

## OLD AND NEW TIME BOOK PRICES

**T**AKING a retrospective view of the twenty years just past and noting the great changes in the price of books, it occurs to me that the book buyers of to-day do not appreciate the advantages they have over the book buyers of twenty years ago. It may therefore be interesting to see a comparison of prices on some standard books, popular then and now.

In making this comparison I will use the full publication price in other instance, for books were sold at that time very much the same as they are to-day. There were always dealers to be found by the knowing ones, who were willing to dilute their profits with the custom, by making one discount from the publisher's price. For the first illustration I will take the works of Charles Dickens, which had then, as they have to-day, the largest sale of any set of books. At that time what was called a cheap set of Dickens, in fifteen volumes, sold for \$16 to \$18. There were several other editions, undesirable on account of the small type that sold for \$10 a set. The stereotype plates of one of these sets is now doing duty for a cheap series of twelve-volume books that sell for 30 cents a volume. Another edition, in six volumes, printed in double column, sold for \$8. At the present day this would hardly bring \$1.50 a set. The stereotype plates of this edition are used in making the poorest of the cheap paper editions. Today one may buy a good readable edition of Dickens for \$7 that will compare favorably with the style sold for \$16 twenty years ago; and editions are sold for \$5 and even for \$3.75, as readable as those that sold for \$10 at that time. With the higher priced editions the changes have perhaps been a trifle less marked, but a comparison will show a decrease of forty per cent.

With the works of Scott, Thackeray, Butler, Carlyle, Ruskin, Macaulay and our own Washington Irving and Cooper the change has been fully as great; although no one of these mentioned has been published in any single edition. Space will not permit me to go over the long list thoroughly, item by item, but I will give a few instances. Where a twelve-volume edition of Sir Walter Scott's novels in the old time cost \$15, the price now is \$6 or \$7. When the Library edition of Thackeray's works was issued by Smith, Elder & Co. in 1869, \$2.75 per volume was the cut rate price, along Nassau street, New York (in the centre for cheap books). To-day \$1.50 per volume is the price for the same edition, which by the way is still the best edition for

actual use as it was then of Thackeray's works. The writer has sold sold many a copy of Thackeray's New-comers, Vanity Fair, Pendennis and Virginians at eighty cents each in paper covers. Each can be bought to-day for ten cents a copy, and if not printed on as good quality of paper, the reading will be found as easy for the eyes. When an edition of Thackeray, in eleven volumes, printed in double column, was made in Boston, from \$10 to \$11 was the price for a set. A better one is sold to-day for \$5. Macaulay's England, in five volumes, had a large sale at \$5.50 for the set; \$2, and even \$1.50 will get a set now.

Previous to the publication of "Middlemarch," in 1872, a set of George Eliot comprised "Adam Bede," "Romola," "Felix Hold," "The Mill on the Floss," "Scenes of Clerical Life," and "Silas Marner." These were put up in five understated twelve-volume volumes. One edition sold for \$1, and another for \$3.75. Since "Middlemarch," "Daniel Deronda," "Theophrastus Such," "The Poems and Essays" and some minor works have been added, a set contains twice as much matter, yet a well printed edition, bound in six or eight volumes, sells for \$3.50, and a readable set in six volumes, is now sold for \$1.40. While the books have, I believe, always appeared with the name of George Eliot, it was not an uncommon thing for the bookseller of twenty years ago to be asked for Miss Evans' novels, when a volume was wanted. This probably led to the ludicrous mistake I once saw in print, where the writer said that George Eliot was the nom de plume of Augusta J. Evans. The sale for these books seems to increase each year, until with the single exception of Charles Dickens' works they have the largest sale of any set of novels published.

Another great opportunity that a book buyer has to-day, which was hardly known twenty years ago, is in the libraries, as they are called—volumes bound in paper and selling for ten to twenty cents a book; and in what are known to the trade as the lines of twelve-volume—cloth bound and selling for from eighty to thirty cents a volume. But perhaps some one says, "These are nothing but trash." That can be answered with a single statement. Every author I have mentioned in this article is largely represented in one or the other of these libraries, and some have been published entire. With this fact before us no one would be justified in calling these libraries trash. Several years ago a United States Senator said these libraries were having a pernicious effect on the morals of our people. The Senator's term of office has expired, but let us hope that he had a better knowledge

of the affairs of government than he appears to have had of the contents of these "libraries."—Warren Hayder, in Book News for August.

## BOOKS IN DRY GOODS STORES.

**A** NOTICEABLE feature, says a Chicago dry goods paper, in many of our large retail dry goods stores to-day is the prominence given to the book department. This department is comparatively a recent creation, at least, as far as Chicago is concerned. For years a generous space has been devoted to books in large Eastern houses.

To judge by the attention given to the department it must result in a fair profit, which is a first consideration in the adoption of a new line of trading.

The book trade of dry goods stores differs from that of the regular book stores, inasmuch as that little of a heavy or technical nature is kept. The stock is almost entirely made up of light literature, in which all the standard and popular novels find a place. Novels in paper or cheap cloth covers find readiest sale.

Books are generally allied to the stationery, of which department it is an outgrowth. In the case of many local houses the department is not run by the firm, but by some firm of publishers, who, in the ever-crowded dry goods stores find a ready market for their goods.

## MCCLURE'S MAGAZINE.

The publishers of this new comer in the magazine field do not seem to care a snap how it reaches a market so long as it is sold. Newsdealers have to pay ten cents for it at wholesale, and the publishers of Jay (and other) journals all over the country are supplied on terms so favorable that they can and do give McClure's Magazine free to yearly subscribers. As if this were not going far enough, they offer to sell it to all corners for ten cents a copy delivered, payable once a month. No one can believe that anyone rakes in the dimes for McClure's for the glory of it, so it is clear that the publishers are knitting the trade by selling to other publishers at a much lower figure than to retail newsdealers. Dealers will refuse to handle McClure's if the publishers continue to have it retailed to every Tom, Dick and Harry at the wholesale price. This sort of thing must be stopped.—Book and News Dealer.

It is said that \$2,000 was paid by F. W. Helmick, 265 Sixth avenue, New York, for the privilege of publishing a new sacred song entitled, "Deal Gently with the Erring."