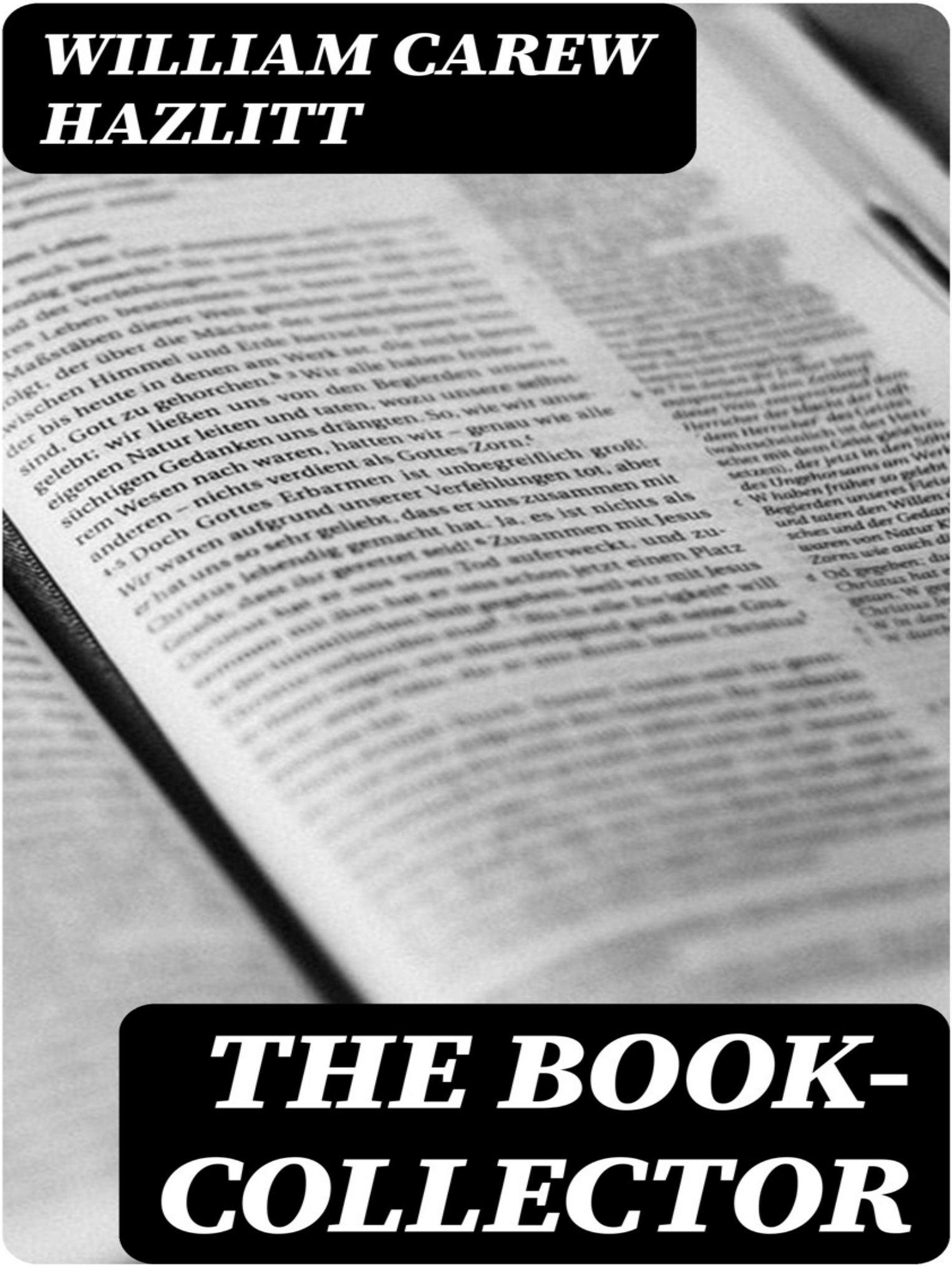
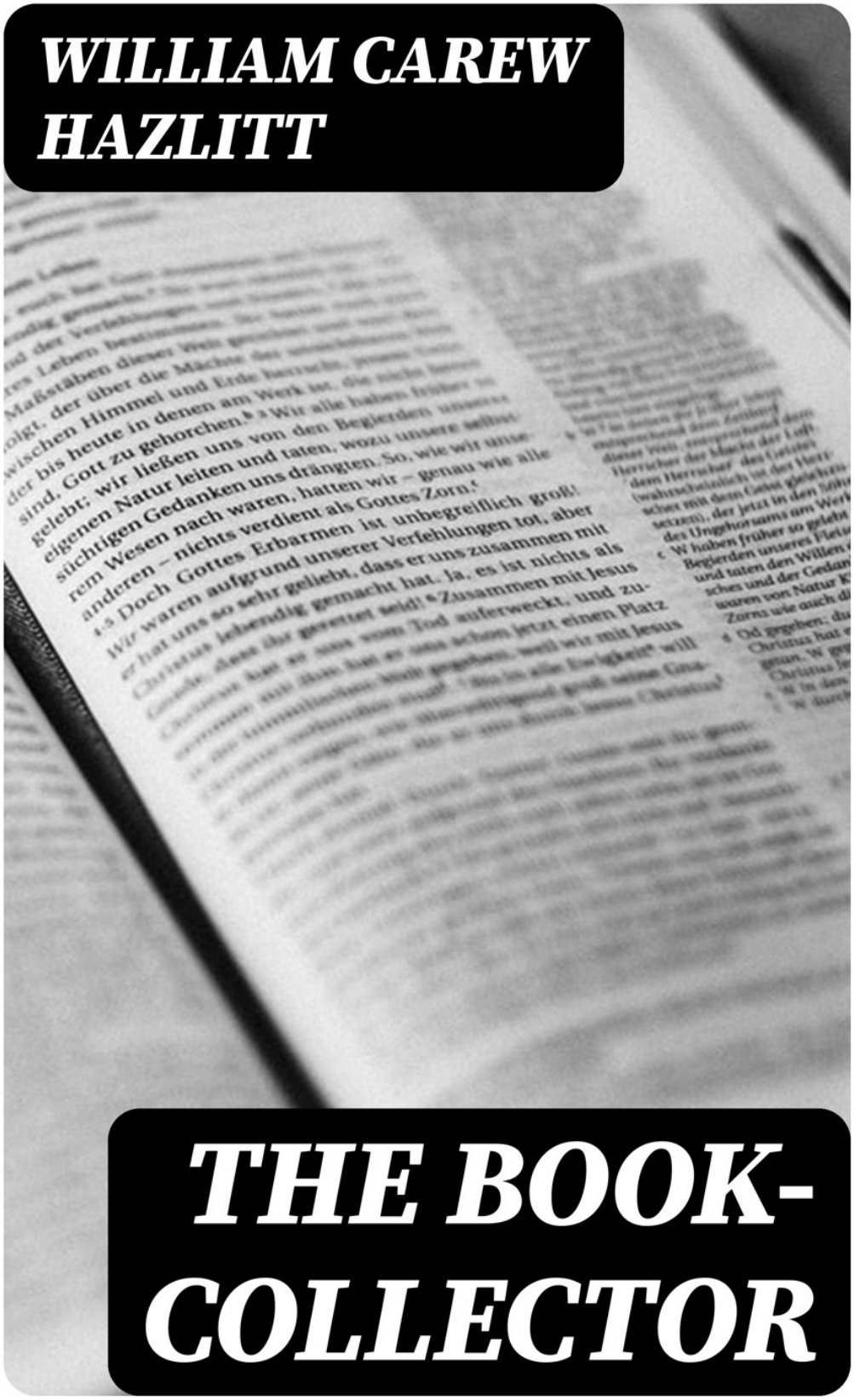
WILLIAM CAREW HAZLITT



THE BOOK-COLLECTOR



WILLIAM CAREW HAZLITT

THE BOOK-COLLECTOR

William Carew Hazlitt

The Book-Collector

A General Survey of the Pursuit and of those who have engaged in it at Home and Abroad from the Earliest Period to the Present Time

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PREFACE

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SEVERAL monographs by contemporary scholars on the inexhaustible theme of Book-Collecting have made their appearance during the last twenty years. All such undertakings have more or less their independent value and merit from the fact that each is apt to reflect and preserve the special experiences and predilections of the immediate author; and so it happens in the present case. A succession of Essays on the same subject is bound to traverse the same ground, yet no two of them, perhaps, work from the same seeing point, and there may be beyond the topic substantially little in common between them and the rest of the literature, which has steadily accumulated round this attractive and fruitful subject for bookman and artist.

During a very long course of years I have had occasion to study books in all their branches, in almost all tongues, of almost all periods, personally and closely. No early English volumes, while I have been on the track, have, if I could help it, escaped my scrutiny; and I have not let them pass from my hands without noting every particular which seemed to me important and interesting in a historical, literary, biographical, and bibliographical respect. The result of these protracted and laborious investigations is partly manifest in my *Bibliographical Collections*, 1867-1903, extending to eight octavo volumes; but a good deal of matter remained, which could not be utilised in that series or in my other miscellaneous contributions to *belles lettres*.

So it happened that I found myself the possessor of a considerable body of information, covering the entire field of Book-Collecting in Great Britain and Ireland and on the European continent, and incidentally illustrating such cognate features as Printing Materials, Binding, and Inscriptions or Autographs, some enhancing the interest of an already interesting item, others conferring on an otherwise valueless one a peculiar claim to notice.

My collections insensibly assumed the proportions of the volume now submitted to the public; and in the process of seeing the sheets through the press certain supplementary Notes suggested themselves, and form an Appendix. It has been my endeavour to render the Index as complete a clue as possible to the whole of the matter within the covers.

As my thoughts carry me back to the time—it is fifty years—when I commenced my inquiries into literary antiquities, I see that I have lived to witness a new Hegira: New Ideas, New Tastes, New Authors. The American Market and the Shakespear movement[1] have turned everything and everybody upside down. But Time will prove the friend of some of us.

In the following pages I have avoided the repetition of particulars to be found in my *Four Generations of a Literary Family*, 1897, and in my *Confessions of a Collector*, 1897, so far as they concern the immediate subject-matter.

W. C. H.
Barnes Common, Surrey,
October 1904.

Footnotes

[1] See the writer's *Shakespear, Himself and his Work: A Study from New Points of View*, second edition, revised, with important additions, and several facsimiles, 8vo, 1903.

HISTORY OF

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BOOK-COLLECTING

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CHAPTER I

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The plan—The writer's practical career—Deficiency of a general knowledge of the subject—The Printed Book and the Manuscript independent branches of study—The rich and the poor collector—Their relative systems and advantages—Great results achieved by persons of moderate fortune—The Rev. Thomas Corser—Lamb and Coleridge—Human interest resident in collections formed by such men, and the genuine pleasure experienced by the owners—A case or two stated—The Chevalier D'Eon—The contrary practice—Comparatively early culture in the provinces and interchange of books—Lady collectors—Rarity of hereditary libraries—The alterations in the aspect of books—The Mill a fellow-labourer with the Press—A word about values and prices—Our social institutions answerable for the difference of feeling about book-collecting—Districts formerly rich in libraries—Distributing centres—Possibility of yet unexplored ground—The Universities and Inns of Court—Successful book-hunting in Scotland and Ireland—Present gravitation of all valuable books to London.

A MANUAL for the more immediate and especial use of English-speaking inquirers is bound to limit itself, in the first place, mainly to the literary products of the three kingdoms and the colonies; and, secondly, to a broad and general indication of the various paths which it is open to any one to

pursue according to his tastes or possibilities, with clues to the best sources of intelligence and guidance. The English collector, where he crosses the border, as it were, and admits works of foreign origin into his bookcase, does not often do so on a large scale; but he may be naturally tempted to make exceptions in favour of certain *chefs-d'œuvre* irrespective of nationality. There are books and tracts which commend themselves by their typographical importance, by their direct bearing on maritime discovery, by their momentous relation to the fine arts, or by their link with some great personality. These stand out in relief from the normal category of foreign literature; they speak a language which should be intelligible to all.

It must be obvious that in a restricted space a writer has no scope for anecdote and gossip, if they are not actually out of place in a technical undertaking. Yet we have endeavoured to lay before our readers, in as legible a form as possible, a view of the subject and counsel as to the various methods and lines of Collecting.

Such an enterprise as we offer, in the face of several which have already appeared under various titles and auspices, may at first sight seem redundant; but perhaps it is not really the case. A book of this class is, as a rule, written by a scholar for scholars; that is all very well, and very charming the result is capable of proving. Or, again, the book is addressed by a bibliographer to bibliographers; and here there may be, with a vast deal that is highly instructive, a tendency to bare *technique*, which does not commend itself to many outside the professional or special lines. It was thought, under these circumstances, that a new

volume, combining readability and a fair proportion of general interest with practical information and advice, was entitled to favourable consideration; and the peculiar training of the present writer during his whole life, at once as a *litterateur* and a practical bookman, encouraged the idea on his part that it might well be feasible for him to carry the plan into execution, and produce a view of a permanently interesting and important subject in all its branches and aspects, appealing not only to actual book-collectors, but to those who may naturally desire to learn to what the science and pursuit amount.

One of the best apologies for book-collecting, and even for the accumulation of fine books, is that offered by McCulloch in the preface to his own catalogue. The writer takes occasion to observe, among other points and arguments: "It is no doubt very easy to ridicule the taste for fine books and their accumulation in extensive libraries. But it is not more easy than to ridicule the taste for whatever is most desirable, as superior clothes, houses, furniture, and accommodation of every sort. A taste for improved or fine books is one of the least equivocal marks of the progress of civilisation, and it is as much to be preferred to a taste for those that are coarse and ill got up, as a taste for the pictures of Reynolds or Turner is to be preferred to a taste for the daubs that satisfy the vulgar. A man acts foolishly, if he spend more money on books or anything else than he can afford; but the folly will be increased, not diminished, by his spending it on mean and common rather than on fine and uncommon works. The latter when sold invariably bring

a good price, more perhaps than was paid for them, whereas the former either bring nothing or next to nothing."

McCulloch's maternal grandfather was possibly the book-lover from whom the eminent political economist inherited his taste.

In common with the Manuscript Document and the Autograph Letter, the Written Book forms such a vast department of inquiry and study, that it would be undesirable, and indeed almost impracticable, in a volume of limited extent on book-collecting, to include the consideration of any collateral subject.

The broad facts regarding our national collections of MSS. are sufficiently well known, no less than the principal repositories in which they are to be found and consulted, and the individuals who have signalised themselves from time to time as owners of this class of property on various scales or on various principles. Nearly everybody with any claim to culture is familiar with the names of Cotton, Arundel, Harley, Lansdowne, Birch, Burney, Egerton, Hardwicke, and Stowe, in connection with precious assemblages of monuments in the National Library; Parker, Tanner, Fairfax, Ashmole and others at Oxford or Cambridge; Carew at Lambeth, and a succession of private enthusiasts in this direction, either independently or in conjunction with the printed side—Dering of Surrenden, Le Neve, Martin of Palgrave, Duke of Buckingham, Sir Thomas Phillipps, Libri, Lord Ashburnham, Heber, and Bright.

In the case of MSS. it is equally true with printed literature that the interest and value depend on circumstances, and are liable to changes and vicissitudes.

They may be classified into countries, periods, and subjects, and their appreciation depends on their character even more than on their mere rarity. An unique MS. may possibly be quite worthless. A comparatively common one may command a good price. How numerous soever the ancient copies of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* might be, another coming into the open market would still be an object of keen competition; and where importance is coupled with scarcity or uniqueness, of course the latter feature lends a high additional weight to the matter, and multiplies inquirers.

We must, however, in justice to this branch of the topic and to our readers, refrain from further pursuit of the discussion of it, as its adequate treatment would absorb a monograph to the full extent as ample as the present, and such a Manual is in point of fact a desideratum—one, too, which the improved state of bibliographical knowledge would assist in rendering much more satisfactory than was formerly possible.

The *Rolls of Collectors* by the present writer afford a convenient view of the different classes of society in the now United Kingdom, which from the outset to the present day have created, during unequal periods of duration, more or less noteworthy centres of literary or bibliographical gatherings, from the Harley, Roxburghe, Heber, or Huth level to that of the owner—often not less to be admired or commended—of the humble shelf-ful of volumes. Here names occur associated with the most widely varied aims in respect to scope and compass, yet all in a certain measure participating in the credit of admitting to their homes products of intellectual industry and ingenuity beyond such

matter as Family Bibles, Directories, Railway Guides, Charles Lamb's *Biblia-a-Biblia*, and sixpenny or threepenny editions of popular authors, which constitute the staple decorations of the average British middle-class household in this nonagenarian nineteenth century.

So early as the time of the later Stuarts, a movement seems to have commenced both in England and Scotland, not only in the chief centres, but in provincial towns, for the education of the middle class, and even of the higher grade of agriculturists, who sent their children to schools, and at the same time, in the absence of circulating libraries, improved their own minds by the exchange of books, as we perceive in contemporary diaries and correspondence; and Macaulay doubtless overcolours the ignorance and debasement of the bulk of society about the period of the Revolution of 1688, apparently in order to maintain a cue with which he had started. The Diary of John Richards, a farmer at Warmwell in Dorsetshire, 1697-1702, is an unimpeachable witness on the other side; it is printed in the *Retrospective Review*, 1853.

It was about the same date that we find even in Scotland a project for establishing throughout the country, in every parish, Reference or Lending Libraries, and some pamphlets on the subject have come down to us; but we hear nothing more about it. This was in 1699-1702, just when the indefatigable John Dunton was sending from the press his multifarious periodical news-books for the benefit of the more literary sort in South Britain.

The Circulating Library in the United Kingdom in its inception was intended more particularly for the better-to-do

class, and even to-day its tariff is hardly compatible with very narrow resources. Perhaps the earliest effort to bring literature within the reach of the working-man was Charles Knight's scheme of "Book-Clubs for all Readers," mentioned in a letter to him of 1844 from Dickens.

A remarkable change in the fortunes and tactics of the collector has arisen from one in our social institutions. The book-hunter of times past, if he was a resident in the provinces, and worked on a more or less systematic and ambitious scale—nay, if he merely picked up articles from year to year which struck his fancy, relied, as he was able to do, on his country town. Thither gravitated, as a rule, the products of public and private sales from the surrounding neighbourhood within a fairly wide radius. If a library was placed in the market, the sale took place on the premises or at the nearest centre; there was no thought of sending anything short of a known collection up to London. The transit in the absence of railways was too inconvenient and costly. These conditions, which long survived better possibilities, naturally made certain headquarters throughout the kingdom a perfect Eldorado and Elysium, first of all for local enthusiasts miles round, and later on for metropolitan bargain-seekers, who made periodical tours in certain localities at present as barren as Arabia Petræa.

The principal points appear, so far as existing information goes, to have been in the North: Newcastle, York, Sheffield, Leeds; in the Midlands: Birmingham and Manchester; in the West: Plymouth, Exeter, and Bristol; in the South: Chichester; in the East: Norwich, Yarmouth, Colchester, Bury, and Ipswich. It was at Chichester that the poet Collins

brought together a certain number of early books, some of the first rarity; his name is found, too, in the sale catalogues of the last century as a buyer of such; and the strange and regrettable fact is, that two or three items, which Thomas Warton actually saw in his hands, and of which there are no known duplicates, have not so far been recovered.

East Anglia during a prolonged period was peculiarly rich in holders and seekers of the Old Book, both manuscript and printed. It formerly abounded in monastic institutions, affluent county families, and literary archæologists. We may mention Lord Petre, the Hanmers of Mildenhall, the Herveys of Ickworth, the Bunburys of Bury, the Tollemaches, the Freres, the Fountaines, Sir John Fenn, Martin of Palgrave, Dawson Turner, and the Rev. John Mitford. It was the same, as we take elsewhere occasion to show, in the West of England, in the Midlands, in the Northern counties, and in the South of Scotland. The absence of ready communication with the metropolis and the relative insignificance of provincial centres kept libraries together. Their owners, while the agricultural interest was flourishing, had no motive for sale, and the inducement to part with such property was far less powerful, while the competition remained limited.

In Kent: Canterbury and Maidstone; in Surrey: Guildford, Croydon, Kingston, and even Richmond, may have helped to supply local requirements to a certain extent. But the Sydneys of Penshurst, the Oxindens of Barham, the Lee-Warlys, the Barretts of Lee, the Evelyns of Sayes-Court and Wootton, and others among the gentry of these and the adjacent shires, probably filled their shelves in principal

measure from the London shops during their periodical visits to the metropolis for various purposes.

Even in later times the suburbs of London, and now and then such localities as Woolwich, Reading, Manchester, Shrewsbury, Salisbury, Wrexham, Conway, Keswick, and Dublin have yielded a prize or so, owing to the dispersion of some small library in the neighbourhood on the premises. Otherwise one may prospect the country towns all over the three kingdoms nowadays, and not see anything save new stock and penny-box ware. Even the provincial centres are, in general, sterile enough; but the rural districts are dried up. Every species of property seems to drift to London.

The Bristol houses, Kerslake, Jefferies, George, Lasbury, often came across rarities; but it is so no longer. The West has been threaded through. If there is a section of England where some good things may yet linger, it is, we should say, in Staffordshire, Lancashire, and Shropshire, to which might perhaps be added Worcestershire.

The seats of our two ancient Universities, and cathedral cities generally, have not yielded such ample fruit to the explorer, perhaps because there has always been a species of magnetic attraction, by which any spoils of the kind are drawn into the local libraries and museums. A graduate of Oxford or Cambridge, a canon of this or that church, a loyal dweller in Winchester or Lincoln, possesses or discovers a rare volume, and his impulse, if he does not keep it himself, is to bestow it on his place of residence or education. Whatever happens, the stranger coming to hunt in these preserves arrives only in time to learn that the stall or the shop has given up some unique desideratum a day or two

before, and is referred to the librarian of the college, or to the buyer at such an address, if he desires to inspect it, which, if his aims are simply commercial, be sure he does not. The aggravation is already sufficient!

At the same time, the Universities and Inns of Court have been from time to time the homes of many famous book-collections. Robert Burton, Anthony Wood, John Selden, Sir David Dundas, Mr. Dyce, Dr. Bliss, Dr. Bandinel, Dr. Coxe, Mr. Bradshaw, are only a few select names.

In the same way there was a time, and not so distant, when Edinburgh, and even Dublin, yielded their proportion of finds, and the Duke of Roxburghe and General Swinton, David Laing and James Maidment, obtained no insignificant share of their extremely curious and valuable stores from their own ground. Now the Scotish amateur and bookseller equally look to the great metropolis for the supply of their wants, and the North Country libraries are sent up to London for sale. The capital of Scotland has lost its ancient prestige as a cover for this sort of sport, and is as unproductive as an ordinary English provincial town.

From an acquisitive standpoint the locality signifies no longer. The game is up. The three kingdoms have been well-nigh ransacked and exhausted. The country town is as bare as a bird's tail of anything but common-place stuff, bought in the London market, and (if any dweller in a distant city is simple enough to order it from the unsophisticated vendor) charged with a good profit and the freight up. Naturally the provincial dealer, if he stumbles on a gem or two in an accidental way, takes care that it is sold in no corner, unless it be at the corner of Wellington Street in the Strand. He

considers that the value may be a matter of doubt, and he leaves it to gentlemen to decide between them how much it is worth. Do you blame him?

It is a frequently debated point whether at home in Great Britain the feeling for books, in the collector's sense, is not on the decline; and, indeed, the causes of such a change are not far to seek. The acute pressure of business among the wealthy mercantile class, which principally contributes to the ranks of book-buyers, and the decrease of resources for such luxuries among the nobility and clergy, might be sufficient to explain a shrinkage in the demand for the older and rarer literature in our own and other languages; but there is another and even more powerful agency at work which operates in the same direction, and is adverse to the investment of money in objects which do not appeal directly to the eye. The *bibliophile* discovers, when he has expended a small fortune (or perhaps a large one) in the formation of a library, that his friends evince no interest in it, have no desire to enter the room where the cases are kept, do not understand what they are told about this or that precious acquisition, and turn on their heel to look at the pictures, the antique furniture, or the china. This undoubtedly wide-spread sentiment strikes a very serious blow at a pursuit in which the enthusiast meets with slight sympathy or encouragement, unless it is at the hands of the dealers, naturally bound for their own sakes to keep him in heart by sympathy and flattery. Doubtless the present aspect of the question might have become ere now more serious, had it not been for the American market and the extension of the system of public and free libraries.

But, on the other hand, while enormous numbers of books are sold under the hammer year by year, there must be an approximately proportionate demand and an inexhaustible market, or the book trade could not keep pace with the auctioneers; and, moreover, we may be in a transitional state in some respects, and may be succeeded by those whose appetite for the older literature will be keener than it ever was.

The complaint of a superabundance of books of all kinds is not a new one. It goes back at least to the reign of Elizabeth and the age of Shakespeare, for in 1594, in a sermon preached at Paul's Cross, a divine says:—

> "There is no ende of making Bookes, and much reading is a wearinesse to the flesh, and in our carelesse daies bookes may rather seeme to want readers, than readers to want bookes."

No one should be too positive whether it is to the rich or to the poor book-collector that the romantic element chiefly or more powerfully attaches itself. It has been our lot to enjoy the acquaintance of both classes, and we hesitate to pronounce any decided opinion. There is the unquestionable triumph of the man with a full purse or an inexhaustible banking account, who has merely to resolve upon a purchase or a series of purchases, and to write a cheque for the sum total. He is no sooner recognised by the members of the trade as a zealous enthusiast and a liberal paymaster, than offers arrive, and continue to arrive, from all sides. He is not asked to take any trouble; his library is an object of solicitude to everybody who has anything to sell; the order

on his bankers is all that his humble servants desire. He finds himself, after the lapse of a decade or so, the master of a splendid collection, without having once known what it was to get disagreeably warm or anxious in the pursuit of a volume, to deliberate whether he could afford to buy it, or to submit to the ordeal of attending an auction, one of a motley throng in a fetid atmosphere. All these trials he has been spared; he has collected with kid gloves.

On the contrary, a good deal may be said in favour of the amateur of moderate fortune, who by personal judgment slowly accumulates an important and enviable assemblage of literary monuments, like the Rev. Thomas Corser, who spent £9000 during a lifetime on books, which realised £20,000, and would now bring thrice as much, and perhaps even more; and in that of men such as Charles Lamb and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who had to pause before they laid out a few shillings in this way. The history of Lamb's books is more humanly interesting than the history of the Huth or Grenville library; as chattels or furniture they were worthless; they were generally the poorest copies imaginable; but if they did not cost money, they often cost thought; they sometimes involved a sacrifice, if the price was in the high altitude of a sovereign. In the case of Lamb, the sister's opinion was sought, and the matter lay ever so long in abeyance before the final decision was taken, and Lamb hastened to the shop, uncertain if he might not be too late, if the person whom he saw emerging as he entered might not have *his* book in his pocket. Here was payment in full for the prize; the coin handed to the vendor was nothing to it; Lamb had laid out more than the value in many a

sleepless night and many an anxious calculation. Lamb, although he probably never bound a volume of his own in his life, or purchased one for the sake of its cover, could grow enthusiastic over his favourite *Duchess of Newcastle*, and declare that no casket was rich enough, no casing sufficiently durable, to honour and keep safe such a jewel.

Collectors of the abstract type looked, and still look, at the essence or soul—at the object pure and simple. A book is a book for a' that. It may be imperfect, soiled, wormed, cropped, shabbily bound—all those things belong to its years; let it suffice that there is just enough of the author to be got in glimpses here and there to enable the proprietor of him in type to judge his quality and power. That is what such men as Lamb wanted—all they wanted. A copy of Burton's *Anatomy*, of Wither's *Emblems*, or Browne's *Urn-Burial*, in the best and newest morocco, was apt to be a hinderance to their enjoyment of the beauties of the text, was almost bound to strike them as an intrusion and an impertinence—perchance as a sort of sacrilege—as though the maker of the cover was seeking to place himself on a level with the maker of the book. Nor are there wanting successive renewers of this school of collector—of men who have bought books and other literary property for their own sake, for their intrinsic worth, irrespectively of rarity and price. A relative of the writer devoted a long life—a very long one—to the acquisition of what struck him as being curious and interesting in its way and fell within his resources, which were never too ample; and in the end he succeeded in gathering together, without much technical knowledge of the subject, a fairly large assortment of

volumes, not appealing for the most part to the severer taste of the more fastidious and wealthier amateur, but endeared to him at least, as Lamb's were, by the circumstances under which they came to his hands. Each one had its *historiette*. This gentleman represented, as I say, a type, and a very genuine and laudable one, too. I admired, almost envied him, not in his possession, but in his enjoyment of these treasures; they were to him as the apple of his eye. When I speak of him as a type, I mean that the same phenomenon still exists. In a letter of 1898 from the extreme North of England there is the ensuing passage, which strongly impressed my fancy: "Ever since I had a house of my own—nearly twenty years—I have been a collector of books on a humble scale. . . . Still, by being continually on the look-out for 'bargains,' I have managed to gather between three and four thousand volumes together, chiefly of a poetical nature." Now, to my apprehension, the present aspect of the matter touches a higher or deeper chord than that reached by the owner of the most splendid library in the universe; for all this Heliconian harvest signified personal search and personal sacrifice.

We do not always bear in mind that the rare books of to-day were the current literature not merely of, but long posterior to, the period of their appearance. They suffered two kinds and stages of deterioration and waste. While they remained in vogue among readers and students, they necessarily submitted to a succession of more or less indifferent owners, who regarded without much concern objects which it was in their power to replace without much difficulty. The worst day dawned, however, for our ancient

literature, especially that of a fugitive or sentimental class, when it had ceased to be in demand for practical purposes, and was not yet ripe for the men, in whose eyes it could only possess archæological attractions. Independently of destruction by accidental fires, a century or two of neglect proved fatal to millions of volumes or other literary records in pamphlet or broadsheet form; and as tastes changed, the mill and the fire successively consumed the discarded favourites of bygone generations, just as at the present moment we pulp or burn from day to day cartloads of old science, and theology, and law, and fiction, and ever so much more, preparing to grow unique.

The Mill has been as busy as the Press all these centuries on which we look back. It has neither eyes nor ears, nor has it compassion; it unrelentingly grinds and consumes all that comes in its way; age after age it has reduced to dust what the men of the time refuse in the presence of something newer, and, as they hold, better. The printers of each generation, from those of Mainz downward, lent themselves, not unnaturally, not unwisely, to subjects in the first place (by way of experiment) which were not costly, and secondly to such as appealed to contemporary taste and patronage. We find under the former head Indulgences, Proclamations, Broadsides, Ballads; under the second, Church Service Books of all kinds, succeeded after a while by certain of the Classics. The impressions long remained limited; and continual use and subsequent neglect accomplished between them the task of creating the modern bibliographical and bibliomaniacal schools.

Even in Anglo-Saxon times the ferocity of warfare and the ravages of invasion on invasion, coupled with the scanty diffusion of literary taste, destroyed many of the monastic libraries. But, which is stranger and less excusable, even down to the second half of the seventeenth century, down to Aubrey's day, the greatest havoc continued to be made in this way alike among printed books and MSS., the latter being used for all sorts of utilitarian purposes—even as bungs for beer-barrels. In our own period it is immeasurably sadder and more astonishing to learn that, besides the losses arising from casual conflagrations to public and private libraries, the old vandalism is not extinct, and that nothing is sacred in its eyes, not even the priceless muniments of a cathedral church.

What must the aggregate have become, if such a process had not been steadily in operation all these centuries! And, even as it is, the dispersion of old libraries, like those of Johnson of Spalding and Skene of Skene, encourages the waste-paper dealer to believe that the end is not yet reached. The frequenter of the auction-rooms of London alone has perpetually under his eyes a mountain of illegible printed matter sufficient to overload the shoulders of Atlas.

Bibliomania has as many heads as the famed Briareus; but it seldom lifts more than two or three at once. Perhaps it would be impossible to name any variety of fancy which has not at some time entered into the pursuit which we are just now attempting to illustrate. The love of the book without regard to the binding, or of the binding irrespectively of the book; the fashion for works with woodcuts, of certain printers, of certain places, of certain dates; the

establishment of a fixed rule as to a subject or a group of subjects, taken up collectively or in succession; a limitation as to price or as to size, for a candidate for admittance to some cabinets may not exceed so many inches in altitude; it must go back to the century which produced it, to be rewritten or reprinted, ere it may have a place.

It is said of the elder Wertheimer that, when some one expressed his astonishment at the price which he had given for an item, and even insinuated his want of wisdom, he retorted pleasantly that he might be a fool, but he thought that he knew greater ones than himself.

Do we not under existing conditions view with too uncharitable sentiments the marvellous good fortune of the book-hunters of the last century, at the very outset of a revival of the taste for our own vernacular literature? Does it not seem tantalising to hear that Warton the historian could pick up for sixpence a volume containing *Venus and Adonis*, 1596, and seven other precious *morçeaux*, off a broker's counter in Salisbury, when the British Museum gave at the Daniel sale £336 for the Shakespeare alone? What a thrill passes through the veins, as we read of Rodd the bookseller meeting at a marine store-shop on Saffron Hill, somewhere about the thirties, with a volume of Elizabethan tracts, and having it weighed out to him at threepence three-farthings! Our space is far more limited than such anecdotes; but they all strike us as pointing the same moral. If one happens on a Caxton or a quarto Shakespeare to-day for a trifle, it is the isolated ignorance of the possessor which befriends one. But till the market came for these things, the price for what very few wanted was naturally low; and an acquirer like

George Steevens, Edward Capell, or Edmond Malone was scarcely apt to feel the keen gratification on meeting with some unique find that a man would now do, seeing that its rarity was yet unascertained, and even had it been so, was not likely to awaken much sensation.

Low prices do not alone establish cheapness. Cheap books are those which are obtained by accident under the current value. In the time of the later Stuarts, Narcissus Luttrell found from one penny to sixpence sufficient to satisfy the shopkeepers with whom he dealt for some of the most precious volumes in our language; and a shilling commanded a Caxton. The Huths of those days could not lay out their money in these things; they had to take up the ancient typography in the form of the classics, or large-paper copies of contemporary historians, or the publications of Hearne.

We do not know that the celebrated Chevalier D'Eon was singular in his views as a collector in the last century. He bought in chief measure, if we may judge from a document before us, what we should now term nondescripts, and in the aggregate gave a very handsome price at a London auction in 1771 for an assemblage of items at present procurable, if any one wanted them, at a far lower rate. There is not a lot throughout which would recommend itself to modern taste, save the *Cuisinier François*, and perhaps that was not in the old morocco livery considered by judges as *de rigueur*. We append the auctioneer's account entire, because it exhibits a fair example of the class of book which not only Frenchmen, but ourselves, sought at that time more than those for which we have long learned to

compete, and which were then offered under the hammer by the bundle, if not by the basketful. For £8, 4s., a hundred and twenty-five years ago, how many quarto Shakespears could one have acquired?

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