

Real and Imitation Parchment Papers.

DURING the last few years parchment papers have come greatly into use. The demand has led to adulteration, and that to the substitution of inferior makes. One of the principal uses of real parchment paper is to pack damp substances in, as it is able, owing to its peculiar nature, to resist the passage of moisture or damp, and is thus capable of preserving the contents fresh and undamaged. This property is communicated to the paper by the parchmentising process, which changes the fibres into a homogeneous gelatinous mass.

The real article has a solid and vitreous appearance, and these two points are practically the only ones by which parchment papers can be recognised. Now that the use of sulphite wood pulp has been so greatly extended, among other purposes it is employed in the fabrication of imitation parchments; this is especially the case with pulp prepared by the Mitscherlich process, and when this latter is made up to a very thick consistency, and passed through a beating engine with blunt knives, it is capable of being manufactured into a very good imitation of real parchment paper. The treatment in the beating engine, with sulphuric acid, chloride of zinc, etc., swells the fibres, and thus helps to give the paper a fictitious parchment-like aspect. True parchments resist damp and moisture, but imitation makes, when put into contact with water, become very tender, and are easily torn or broken.

In a recent article on the subject, Dr. Muth recommends that when a purchaser is in doubt as to the real character of a "parchment paper" offered him, he should take a sheet and cut it up into small strips about the width of a finger; these slips should then be placed in hot water for a short time, and if the material dealt with be real parchment paper, no change will take place; but if, on the contrary, it be an imitation make, the paper will be found after a short time to have assumed a pappy consistency, to have absorbed water largely, and to be capable of being easily torn to pieces. Moreover, real parchment paper when torn, should exhibit sharp, clean edges, free from fibre, while the imitation make, if torn, shows ragged fibrous edges; this is very clearly seen when a magnifying lens is used, and this latter is valuable in investigations of the kind, inasmuch as sulphite pulp, when beaten a good deal in the engine, has its bundles of fibres broken up into very fine filaments, and these, when united in a sheet of paper, make a substance very like true parchment. The presence of sulphite pulp in any description of paper can be easily proved by treating a piece with milk of lime, provided, of course, that the paper does not contain any colouring matter, as the alkaline liquid has no power over these.

THE United States and Germany have nearly concluded a copyright agreement under which citizens of the United States will enjoy as full protection as regards works of literature and art as subjects of the empire of Germany, and *vice versa*.

MESSRS. WM. CLOWES & SONS, LIMITED, have just completed a very "big job." They are the printers of the Law Reports, and were entrusted with the production of the Digest of Cases from 1865 to 1890. The work was commenced by them nearly three years ago, and it is probably the largest ever issued under the same conditions. It was necessary that the whole of it should be in type at one time before any portion of it was passed for press; and the extent to which the resources of the printers were taxed may be gathered from the statement that the type employed weighs over twenty-two tons. The three volumes contain 4,498 pages, and the number of persons employed on the work has fluctuated according to the amount of copy in hand, but from 150 to 200 persons have been engaged thereon at one time. The total number of hours occupied was nearly 80,000, and the weight of paper used for the edition was 42 tons.

THOSE interested in the Midland metropolis will willingly expend sixpence a month on "The Making of Birmingham," by Robert K. Dent, the historian of "Old and New Birmingham," and which is now being published by J. L. Allday of that town, in a series to be completed with the 24th number. Nos. 4 and 5 to hand are well illustrated and neatly printed, and contain much that is interesting. The chapters in No. 4 treating of local charities and local manufactures, church and dissent, and "Birmingham at Play," are more than ordinarily interesting, while in No. 5 the portions devoted to public life in Birmingham, and more especially to the famous Baskerville Press, are well worthy the attention of all readers. The series is a decidedly good one and ought to command a large sale.

TRULY, the generosity of Mr. Passmore Edwards is great. At a recent meeting of the South London Public Fine Art Gallery, it was announced that £2,000 was required to complete the gallery. A gentleman in the audience rose, and after asking a few questions, quietly said, "I will build the hall you want at my own expense." This was Mr. Passmore Edwards, who has also promised to give one thousand books to start the library with, the total value of his gifts being £3,000. Mr. Edwards has been elected a member of the Reform Club in recognition of his signal services to the Liberal party.

"THE POCKET GAZETTEER OF THE WORLD," New Census Edition, 1892 (John Walker & Co.), comes to hand replete with geographical information, and well brought up to date. An additional item of interest is provided in the shape of a summary of the recent census returns, giving the most reliable information on this point up to time of going to press. The book is invaluable to all business men, and our friends would do well to invest in a copy.

It is claimed by Canadian publishers that the new Copyright Act in the United States has stopped to a very large extent the reprinting of books in the dominion, and business is said to be so much injured thereby that they advise the imposition of a heavy duty on all imported books.