Remainders.

THE difference between expectation and realisation, great in all things, is in nothing greater than in literature. I have had one or two says about book-titles, ill and well-chosen, changing and misleading, but it seems to me that not only Charles Dickens' novel, but every author's every work, is "Great Expectations" at first, and is intended to become "Heaps of Money" when introduced to "All Sorts and Conditions of Men," but often proves a "Nine Days' Wonder," if not "Good for Nothing."

In a paper on "Library Surplusage," which I read in 1885, I remarked that over 50,000 copies of new novels, annually, are found to be too many for the libraries that have bought them, and are resold at a sixth of their cost. But all these count as author's successes, as they have once been sold and paid for at full price. I am now considering the remainders, which failed to get sold, and not novels only, but in all departments of literature—a mass estimated to amount to not less than 300,000 volumes annually. Of all these, doubtless, their authors have had fond visions of second editions and complete selling out, but these have been dispelled.

But in order to thoroughly pummel the vanity out of an author, he must be sent to Chancery Lane, to the well-known auction rooms at a remainder sale, where he will very likely see his works tied up in bundles of 50 to 100 copies each, and Mr. Hodgson's genial face appear in the pulpit, preaching to a small but earnest congregation on the vanity of literary expectations. No author is too respectable and dignified, no work too standard and important, to come under that hammer, by which thick prices are beaten out thin—very thin sometimes, for as little as one-eighth of a penny per copy has been known to be given for a large remainder of a book in quires, when it has been doubtful whether the waste paper merchant had better not have it. But, knocking down by Mr. Hodgson is but one, and a preliminary mode of execution of the remainder. Far more are privately made away with by the pub-

lishers, and as far as novels in two or three volumes are concerned, their funeral knell is rung out by two Bells. A visit to the remainder warehouse of Messrs. F. & G. Bell, trading as Miles & Co., Upper Street, Islington, will show stacks of remainders amounting to not less than 80,000 volumes, and as many as 65,000 volumes are sold by this one firm in a year. These "Merry Bells of Islington" play to the tune of the sale of many thousands of pounds' worth of remainders in a year. Here is a piling up and dispersing of authors' hopes and readers' food. Other firms—Mr. Glaisher, of Holborn; Grant, of Edinburgh; and W. H. Smith & Sons, of the Strand—also do large business of this kind.

The subject of nominal and actual prices, discount and nett books, has often been discussed; but in addition to all these forms of original prices, the remainder man must be taken into account, and often his pricing is more nearly the true value of the book than any other. This sounds very shocking in connection with the low prices I have before mentioned. But some of the remainders are very large. The year before last, one of 8,500 copies of an edition of Shakespeare's *Songs*, illustrated with chromos by Sir John Gilbert, was sold—a thoroughly good and attractive book, but the publisher had miscalculated the demand for it to the trifling extent of 8,500 copies. It does not so much surprise us when 50,000 volumes of Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates* could find no bidder, nor when 65,000 of Myra's shilling *Hand-books* were sold. But in 1891, 20,000 volumes of English translations of the works of the greatest modern French novelists had to be sold as remainders. It would seem that the vivacity and spirit of French fiction need the language of vivacity and spirit by which it may be flashed to the reader, and will not bear the duller and more sober-coloured medium of the English tongue.

Large remainders have existed from very early times. In the 17th century it seemed to be the destiny of a great mass of literature to be interred with the illustrious dead in the vaults of St. Paul's Cathedral, for £200,000 worth of books in quires were stowed away there; but the great Fire of London came, and cremation was their unexpected fate. Other modes of disposal attend remainders now, drowning and maceration in the pulp-vat of the paper maker being a not infrequent one. But it must not be concluded that its appearance as a remainder always shows that it has come to a melancholy end. Whose

are the names of the authors you see on the shelves of the remainder dealers' warehouse? Besant, Carlyle, Froude, Anthony Trollope, George Macdonald, Oliphant, Payn, Norris, Meredith.

These are not dead names, but very much alive indeed. Still further, we see Shakespeare, Byron, and Burns' works, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, works which will see out several more centuries besides this closing one. There are remainders of editions of the Bible (there was a very large one of the Revised New Testament), of atlases, dictionaries and other works by no means ephemeral, and even of the Cambridge Transactions of the Library Association. Ashley's *Life of Palmerston*, Oliphant's *Literary History of England*, and Lady Burton's *Arabian Nights* are to the fore at the present time. All standard works, yet remainders.

The first publication of novels is usually in three volumes, but if there is to be a great and permanent demand there must be a one-volume edition. "Hope told a flattering tale," in three volumes, but realisation always comes in a cheap edition. Then the remainder-man comes in between and clears out the three-volume edition.

Sometimes the three-volume edition afterwards becomes scarce and valuable, from the author's death or other causes. An instance of this occurred in the case of *Bevis*, by Richard Jefferies. Messrs. Miles cleared out 223 copies of this work at 7½d. per copy in quires, and now this edition fetches £1 a copy. *Mehalah*, by Baring Gould, and *Mademoiselle de Mersac*, by W. E. Norris, also became worth much more than at first. *Through Flood and Flame*, by Baring Gould, and *Desperate Remedies*, by Thomas Hardy—each published in three volumes anonymously, but afterwards acknowledged—now fetch a high price.

I have record of one paradoxical case of a work being offered as a remainder that had never been published at all. In a difference between author and publisher, it had been thrown on the publisher's hands, and so presents us with the peculiar arithmetical result of taking something from nothing, and having a remainder. We also, not unfrequently, have remainders of remainders, and so on *ad infinitum*. The publisher sells a remainder to A, who sells a great portion of it, and when he finds it sticks on hand, puts his remainder on the market again. B buys it this time, and does the best he can with it with his clients, then sells what is left, and C buys it, and so on.

The father of the remainder trade was James Lackington, who about the year 1780, being in business in Finsbury, says: "When first invited to the trade sales, I was very much surprised to learn that it was common for such as purchased remainders to destroy one-half or three-fourths of such books, and to charge the full publication price, or nearly that, for such as they kept on hand; and there was a kind of standing order amongst the trade that in case anyone was known to sell articles under the publication price, such a person was to be excluded from trade sales, so blind were copyright holders to their own interest. After a bit I resolved not to destroy any books which were worth saving, but to sell them off at half or a quarter of the publication prices." "Of course," says Chas. Knight, from whom I quote, "he was reviled, his ruin was prognosticated, the doors of the trade sale-rooms were shut against him, but there were plenty of indirect modes of supplying him with remainders." "By selling them in this cheap manner," he says, "I have disposed of many hundred thousand volumes, many thousands of which were intrinsically worth their original prices."

From Lackington's time to a few years ago, the annual trade dinner sales of the publishers were the chosen opportunities for disposing of the remainders, and sometimes the generous beverages led to reckless purchases, and these again to failure to pay when the bills came due. Things are done in more sober style now. The regular remainder buyer is generally the most satisfactory to deal with for disposing of the edition, for when his offer is not thought sufficient, and an appeal to the auctioneer is made, it generally proves a going further and faring worse—though probably, under no circumstances, would an author be found who thought the proceeds quite equal to the merits of his work.

It does happen, occasionally, that a remainder fetches less in cloth than in quires, thus showing that books are sometimes worth less than waste paper. When the cost of production is shared between author and publisher, the necessity for settling up accounts between them will generally require the invocation of the remainder-man at a comparatively early period; but the need for cash and for space is the most frequent cause. Some remainders are sold together with copyright and stereotype plates. The purchaser then becomes the publisher, very likely being far more successful than the original one. This was the case with *Chronicles of Crime*, illustrated by Phiz, now published by Miles & Co.

We now come to the practice of dishing up remainders with new title pages as new editions—a practice most reprehensible and not a little indulged in. Old fellows, regularly “on the shelf,” veritable remainders, but furnished by tonsorial or other art with newly-cut frontispieces, sometimes with titles, are to be met with in others besides literary spheres. A recent trial has brought this matter under our immediate notice, and in this case we find that the defendant republished his remainder with a new title page and fresh date, and omitted from the work its preface, table of contents, introduction, bibliographical notice and index. Well might the author bring an action for injured reputation. Well might he rage and fume at finding sent into the world under his name this decrepit remainder, which like Shakespeare’s seventh age, is, at least in the librarian’s eyes, “sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.”

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