

Wherein then lies the source of the difference? In the fact of slave-labour. In Rome there were hundreds, nay, thousands, of slaves employed in that work of transcribing, which, in the Middle Ages, was done by a few monks and clerks. Slave-labour was not only abundant, it was cheap. Writing, in the Middle Ages, was not a common accomplishment, and labour was valuable. In the Roman household the readers (*anagnostæ*) and the transcribers (*librarii*) were almost as indispensable as cooks or dressers. Even the ladies had their female transcribers (*librariæ*). These slaves were not only employed in writing to dictation, and making extracts, but also in copying any book which their masters desired, and which was not yet issued to the public, or had ceased to be common in the shops.

At first every one supplied his library by these means. But gradually the natural tendency to the division of labour, and specialization of employments, produced a separate class of publishers. Atticus, a man of refined taste, and himself an author, being of a commercial no less than of a literary turn, saw a fine opening for his tastes and energies in the preparation of copies on a grand scale. He had a number of slaves trained specially for the purpose; and, by employing a vast number of copyists at once, he could multiply books almost as fast as they were demanded; and could issue them at a price which would induce most people to buy from him rather than employ their own slaves in copying. He produced books at a low price, with great rapidity, and in a superior style. His success was so great as rapidly to find imitators; publishing became a trade. Rome soon had numerous bookshops in every quarter. The columns of the colonnades were emblazoned with announcements of new books. And favourite authors were besieged by flattering publishers, as we learn from Pliny and Quintilian, eager to get the work "so much and generally desired by the public." This eagerness was not unfrequently punished; the Nemesis of a large "remainder" overtook the too enterprising speculator. However, there was the resource of the provinces, to which unsold copies could be despatched; and when the provinces were rebellious, there was always, as Martial and Horace intimate, the resource of selling the unread verses to wrap up pastry and spices.

There was no need of printing when slave-labour was thus abundant. One slave dictating to a hundred transcribers at once, the production of a large edition would have cost less, and would have required little more time, than a similar edition issuing from our printing-offices. The rapidity of the transcription was, of course, facilitated by the system of abbreviations. To judge of this rapidity we have the intimation of Martial that it would only require one hour to copy the whole of the second book of his Epigrams.

Hæc una peragit librarius hora.

Now this book contains five hundred and forty verses; and if we understand him literally when he says "one hour," that would give about nine verses in a minute. This is, perhaps, scarcely acceptable. But make whatever deduction is reasonable on the score of his speaking laxly, we cannot help the conclusion that the copying was very rapid. An edition of a thousand copies of such a poem might thus be produced in one day were it required.

That works prepared from dictation should be full of blunders is to be ex-