

MR·EDITOR·IF·YOU·THINK·THAT THE·ATHENÆUM·IS·READ·OR·SEEN·BY·ANY

MEMBERS OF THAT CLASS OF RUTHLESS BINDERS WHO DELIGHT IN destroying the appearance of every pamphlet and book that comes into their hands, by trimming or ploughing its edges to the quick (and almost always crookedly), I beg you to insert this appeal to the monsters I have named, to desist from their barbarous practices, to learn to reverence the margin of a book, and never to take from it a hair's breadth more than is absolutely needful. The brutality with which the fair margins of one's loved volumes are treated by these mangling wretches with their awful plough knives is shocking to behold. The curses of book lovers are daily heaped on their backs, but they go on running-a-muck, heedless of remonstrance, remorseless, ever sacrificing fresh victims. Had we a paternal government, one might hope for due punishment of some of these offenders: one at least might be ploughed up the back, another up the front, as an example and a terror to the trade; but as this wholesome correction cannot unhappily be administered, will you give expression to the indignation of one amongst a million sufferers for years from these trimmers' savageries, and let them know what feelings their reckless cruelty awakens in many breasts? One of the largest houses in London has just sent me home fifty copies of an essay, intended as a present for a friend. They have been trimmed, and been ruined. Would that I could have the trimming of their trimmer's hair and ears; also his nose! I don't think his best friend would know him when I had done with him.

But, Sir, we live in a philanthropic age, and are bound to forgive our enemies and try to reform the worst criminals. I therefore propose a practical measure to win these book trimmers from their enormities; namely, that fifty at least of your readers, who care for book margins, should subscribe a guinea each for a challenge cup, to be competed for yearly, and held by that firm which, on producing copies of all books and pamphlets trimmed by it during the year, shall be adjudged to have disfigured them least. I ask you, Sir, if you will receive subscriptions for this challenge cup? If you will, I shall be glad to send you mine.

M. A.

October 17th 1868

P.S. - Any one who will cut out this letter, and get it pasted up in any binder's or printer's trimming room, will confer a favour on the writer.