sense. Of course the one end and object of these magazines is a large sale. The modern editor crawls in obedient awe before his readers; he would think it a cardinal sin to give them anything better than the dried thistles that they ask; and a glance at one of those countless magazines which lie on every table, and are sold by the hundred thousand, convinces you that the popular editor never does violence to his conscience. Not one of these commercial articles would ever have been prepared for an educated eye, yet they are consumed (you cannot say "read") by thousands who should know better than to touch them. It is perfectly true as is urged by their manufacturers, that they will not bring the blush of shame to the cheek of innocence. But, in revenge, the cheek of intelligence should be suffused with scarlet at their mere apparition.

—*Blackwood's, March, 99.*

(To be continued)