

the reach of all and if one does not study their thoughts or share their pleasures, he has none to blame but himself.

The present is a reading age, but whether it is so owing to the cheap productions of the great publishing houses or because of the increasing intellectual activity of man is a problem which I will not attempt to solve. However, though we read more, I think we set less store by books now than our ancestors did. The accuracy of this somewhat paradoxical assertion will probably be disputed, nevertheless I will endeavor to illustrate my meaning at the risk of disturbing the susceptibilities of some of my readers.

Centuries ago the only means of duplicating copies of any work was by laboriously transcribing from the original and we can easily picture to ourselves the pride of those who were fortunate enough to possess many of these precious manuscripts. We know as a matter of fact that the libraries of those days were jealously guarded and their contents lovingly perused by those having access to them. This is amply demonstrated by the annals of the monastic establishments, in which most of the literature of the middle ages was preserved. Afterwards when the introduction of printing wrought a revolution in the scholastic world, we find the old folios and quartos splendidly bound, magnificently illustrated and produced in a style which would probably mean ruin to a modern publisher. It may be confidently surmised that the people who expended money in this way did so, not because elaborate covers were the sole desideratum, but because the volumes themselves were objects to be carefully treasured and perused, not lightly parted with or loaned indiscriminately to all and sundry.

At the present day thousands of new books on all conceivable subjects are launched on the sea of public opinion.

They are in all sorts and conditions of binding, paper, and print, and the illustrations, when there are any, vary from inferior woodcuts to the most finished productions of the engravers art. One of the most striking features of the time is the development of the trade in paper covered books and this phase of the question is more pronounced in America than England. Go where you will throughout Canada and in almost every house it will be found that paper bound books are to cloth bound volumes in a ratio of four to one—and this comparison is not confined to novels, but extends through the whole range of literature. The good feature of this condition is that it brings the works of the majority of authors within the reach of the most moderate purses, and whereas not so long ago a book of world wide repute cost at least \$3, now as a rule a copy can be obtained for less than a dollar. The result is that the present generation can indulge in a range of reading which was formerly a luxury enjoyed only by the comparatively rich, and this has enabled authors to reach a large and increasing circle of readers, and generally raised the intellectual and critical standard of the reading public. Such a result is a distinct advance in the evolution of intellect.

The ease with which we can now possess books, however, has caused a corresponding lack of care in their preservation. In many homes the paper covered volumes may be seen, in all stages of delapidation huddled indiscriminately on the lowest shelves or thrown into an odd corner of the room "unwept, unhonoured and unsung." If they were worth buying, they were worth preserving, and the fact that you or I can for an outlay of, say fifty cents, purchase some of the most magnificent productions of the world's master-minds,