

other in consequence of their gratuitous distribution; but the librarians, in consequence of their inability to read, cannot apply the panaceas set forth in the former, nor can they understand the importance of the laws "being enacted" as mentioned in the latter. Though there are many such families and some such communities without books and the ability to read; communities that are still a law unto themselves, which is not easily encroached upon by the refinements that schools and books are calculated to impart; still it is wonderful to see the advances made in the circulation of books, periodicals, and newspapers. We can point to several large communities where the original denizens could not read, but not so of their offspring,—they are taught to read from early childhood, and as they grow in years they increase their store of books. In truth the acquisition of books and the formation of libraries is becoming fashionable, for "it's better to be out of the world than out of the fashion." Books are as much a necessary part of parlor furniture as the tables on which they lie. And the wonderful cheapness of literature adds powerfully to our facilities for acquiring books. Our facilities for acquiring knowledge being so great, one might almost be led to the conclusion that every one living within the precincts of these facilities would be a kind of circulating library.

But in the face of all these advantages we are sometimes inclined to ask, whether arbitrary fashion is not exercising a power over our literary

acquisitions; are we not purchasing books for "fashion's sake"? more for parlor furniture than that of the mind. However, there might be worse fashions than that of purchasing a few neatly bound books as parlor furniture, even if the possessors should fail to read them. One would feel very small, if on being asked a simple question, and had for the want of knowledge, to refer the interrogator to the parlor table for information. The possession of books now-days does not always imply a knowledge of their teachings.

We have not unfrequently lodged in respectable houses, inhabited by interesting families, and parlor tables loaded with books, but to our astonishment the youth were seldom allowed to peruse them for fear of tarnishing or destroying their appearance.—In one case we remember seeing a young man of twenty years open a book, "the History of the World, Ancient and Modern," and commence reading, when the good lady of the house, who liked the appearance of books in a house, so she said, ordered him to "let that book alone, you will only destroy it."

This reminds us of the story of an Irishman, who, when ascending a stair, walked one foot on each side for fear of soiling the carpet. So it was with the lady,—she would rather that her family remain ignorant of the world, ancient and modern, than her books, her parlor furniture, should be tarnished. We fear it will be a long time before such families will learn much of the world outside of their own dwellings. It is a miserable affair to