A Famous Book Shop.

Hatchard's book shop in Piccadilly is one of the many historic houses in this very historic thoroughfare. Nearly a hundred years ago it was a kind of boekish free and easy, where men of letters met for books, gossip, and news. To-day Hatchard's is more boekish than ever, but one of the most fashionable of West-end bookshops.

Bent on an interview (says a Chronicle interviewer), I betook me the other day to this famous bookshop. Hatchard is now Arthur Humphreys, and his partner Edwin Shepherd, but the original John Hatchard—urbane old man, as the chronicles tell us he was—could not have received me more kindly. Indeed, Mr. Humphreys, who elected to face the interview, buckled down to my questions with a geniality which in similar circumstances I could not for a minute hope to attain. Besides being a bookseller he is a student and lover of books, and has written one or two.

"When," I asked, "and under what circumstances was Hatchard's founded?"

"The business," said Mr. Humphreys, "was founded in the year 1797 by John Hatchard, who had formerly been in the employ of that famous bookseller, Honest Tom Payne. This was a great man in his day, and his shop, where the National Gallery now stands, was a favourite resort of authors. There, I suppose, Hatchard became acquainted with many writers of the day, and when he set up business on his own account they made his place a centre. Hatchard, who seems to have been a shrewd, able man in his way, was of course anxious to have the big men look in on him. For instance, I have a letter which he wrote to Dr. Burney, the historian of music, asking for his custom. He got the custom, and, further, Burney promised to recommend him to his friend Richard Porson.

"It was in this way, then, that the beginnings of the business were laid?"

"Yes, but the real foundation of the business was the publication of a pamphlet, entitled 'Reform or Ruin.' Its author was John Bowdler, the father of that Thomas who afterwards distinguished himself by 'bowdlerising' Shakespeare. I suppose there was considerable ground for the pamphlet, which was a bitter, strong, and powerful attack on current scandals at court. It was the boldness and daring of the pamphlet that amazed people, and gave it quite a remarkable vogue. Edition after edition was published, and I have myself two copies of different editions."

"Nobody, neither Bowdler nor Hatchard, got 'put away' for it?"

"No; John Hatchard went on publishing and selling religious books, for really that was practically the backbone of the trade. Indeed, up to ten years ago Hatchard's was still essentially a religious bookseller's. I need hardly tell you that now we are booksellers in the broadest sense of the word. We sell books of every sort and kinds, and we think we can enlighten people upon almost any book they may be looking for. My notion of a bookseller—bookseller distinct from a mere seller of books—is that he should be a kind of walking catalogue of literature."

"Do the upper ten buy very largely of books?"

"They do, as you might yourself see by looking in on us any afternoon you're passing. I should say that the bulk of our buyers are ladies, or rather that ladies buy more than men. In a recent article in the Fortnightly, Mr. Andrew Lang said he did not know any lady of distinction who could tell the difference between wide margins and narrow—who, in a word, knew about a book as a book. Speaking from my own experience, I entirely disagree with him. I believe there is an increasing number of ladies who take a deep interest in beautiful paper, fine bindings, and so on. In other words, I see signs which lead me to think that in the not very far distant future the collection of valuable books will not remain a hobby for men only. Book collectors are arising, sir, among the fair sex, and from a trade point of view I'm bound to say the development is an excellent one."

"To what do you attribute this advance of bookishness among women?"

"My own notion is that to some extent it is a result of the American woman in English society."

"Taking your readers generally, men as well as women, are there at the present day any marked tendencies toward special subjects or periods in literature?"

"Two illustrations in answer to your question occur to me: one the penchant for eighteenth century literature, the other the interest in works on gardening and horticulture generally. Several influences are responsible for the devotion to subjects and themes of the eighteenth century. Lecky's 'History of the Eighteenth Century' has been one influence; Austin Dobson's writings another; Reginald Brett's a third. Then the reprints of 'Dorothy Osborne's Letters' and the 'Chesterfield Letters' have caused a wide demand, and there is an undying interest in Horace Walpole. The interest in garden literature appertains most markedly to women, and perhaps it may be referred back to the publication of a little book by 'E.V.R.' (Mrs. Boyle) on 'Days and Hours in a Garden,' an account of the authoress's own garden near Burnham Beeches. I rather suspect that the interest in horticulture on the part of most ladies is a purely literary one. That is to say, they don't themselves garden exactly, but they like to read about gardens."

"I take it you have yet to tell me what it is essentially the upper ten, the West End, read?"

"Yes; we have more or less been wandering through West End literary byways. The great literary highway in the West End is fiction-fiction dashed with adventure and biography. Undoubtedly, novels are the literary pabulum of the mass of the people in the West End. Women seem never to tire of ghost stories and detective stories; they like mystery, a substantial splash of sensation, in their daily reading. Doyle's 'Adventures of Sherlock Holmes' are regarded as the very best in the way of detective stories. Military men, and men who have travelled, as all well-to-do people have more or
less, like stories of adventure — anyhow stirring stories. Sporting novels, too, as for example those of Whyte-Melville, or 'Handley Cross,' and 'Sponge's Sporting Tour,' by Sortes, go very well."

"I have asked you much, and I have still one other point, but only one. What are the powers which make for the sale or the non-sale of the book?"

"In my opinion, dinner table talk on books has more to do with the sale of books than anything else. A word at a dinner table from men like Mr. George W. Smalley or Sir Henry Calcraft in praise of a book will move the mysterious waters which insure a large sale. Even more so, recognition by Mr. Gladstone does a book a world of good. Not long ago the Grand Old Man, while at a country house, praised a biographical dictionary. Next day we sold a copy of the work to a member of the party at the country house."

"Get a book talked about, then, and it will sell; that is a first principle?"

"I certainly think it so. And after that influence come the reviews."

—The Bookseller.

**Directory Curiosities.**

The new edition of the New York City Directory is even more interesting than its predecessors. People in search of light reading rarely turn to such volumes, yet there is a great deal in it that challenges attention.

A perusal of the new edition will show that Julius Caesar is now making cigars for a living. Mark Antony is selling newspapers on Canal-street. Cicero is a Thompson-street tailor. Michael Angelo will be very pleased to shave you if you will step into his shop on Third-avenue. William Shakspeare is a printer. Richard B. Sheridan is an engineer in the annexed district. There are not less than twenty-five Tom Johnsons, five Macbeths, and six Macduffs. Washington Irving has apparently forsaken the barren field of literature, and is gathering coin as a broker. Henry Clay is a cook, and James G. Blaine is a coachman. There are nine Knickerbockers in the good book. It is a significant fact that there are only nine Angels, and only one of them is a woman.

There are eight Homers, three Virgils, nine Miltons, and two gentlemen bearing the name of Columbus. A Dumas is engaged in the retail candy trade on Canal-street. It is not stated whether this is Dumas père or fils. Miss Cleopatra C. Ice is a typewriter. Eighteen people bear the name of Moon, but there is only one sun — Mr. Kwung On Sun. There is an Isaac Sunshine, however.

_Someone_ came past Deacon Podberry's the other night about ten o'clock, and was surprised to find that good man carefully examining his wood pile. "What are you looking for?" asked the passer-by. "Just examining this load of wood to see if it was all right," answered the good man. "I bought it from Brother Brown yesterday, and to-night in prayer meeting he called himself so many kinds of a miserable sinner that I thought maybe it was the quality of this load of wood which was weighing on his mind."

**History of Bookbinding.**

The early history of bookbinding is involved in some obscurity. There are to be seen in the British Museum samples of terra cotta cases which are generally considered specimens of the earliest art. These ancient book covers are inscribed in cuneiform characters, with simple archaic ornamentation, and are large enough to hold a small volume. It is supposed that the leaden tablets bearing hieroglyphic inscriptions were next introduced, and after these came the Egyptian roll, the most usual form of ancient manuscripts. For a long period after the Christian era, this form was adopted for all books, and many specimens are still extant, the relics of Greek and Roman libraries. The roll form of these ancient books would not permit of very great variety in the binding, and thus we may consider the history of bookbinding, as it is now understood, to have commenced with the introduction of folding instead of rolling the manuscript. We are unable to glean any details of the bindings of classic times from the Greek books which remain to us at the present day. A very full account of the Roman process of binding, however, is found in the works of Cicero and other Latin authors. The practice of collecting books for the value of their bindings, it would appear, is by no means a modern custom, for we find Seneca inveighing against the book collectors for whom the bindings had more interest than the contents. Lucian, also, wrote a treatise directed against this custom.

The exact date at which the folded book superseded the roll is uncertain. Eumenes II., who about 197 B.C. was king of the cultured city of Pergamus, did much toward popularising the new shape. It is extremely doubtful, however, that the invention is to be attributed to him, as, in great probability, he derived the idea from the Roman pugillaria, or table books, many of which have been unearthed at Herculaneum.

In the opinion of some, the most ancient books in the modern form are to be found among the sacred volumes of Ceylon. These are composed of palm leaves joined with a silk string, and the practice, wherever introduced, must be considered the beginning of the art of bookbinding, as the two protecting boards are identical in purpose to the covers of to-day. This is where we must look for the origin of artistic bindings. In the course of time the workers in the precious metals directed their energies to the embellishment of the products of literary labourers. Decorative binding may be assumed to have commenced in the eastern Roman dominions, or Byzantine Empire, where it was cultivated and developed for many centuries, at last being transplanted to the western cities of Spain and Italy by the crusaders. The invention of printing, creating a demand for ornamental bindings, was also largely instrumental in the introduction of the art into the western countries. Bookbinding has been the theme of many authors in various languages, but the world yet lacks an exhaustive historical account, a want that will for ever continue to exist.