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A BOY'S BOOKS, THEN AND NOW—1818, 1881.\*

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IT is singular to observe how soon, in a progressive age, and in a progressive region, numerous things become "curiosities," objects, that is, suitable to be placed behind glass in a museum or private cabinet. We gaze with astonishment at the costumes of our grandfathers and grandmothers; at their coats and gowns, their ruffles and furbelows; at their hats, caps, wigs and headgear generally; at their shoe-buckles, their snuff-boxes, their smelling-bottles, their patch-boxes. In the matter of dress, indeed, we gaze with wonderment at what we have worn ourselves, or what our wives, our sisters, or our lady friends have worn a few years back; and we say we must have been insane, and the whole community around us must have been insane, when such articles of attire were deemed beautiful and convenient.

It seems natural enough that the few relics which have come down to us from primæval times should excite interest and be looked at with a certain sense of superiority; as, for example, the tools and domestic utensils of the lacustrine inhabitants of Switzerland and elsewhere; or the arms and ornaments of our fellow men in the bone, stone and bronze periods. But that within the space of our own short lives, objects once most familiar, common-place and indispensable, should become rarities and seem to us odd when we do chance again to see them, is surely very extraordinary. A tinder-box, with its flint and steel, is now a "curiosity." The like is to be said of candlesticks of certain forms, of snuffers, and "lanthorns," and fire-dogs; of the tall case-clock, the bull's-eye watch, the quill pen.

And so, when for some reason, you have to turn over the volumes which have insensibly accumulated in an old

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