

The best material for bands is undoubtedly leather, either used by itself or lined with brown paper stuck on with paste, and given a good pressing in the standing press till dry; which can be better and more sharply nipped up than any other stuff.

Cord is also used, but the rough and knotty parts must be thrown away, and even then it is only suitable for antique work where thick covers are used.

For cheaper work, thin strawboard is often used, or layers of brown paper pasted together and pressed as before mentioned, but this must not be used till thoroughly dry, or the band stuff will split when bent round on to the backs. This may be cut up into various widths by means of the guillotine or the board machine. For leather bands it is best to cut into widths by means of a sharp knife and straight edge.

[To be continued.]

Are Public Libraries Injuring the Book Trade?



A VEXED question has again cropped up. A correspondent, writing on the subject of free libraries, discusses their effect upon the book trade. In his opinion it has been distinctly prejudicial. He points out that whereas, in times gone by, among people occupying a fairly comfortable position, you would invariably find a small library one of the household possessions, you may now visit family after family without seeing anything more indicative of reading than the daily newspaper, or perhaps a yellow-backed novel, lying about the room. The reason for this, to his mind, is obvious. Paterfamilias pays his rates, and naturally does not see why he should not take advantage of the opportunities afforded him by the State; so both he and his offspring go to the nearest free library for their literary food rather than purchase for themselves at the bookseller's. To argue from this that the publisher is the sufferer requires but a slight display of logic. If a book which should be bought by, say, fifty people is only purchased by one, the remainder being free readers, it naturally follows that the sale of the work is one-fiftieth of what it otherwise would be. And in so far our correspondent triumphantly vindicates his position.

But he argues, we think, on a false basis, and takes but a very limited view of the question. The great majority of people who use free libraries are not in a position to buy books for themselves, and in their houses it was never possible at any time to find volumes that could by the greatest stretch of imagination be termed a library: indeed, as a rule they were completely destitute of literary embellishment. Even the ordinary five or six shilling volume was quite out of the reach of such people, supposing they had a taste for reading—which was certainly not always the case; and the more expensive work of reference was unknown to them. But with the spread of education matters have greatly changed, and the love of reading has widely increased. In this revolution the free

libraries have acted no mean part, and by placing books within the reach of those who would otherwise have had no means of procuring them, they have encouraged a love of literature that cannot fail to have been of assistance to the book trade. A man, as a rule, having taken to books, cultivates a liking, amounting in time almost to veneration, for a certain author. He is then not content to see his author's volumes on the shelf of a public library; he wishes to possess some for himself, and his admiration leads him to have them neatly bound. So the foundation for a library is laid, and its future limitations are difficult to calculate, for the love of books when once started tends to rapidly grow and increase. In this fostering of the public inclination the free libraries have done a good work, and though frequent abuses of these institutions may occur, it is not difficult to see that their general tendency is to promote the spread of reading and education, and thus increase the production of books.

While on the subject, it may not be uninteresting to point out, as apart from the influence of free libraries on the book trade, that according to the experience of the Massachusetts Free Public Library Commission, appointed for the purpose of inquiring into library administration in some of the smaller and poorer towns within that State, the taste for good reading is markedly apparent in public libraries; and from this fact another argument in their favour is easily deducible. Of course the chief demand is for fiction, but this is scarcely to be wondered at, seeing what humdrum lives the majority of people lead, and it is rather matter for congratulation that the fiction preferred should be of such excellent quality. It is not surprising to find that the most popular book in the American libraries is "Uncle Tom's Cabin." "Wherever lists of works having the widest circulation are kept, this book usually heads them." "Ben Hur" exercises a remarkable fascination, and among works by modern authors, we understand that "Lorna Doone" and the novels of William Black have a large circulation. Many of the stories of a bygone generation, such as "The Wide, Wide World" and "Queechy," are still in request, while successes of more recent date, after a remarkable run for the time being, have ceased apparently to attract. There is a steady demand for Scott's novels, but Dickens, if one may judge by this report, is on the down line. Next to fiction, biography, "especially autobiography, which exhibits with minuteness the personality of the subject," is most largely in request, and books of travel find great favour. The good old classics of English literature are not so widely read as they were a generation ago, and the charms of style seem to have lost their attraction for the present type of reader. But take it for all in all, the demand for books at the free libraries shows a remarkably healthy tendency, and the effect can scarcely fail to be of advantage to the coming generation.—*Publishers' Circular.*

THE annual outing of the Toronto, Canada, Bookbinders' Union took place on August 12th, when over one thousand excursionists went to Hamilton by boat. The outing was a great success for the Union.