Books and Bookmen

Ian Maclaren

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They cannot be separated any more than sheep and a shepherd, but I am minded to speak of the bookman rather than of his books, and so it will be best at the outset to define the tribe.

It does not follow that one is a bookman because he has many books, for he may be a book huckster or his books may be those without which a gentleman's library is not complete. And in the present imperfect arrangement of life one may be a bookman and yet have very few books, since he has not the wherewithal to purchase them. It is the foolishness of his kind to desire a loved author in some becoming dress, and his fastidiousness to ignore a friend in a fourpence− halfpenny edition. The bookman, like the poet, and a good many other people, is born and not made, and my grateful memory retains an illustration of the difference between a bookowner and a bookman which I think is apropos. As he was to preside at a lecture I was delivering he had in his courtesy invited me to dinner, which was excellent, and as he proposed to take the role that night of a man who had been successful in business, but yet allowed himself in leisure moments to trifle with literature, he desired to create an atmosphere, and so he proposed with a certain imposing air that we should visit what he called "my library." Across the magnificence of the hall we went in stately procession, he first, with that kind of walk by which a surveyor of taxes could have at once assessed his income, and I, the humblest of the bookman tribe, following in the rear, trembling like a skiff in the wake of an ocean liner. "There," he said, with his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, "what do you think of that?" And THAT was without question a very large and ornate and costly mahogany bookcase with glass doors. Before I saw the doors I had no doubt about my host, but they were a seal upon my faith, for although a bookman is obliged to have one bit of glass in his garden for certain rare plants from Russia and Morocco, to say nothing of the gold and white vellum lily upon which the air must not be allowed to blow, especially when charged with gas and rich in dust, yet he hates this conservatory, just as much as he loves its contents. His contentment is to have the flowers laid out in open beds, where he can pluck a blossom at will. As often as one sees the books behind doors, and most of all when the doors are locked, then he knows that the owner is not their lover, who keeps tryst with them in the evening hours when the work of the day is done, but their jailer, who has bought them in the market−place for gold, and holds them in this foreign place by force. It has seemed to me as if certain old friends looked out from their prison with appealing glance, and one has been tempted to break the glass and let, for instance, Elia go free. It would be like the emancipation of a slave. Elia was not, good luck for him, within this particular prison, and I was brought back from every temptation to break the laws of property by my chairman, who was still pursuing his catechism. "What," was question two, "do you think I paid for THAT?" It was a hopeless catechism, for I had never possessed anything like THAT, and none of my friends had in their homes anything like THAT, and in my wildest moments I had never asked the price of such a thing as THAT. As it loomed up before me in its speckless respectability and insolence of solid wealth my English sense of reverence for money awoke, and I confessed that this matter was too high for me; but even then, casting a glance of deprecation in its direction, I noticed THAT was almost filled by a single work, and I wondered what it could be. "Cost 80 pounds if it cost a penny, and I bought it second−hand in perfect condition for 17 pounds, 5s., with the books thrown in−− All the Year Round from the beginning in half calf;" and then we returned in procession to the drawing−room, where my patron apologised for our absence, and explained that when two bookmen got together over books it was difficult to tear them away. He was an admirable chairman, for he occupied no time with a review of literature in his address, and he slept without being noticed through mine (which is all I ask of a chairman), and so it may seem ungrateful, but in spite of "THAT" and any books, even Spenser and Chaucer, which THAT might have contained, this Maecenas of an evening was not a bookman.

It is said, and now I am going to turn the application of a pleasant anecdote upside down, that a Colonial squatter having made his pile and bethinking himself of his soul, wrote home to an old friend to send him out some chests of books, as many as he thought fit, and the best that he could find. His friend was so touched by this sign of grace that he spent a month of love over the commission, and was vastly pleased when he sent off, in the best editions and in pleasant binding, the very essence of English literature. It was a disappointment that the only acknowledgment of his trouble came on a postcard, to say that the consignment had arrived in good condition. A year afterwards, so runs the story, he received a letter which was brief and to the point. "Have been working over the books, and if anything new has been written by William Shakespeare or John Milton, please send it out." I believe this is mentioned as an instance of barbarism. It cannot be denied that it showed a certain ignorance of the history of literature, which might be excused in a bushman, but it is also proved, which is much more important, that he had the smack of letters in him, for being turned loose without the guide of any training in this wide field, he fixed as by instinct on the two classics of the English tongue. With the help of all our education, and all our reviews, could you and I have done better, and are we not every day, in our approval of unworthy books, doing very much worse? Quiet men coming home from business and reading, for the sixth time, some noble English classic, would smile in their modesty if any one should call them bookmen, but in so doing they have a sounder judgment in literature than coteries of clever people who go crazy for a brief time over the tweetling of a minor poet, or the preciosity of some fantastic critic.

There are those who buy their right to citizenship in the commonwealth of bookmen, but this bushman was free−born, and the sign of the free−born is, that without critics to aid him, or the training of a University, he knows the difference between books which are so much printed stuff and a good book which is "the Precious life−blood of a Master Spirit." The bookman will of course upon occasion trifle with various kinds of reading, and there is one member of the brotherhood who has a devouring thirst for detective stories, and has always been very grateful to the creator of Sherlock Holmes. It is the merest pedantry for a man to defend himself with a shamed face for his light reading: it is enough that he should be able to distinguish between the books which come and go and those which remain. So far as I remember, The Mystery of a Hansom Cab and John Inglesant came out somewhat about the same time, and there were those of us who read them both; but while we thought the Hansom Cab a very ingenious plot which helped us to forget the tedium of a railway journey, I do not know that there is a copy on our shelves. Certainly it is not lying between The Ordeal of Richard Feverel and The Mayor of Casterbridge. But some of us venture to think that in that admirable historical romance which moves with such firm foot through both the troubled England and the mysterious Italy of the seventeenth century, Mr. Shorthouse won a certain place in English literature.

When people are raving between the soup and fish about some popular novel which to−morrow will be forgotten, but which doubtless, like the moths which make beautiful the summer−time, has its purpose in the world of speech, it gives one bookman whom I know the keenest pleasure to ask his fair companion whether she has read Mark Rutherford. He is proudly conscious at the time that he is a witness to perfection in a gay world which is content with excitement, and he would be more than human if he had not in him a touch of the literary Pharisee. She has NOT read Mark Rutherford, and he does not advise her to seek it at the circulating library, because it will not be there, and if she got it she would never read more than ten pages. Twenty thousand people will greedily read Twice Murdered and Once Hung and no doubt they have their reward, while only twenty people read Mark Rutherford; but then the multitude do not return to Twice Murdered, while the twenty turn again and again to Mark Rutherford for its strong thinking and its pure sinewy English style. And the children of the twenty thousand will not know Twice Murdered, but the children of the twenty, with others added to them, will know and love Mark Rutherford. Mr. Augustine Birrell makes it, I think, a point of friendship that a man should love George Borrow, whom I think to appreciate is an excellent but an acquired taste; there are others who would propose Mark Rutherford and the Revelation in Tanner's Lane as a sound test for a bookman's palate. But . . . de gustibus . . . !

It is the chief office of the critic, while encouraging all honest work which either can instruct or amuse, to distinguish between the books which must be content to pass and the books which must remain because they have

an immortality of necessity.

According to the weightiest of French critics of our time the author of such a book is one "who has enriched the human mind, who has really added to its treasures, who has got it to take a step further . . . who has spoken to all in a style of his own, yet a style which finds itself the style of everybody, in a style that is at once new and antique, and is the contemporary of all the ages." Without doubt Sainte−Beuve has here touched the classical quality in literature as with a needle, for that book is a classic to be placed beside Homer and Virgil and Dante and Shakespeare−−among the immortals−−which has wisdom which we cannot find elsewhere, and whose form has risen above the limitation of any single age. While ordinary books are houses which serve for a generation or two at most, this kind of book is the Cathedral which towers above the building at its base and can be seen from afar, in which many generations shall find their peace and inspiration. While other books are like the humble craft which ply from place to place along the coast, this book is as a stately merchantman which compasses the great waters and returns with a golden argosy.

The subject of the book does not enter into the matter, and on subjects the bookman is very catholic, and has an orthodox horror of all sects. He does not require Mr. Froude's delightful apology to win the Pilgrim's Progress a place on his shelf, because, although the bookman may be far removed from Puritanism, yet he knows that Bunyan had the secret of English style, and although he may be as far from Romanism, yet he must needs have his A'Kempis (especially in Pickering's edition of 1828), and when he places the two books side by side in the department of religion, he has a standing regret that there is no Pilgrim's Progress also in Pickering.

Without a complete Milton he could not be content. He would like to have Masson's Life too in 6 vols. (with index), and he is apt to consider the great Puritan's prose still finer than his poetry, and will often take down the Areopagitica that he may breathe the air of high latitudes; but he has a corner in his heart for that evil living and mendacious bravo, but most perfect artist, Benvenuto Cellini. While he counts Gibbon's Rome, I mean the Smith and Milman edition in 8 vols., blue cloth, the very model of histories, yet he revels in those books which are the material for historians, the scattered stones out of which he builds his house, such as the diaries of John Evelyn and our gossip Pepys, and that scandalous book, Grammont's Memoirs, and that most credulous but interesting of Scots annalists, Robert Wodrow.

According to the bookman, but not, I am sorry to say, in popular judgment, the most toothsome kind of literature is the Essay, and you will find close to his hand a dainty volume of Lamb open perhaps at that charming paper on "Imperfect Sympathies," and though the bookman be a Scot yet his palate is pleasantly tickled by Lamb's description of his national character−−Lamb and the Scots did not agree through an incompatibility of humour−−and near by he keeps his Hazlitt, whom he sometimes considers the most virile writer of the century: nor would he be quite happy unless he could find in the dark The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table. He is much indebted to a London publisher for a very careful edition of the Spectator, and still more to that good bookman, Mr. Austin Dobson, for his admirable introduction. As the bookman's father was also a bookman, for the blessing descendeth unto the third and fourth generation, he was early taught to love De Quincey, and although, being a truthful man, he cannot swear he has read every page in all the fifteen volumes−−roxburghe calf−−yet he knows his way about in that whimsical, discursive, but ever satisfying writer, who will write on anything, or any person, always with freshness and in good English, from the character of Judas Iscariot and "Murder as a Fine Art" to the Lake Poets−−there never was a Lake school−−and the Essenes. He has much to say on Homer, and a good deal also on "Flogging in Schools"; he can hardly let go Immanuel Kant, but if he does it is to give his views, which are not favourable, of Wilhelm Meister; he is not above considering the art of cooking potatoes or the question of whether human beings once had tails, and in his theological moods he will expound St. John's Epistles, or the principles of Christianity. The bookman, in fact, is a quite illogical and irresponsible being, who dare not claim that he searches for accurate information in his books as for fine gold, and he has been known to say that that department of books of various kinds which come under the head of "what's what," and "why's why," and "where's where," are not literature. He does not care, and that may be foolish, whether he agrees with the writer, and there are times when he does not inquire too curiously whether the writer be respectable, which is very

wrong, but he is pleased if this man who died a year ago or three hundred years has seen something with his own eyes and can tell him what he saw in words that still have in them the breath of life, and he will go with cheerful inconsequence from Chaucer, the jolliest of all book companions, and Rabelais−− although that brilliant satirist had pages which the bookman avoids, because they make his gorge rise−−to Don Quixote. If he carries a Horace, Pickering's little gem, in his waistcoat pocket, and sometimes pictures that genial Roman club−man in the Savile, he has none the less an appetite for Marcus Aurelius. The bookman has a series of love affairs before he is captured and settles down, say, with his favourite novel, and even after he is a middle−aged married man he must confess to one or two book friendships which are perilous to his inflammable heart.

In the days of calf love every boy has first tasted the sweetness of literature in two of the best novels ever written, as well as two of the best pieces of good English. One is Robinson Crusoe and the other the Pilgrim's Progress. Both were written by masters of our tongue, and they remain until this day the purest and most appetising introduction to the book passion. They created two worlds of adventure with minute vivid details and constant surprises−−the foot on the sand, for instance, in Crusoe, and the valley of the shadow with the hobgoblin in Pilgrim's Progress−−and one will have a tenderness for these two first loves even until the end. Afterwards one went afield and sometimes got into queer company, not bad but simply a little common. There was an endless series of Red Indian stories in my school−days, wherein trappers could track the enemy by a broken blade of grass, and the enemy escaped by coming down the river under a log, and the price was sixpence each. We used to pass the tuck−shop at school for three days on end in order that we might possess Leaping Deer, the Shawnee Spy. We toadied shamefully to the owner of Bull's Eye Joe, who, we understood, had been the sole protection of a frontier state. Again and again have I tried to find one of those early friends, and in many places have I inquired, but my humble companions have disappeared and left no signs, like country children one played with in holiday times.

It appears, however, that I have not been the only lover of the trapper stories, nor the only one who has missed his friends, for I received a letter not long ago from a bookman telling me that he had seen my complaint somewhere, and sending me the Frontier Angel on loan strictly that I might have an hour's sinless enjoyment. He also said he was on the track of Bill Bidden, another famous trapper, and hoped to send me word that Bill was found, whose original value was sixpence, but for whom this bookman was now prepared to pay gold. One, of course, does not mean that the Indian and trapper stories had the same claim to be literature as the Pilgrim's Progress, for, be it said with reverence, there was not much distinction in the style, or art in the narrative, but they were romances, and their subjects suited boys, who are barbarians, and there are moments when we are barbarians again, and above all things these tales bring back the days of long ago. It was later that one fell under the power of two more mature and exacting charmers, Mayne Reid's Rifle Rangers and Dumas' Monte Christo. The Rangers has vanished with many another possession of the past, but I still retain in a grateful memory the scene where Rube, the Indian fighter, who is supposed to have perished in a prairie fire and is being mourned by the hero, emerges with much humour from the inside of a buffalo which was lying dead upon the plain, and rails at the idea that he could be wiped out so easily. Whether imagination has been at work or not I do not know, but that is how my memory has it now, and to this day I count that resurrection a piece of most fetching work.

Rambling through a bookshop a few months ago I lighted on a copy of Monte Christo and bought it greedily, for there was a railway journey before me. It is a critical experiment to meet a love of early days after the years have come and gone. This stout and very conventional woman−−the mother of thirteen children−−could she have been the black−eyed, slim girl to whom you and a dozen other lads lost their hearts? On the whole, one would rather have cherished the former portrait and not have seen the original in her last estate. It was therefore with a flutter of delight that one found in this case the old charm as fresh as ever−−meaning, of course, the prison escape with its amazing ingenuity and breathless interest.

When one had lost his bashfulness and could associate with grown−up books, then he was admitted to the company of Scott, and Thackeray, and Dickens, who were and are, as far as one can see, to be the leaders of society. My fond recollection goes back to an evening in the early sixties when a father read to his boy the first

three chapters of the Pickwick Papers from the green−coloured parts, and it is a bitter regret that in some clearance of books that precious Pickwick was allowed to go, as is supposed, with a lot of pamphlets on Church and State, to the great gain of an unscrupulous dealer.

The editions of Scott are now innumerable, each more tempting than the other; but affection turns back to the old red and white, in forty−eight volumes, wherein one first fell under the magician's spell. Thackeray, for some reason I cannot recall, unless it were a prejudice in our home, I did not read in youth, but since then I have never escaped from the fascination of Vanity Fair and The Newcomes, and another about which I am to speak. What giants there were in the old days, when an average Englishman, tried by some business worry, would say, "Never mind, Thackeray's new book will be out to−morrow." They stand, these three sets, Scott, Thackeray, and Dickens, the very heart of one's library of fiction. Wearied by sex novels, problem novels, theological novels, and all the other novels with a purpose, one returns to the shelf and takes down a volume from this circle, not because one has not read it, but because one has read it thirty times and wishes for sheer pleasure's sake to read it again. Just as a tired man throws off his dress coat and slips on an old study jacket, so one lays down the latest thoughtful, or intense, or something worse pseudo work of fiction, and is at ease with an old gossip who is ever wise and cheery, who never preaches and yet gives one a fillip of goodness. Among the masters one must give a foremost place to Balzac, who strikes one as the master of the art in French literature. It is amazing that in his own day he was not appreciated at his full value, and that it was really left to time to discover and vindicate his position. He is the true founder of the realistic school in everything wherein that school deserves respect, and has been loyal to art. He is also certain to maintain his hold and be an example to writers after many modern realists have been utterly and justly forgotten.

Two books from the shelf of fiction are taken down and read once a year by a certain bookman from beginning to end, and in this matter he is now in the position of a Mohammedan converted to Christianity, who is advised by the missionary to choose one of his two wives to have and to hold as a lawful spouse. When one has given his heart to Henry Esmond and the Heart of Midlothian he is in a strait, and begins to doubt the expediency of literary monogamy. Of course, if it go by technique and finish, then Esmond has it, which from first to last in conception and execution is an altogether lovely book; and if it go by heroes−−Esmond and Butler−−then again there is no comparison, for the grandson of Cromwell's trooper was a very wearisome, pedantic, grey−coloured Puritan in whom one cannot affect the slightest interest. How poorly he compares with Henry Esmond, who was slow and diffident, but a very brave, chivalrous, single− hearted, modest gentleman, such as Thackeray loved to describe. Were it not heresy to our Lady Castlewood, whom all must love and serve, it also comes to one that Henry and Beatrix would have made a complete pair if she had put some assurance in him and he had installed some principle into her, and Henry Esmond might have married his young kinswoman had he been more masterful and self− confident. Thackeray takes us to a larger and gayer scene than Scott's Edinburgh of narrow streets and gloomy jails and working people and old−world theology, but yet it may be after all Scott is stronger. No bit of history, for instance, in Esmond takes such a grip of the imagination as the story of the Porteous mob. After a single reading one carries that night scene etched for ever in his memory. The sullen, ruthless crowd of dour Scots, the grey rugged houses lit up by the glare of the torches, the irresistible storming of the Tolbooth, the abject helplessness of Porteous in the hands of his enemies, the austere and judicial self−restraint of the people, who did their work as those who were serving justice, their care to provide a minister for the criminal's last devotions, and their quiet dispersal after the execution−−all this remains unto to−day the most powerful description of lynch law in fiction. The very strength of old Edinburgh and of the Scots−folk is in the Heart of Midlothian. The rivalry, however, between these two books must be decided by the heroine, and it seems dangerous to the lover of Scott to let Thackeray's fine lady stand side by side with our plain peasant girl, yet soul for soul which was greater, Rachel of Castlewood or Jeanie Deans? Lady Castlewood must be taken at the chief moment in Esmond, when she says to Esmond: "To−day, Henry, in the anthem when they sang, 'When the Lord turned the captivity of Zion we were like them that dream'−−I thought, yes, like them that dream, and then it went, 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy; and he that goeth forth and weepeth, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.' I looked up from the book and saw you; I was not surprised when I saw you, I knew you would come, my dear, and I saw the gold sunshine round your head."

That she said as she laughed and sobbed, crying out wildly, "Bringing your sheaves with you, your sheaves with you." And this again, as Esmond thinks of her, is surely beaten gold. "Gracious God, who was he, weak and friendless creature, that such a love should be poured out upon him; not in vain, not in vain has he lived that such a treasure be given him? What is ambition compared to that but selfish vanity? To be rich, to be famous: what do these profit a year hence when other names sound louder than yours, when you lie hidden away under the ground along with the idle titles engraven on your coffin? Only true love lives after you, follows your memory with secret blessing or precedes you and intercedes for you. 'Non omnis moriar'− −if dying I yet live in a tender heart or two, nor am lost and hopeless living, if a sainted departed soul still loves and prays for me." This seems to me the second finest passage in English fiction, and the finest is when Jeanie Deans went to London and pleaded with the Queen for the life of her condemned sister, for is there any plea in all literature so eloquent in pathos and so true to human nature as this, when the Scottish peasant girl poured forth her heart: "When the hour of trouble comes to the mind or to the body−−and seldom may it visit your ladyship−−and when the hour of death that comes to high and low−−lang and late may it be yours−−oh, my lady, then it is na' what we hae dune for oursels but what we hae dune for ithers that we think on maist pleasantly. And the thought that ye hae intervened to spare the puir thing's life will be sweeter in that hour, come when it may, than if a word of your mouth could hang the haill Porteous mob at the tail of ae tow." Jeanie Deans is the strongest woman in the gallery of Scott, and an embodiment of all that is sober, and strong, and conscientious, and passionate in Scotch nature.

The bookman has indeed no trouble arranging his gossips in his mind, where they hold good fellowship, but he is careful to keep them apart upon his bookshelves, and when he comes home after an absence and finds his study has been tidied, which in the feminine mind means putting things in order, and to the bookman general anarchy (it was the real reason Eve was put out of Eden), when he comes home, I say, and finds that happy but indecorous rascal Boccaccio, holding his very sides for laughter, between Lecky's History of European Morals and Law's Serious Call, both admirable books, then the bookman is much exhilarated. Because of the mischief that is in him he will not relieve those two excellent men of that disgraceful Italian's company for a little space, but if he finds that the domestic sprite has thrust a Puritan between two Anglican theologians he effects a separation without delay, for a religious controversy with its din and clatter is more than he can bear.

The bookman is indeed perpetually engaged in his form of spring cleaning, which is rearranging his books, and is always hoping to square the circle, in both collecting the books of one department together, and also having his books in equal sizes. After a brief glance at a folio and an octavo side by side he gives up that attempt, but although he may have to be content to see his large Augustine, Benedictine edition, in the same row with Bayle's Dictionary, he does not like it and comforts himself by thrusting in between, as a kind of mediator, Spotswood's History of the Church of Scotland with Burnett's Memoirs of the Dukes of Hamilton, that edition which has the rare portrait of Charles I. by Faithorne. He will be all his life rearranging, and so comes to understand how it is that women spend forenoons of delight in box rooms or store closets, and are happiest when everything is turned upside down. It is a slow business, rearrangement, for one cannot flit a book bound after the taste of Grolier, with graceful interlacement and wealth of small ornaments, without going to the window and lingering for a moment over the glorious art, and one cannot handle a Compleat Angler without tasting again some favourite passage. It is days before five shelves are reconstructed, days of unmixed delight, a perpetual whirl of gaiety, as if one had been at a conversazione, where all kinds of famous people whom you had known afar had been gathered together and you had spoken to each as if he had been the friend of your boyhood. It is in fact a time of reminiscences, when the two of you, the other being Sir Thomas Browne, or Goldsmith, or Scott, or Thackeray, go over passages together which contain the sweetest recollections of the past. When the bookman reads the various suggestions for a holiday which are encouraged in the daily newspapers for commercial purposes about the month of July, he is vastly amused by their futility, and often thinks of pointing out the only holiday which is perfectly satisfying. It is to have a week without letters and without visitors, with no work to do, and no hours, either for rising up or lying down, and to spend the week in a library, his own, of course, by preference, opening out by a level window into an old− fashioned garden where the roses are in full bloom, and to wander as he pleases from flower to flower where the spirit of the books and the fragrance of the roses mingle in one delight.

Times there are when he would like to hold a meeting of bookmen, each of whom should be a mighty hunter, and he would dare to invite Cosmo Medici, who was as keen about books as he was about commerce, and according to Gibbon used to import Indian spices and Greek books by the same vessel, and that admirable Bishop of Durham who was as joyful on reaching Paris as the Jewish pilgrim was when he went to Sion, because of the books that were there. "O Blessed God of Gods, what a rush of the glow of Pleasure rejoiced our hearts, as often as we visited Paris, the Paradise of the World! There we long to remain, where on account of the greatness of our love the days ever appear to us to be few. There are delightful libraries in cells redolent with aromatics, there flourishing greenhouses of all sorts of volumes, there academic meads, trembling with the earthquake of Athenian Peripatetics pacing up and down, there the promontory of Parnassus and the Porticoes of the Stoics." The Duke of Roxburghe and Earl Spencer, two gallant sportsmen whose spoils have enriched the land; Monkbarns also, though we will not let him bring any antiquities with him, jagged or otherwise; and Charles Lamb, whom we shall coax into telling over again how he started out at ten o'clock on Saturday night and roused up old Barker in Covent Garden, and came home in triumph with "that folio Beaumont and Fletcher," going forth almost in tears lest the book should be gone, and coming home rejoicing, carrying his sheaf with him. Besides, whether Bodley and Dibdin like it or not, we must have a Royalty, for there were Queens who collected, and also on occasions stole books, and though she be not the greatest of the Queenly bookwomen and did not steal, we shall invite Mary Queen of Scots, while she is living in Holyrood, and has her library beside her. Mary had a fine collection of books well chosen and beautifully bound, and as I look now at the catalogue it seems to me a library more learned than is likely to be found even in the study of an advanced young woman of to−day. A Book of Devotion which was said to have belonged to her and afterwards to a Pope, gloriously bound, I was once allowed to look upon, but did not buy, because the price was marked in plain figures at a thousand guineas. It would be something to sit in a corner and hear Monkbarns and Charles Lamb comparing notes, and to watch for the moment when Lamb would withdraw all he had said against the Scots people, or Earl Spencer describing with delight to the Duke of Roxburghe the battle of Sale. But I will guarantee that the whole company of bookworms would end in paying tribute to that intelligent and very fascinating young woman from Holyrood, who still turns men's heads across the stretch of centuries. For even a bookman has got a heart.

Like most diseases the mania for books is hereditary, and if the father is touched with it the son can hardly escape, and it is not even necessary that the son should have known his father. For Sainte−Beuve's father died when he was an infant and his mother had no book tastes, but his father left him his books with many comments on the margins, and the book microbe was conveyed by the pages. "I was born," said the great critic in the Consolations, "I was born in a time of mourning; my cradle rested on a coffin . . . my father left me his soul, mind, and taste written on every margin of his books." When a boy grows up beside his father and his father is in the last stages of the book disease, there is hardly any power which can save that son, unless the mother be robustly illiterate, in which case the crossing of the blood may make him impervious. For a father of this kind will unconsciously inoculate his boy, allowing him to play beside him in the bookroom, where the air is charged with germs (against which there is no disinfectant, I believe, except commercial conversation), and when the child is weary of his toys will give him an old book of travels, with quaint pictures which never depart from the memory. By and by, so thoughtless is this invalid father, who has suffered enough, surely, himself from this disease, that he will allow his boy to open parcels of books, reeking with infection, and explain to him the rarity of a certain first edition, or show him the thickness of the paper and the glory of the black−letter in an ancient book. Afterwards, when the boy himself has taken ill and begun on his own account to prowl through the smaller bookstalls, his father will listen greedily to the stories he has to tell in the evening, and will chuckle aloud when one day the poor victim of this deadly illness comes home with a newspaper of the time of Charles II., which he has bought for threepence. It is only a question of time when that lad, being now on an allowance of his own, will be going about in a suit of disgracefully shabby tweeds, that he may purchase a Theophrastus of fine print and binding upon which he has long had his eye, and will be taking milk and bread for his lunch in the city, because he has a foolish ambition to acquire by a year's saving the Kelmscott edition of the Golden Legend. A change of air might cure him, as for instance twenty years' residence on an American ranch, but even then on his return the disease might break out again: indeed the chances are strong that he is really incurable. Last week I saw such a case−−the bookman of the second generation in a certain shop where such unfortunates collect. For an hour he had been there browsing

along the shelves, his hat tilted back upon his head that he might hold the books the nearer to his eyes, and an umbrella under his left arm, projecting awkwardly, which he had not laid down, because he did not intend to stay more than two minutes, and knew indeed, as the father of a family, that he ought not to be there at all. He often drops in, for this is not one of those stores where a tradesman hurries forward to ask what you want and offers you the last novel which has captivated the juicy British palate; the bookman regards such a place with the same feeling that a physician has to a patent drug−store. The dealer in this place so loved his books that he almost preferred a customer who knew them above one who bought them, and honestly felt a pang when a choice book was sold. Never can I forget what the great Quaritch said to me when he was showing me the inner shrine of his treasure−house, and I felt it honest to explain that I could only look, lest he should think me an impostor. "I would sooner show such books to a man that loved them though he couldn't buy them, than a man who gave me my price and didn't know what he had got." With this slight anecdote I would in passing pay the tribute of bookmen to the chief hunter of big game in our day.

When the bookman is a family man, and I have sometimes doubts whether he ought not to be a celibate like missionaries of religion and other persons called to special devotion, he has of course to battle against his temptation, and his struggles are very pathetic. The parallel between dipsomania and bibliomania is very close and suggestive, and I have often thought that more should be made of it. It is the wife who in both cases is usually the sufferer and good angel, and under her happy influence the bookman will sometimes take the pledge, and for him, it is needless to say, there is only one cure. He cannot be a moderate drinker, for there is no possibility of moderation, and if he is to be saved he must become a total abstainer. He must sign the pledge, and the pledge must be made of a solemn character with witnesses, say his poor afflicted wife and some intelligent self−made Philistine. Perhaps it might run like this: "I, A. B., do hereby promise that I will never buy a classical book in any tongue, or any book in a rare edition; that I will never spend money on books in tree−calf or tooled morocco; that I shall never enter a real old bookshop, but should it be necessary shall purchase my books at a dry goods store, and there shall never buy anything but the cheapest religious literature, or occasionally a popular story for my wife, and to this promise I solemnly set my hand." With the ruin of his family before his eyes, or at least, let us say, the disgraceful condition of the dining−room carpet, he intends to keep his word, and for a whole fortnight will not allow himself to enter the street of his favourite bookshop. Next week, however, business, so he says at least, takes him down the street, but he remembers the danger, and makes a brave effort to pass a public−house. The mischief of the thing, however, is that there is another public−house in the street and passing it whets the latent appetite, and when he is making a brave dash past his own, some poor inebriate, coming out reluctantly, holds the door open, and the smell is too much for his new−born virtue. He will go in just for a moment to pass the time of day with his friend the publican and see his last brand of books, but not to buy−−I mean to drink−−and then he comes across a little volume, the smallest and slimmest of volumes, a mere trifle of a thing, and not dear, but a thing which does not often turn up and which would just round off his collection at a particular point. It is only a mere taste, not downright drinking; but ah me, it sets him on fire again, and I who had seen him go in and then by a providence have met his wife coming out from buying that carpet, told her where her husband was, and saw her go to fetch him. Among the touching incidents of life, none comes nearer me than to see the bookman's wife pleading with him to remember his (once) prosperous home and his (almost) starving children. And indeed if there be any other as entirely affecting in this province, it is the triumphant cunning with which the bookman will smuggle a suspicious brown paper parcel into his study at an hour when his wife is out, or the effrontery with which he will declare when caught, that the books have been sent unbeknown to him, and he supposes merely for his examination. For, like drink, this fearsome disease eats into the very fibre of character, so that its victim will practise tricks to obtain books in advance of a rival collector, and will tell the most mendacious stories about what he paid for them.

Should he desire a book, and it be not a king's ransom, there is no sacrifice he will not make to obtain it. His modest glass of Burgundy he will cheerfully surrender, and if he ever travelled by any higher class, which is not likely, he will now go third, and his topcoat he will make to last another year, and I do not say he will not smoke, but a cigar will now leave him unmoved. Yes, and if he gets a chance to do an extra piece of writing, between 12 and 2 A.M., he will clutch at the opportunity, and all that he saves, he will calculate shilling by shilling, and the

book he purchases with the complete price−−that is the price to which he has brought down the seller after two days' negotiations−−anxious yet joyful days−−will be all the dearer to him for his self−denial. He has also anodynes for his conscience when he seems to be wronging his afflicted family, for is he not gathering the best of legacies for his sons, something which will make their houses rich for ever, or if things come to the worst cannot his collection be sold and all he has expended be restored with usury, which in passing I may say is a vain dream? But at any rate, if other men spend money on dinners and on sport, on carved furniture and gay clothing, may he not also have one luxury in life? His conscience, however, does give painful twinges, and he will leave the Pines Horace, which he has been handling delicately for three weeks, in hopeless admiration of its marvellous typography, and be outside the door before a happy thought strikes him, and he returns to buy it, after thirty minutes' bargaining, with perfect confidence and a sense of personal generosity. What gave him this relief and now suffuses his very soul with charity? It was a date which for the moment he had forgotten and which has occurred most fortunately. To−morrow will be the birthday of a man whom he has known all his days and more intimately than any other person, and although he has not so high an idea of the man as the world is good enough to hold, and although he has often quarrelled with him and called him shocking names−−which tomcats would be ashamed of−−yet he has at the bottom a sneaking fondness for the fellow, and sometimes hopes he is not quite so bad after all. One thing is certain, the rascal loves a good book and likes to have it when he can, and perhaps it will make him a better man to show that he has been remembered and that one person at least believes in him, and so the bookman orders that delightful treasure to be sent to his own address in order that next day he may present it−−as a birthday present−−to himself.

Concerning tastes in pleasure there can be no final judgment, but for the bookman it may be said, beyond any other sportsman, he has the most constant satisfaction, for to him there is no close season, except the spring cleaning which he furiously resents, and only allows once in five years, and his autumn holiday, when he takes some six handy volumes with him. For him there are no hindrances of weather, for if the day be sunshine he taketh his pleasure in a garden, and if the day be sleet of March the fireside is the dearer, while there is a certain volume−−Payne's binding, red morocco, a favourite colour of his−−and the bookman reads Don Quixote with the more relish because the snowdrift is beating on the window. During the hours of the day when he is visiting patients, who tell their symptoms at intolerable length, or dictating letters about corn, or composing sermons, which will not always run, the bookman is thinking of the quiet hour which will lengthen into one hundred and eighty minutes, when he shall have his reward, the kindliest for which a man can work or hope to get. He will spend the time in the good company of people who will not quarrel with him, nor will he quarrel with them. Some of them of high estate and some extremely low; some of them learned persons and some of them simple, country men. For while the bookman counteth it his chief honour and singular privilege to hold converse with Virgil and Dante, with Shakespeare and Bacon, and suchlike nobility, yet is he very happy with Bailie Nicol Jarvie and Dandie Dinmont, with Mr. Micawber and Mrs. Gamp; he is proud when Diana Vernon comes to his room, and he has a chair for Colonel Newcome; he likes to hear Coleridge preach, who, as Lamb said, "never did anything else," and is much flattered when Browning tries to explain what he meant in Paracelsus. It repays one for much worry when William Blake not only reads his Songs of Innocence but also shows his own illustrations, and he turns to his life of Michael Angelo with the better understanding after he has read what Michael Angelo wrote to Vittoria Colonna. He that hath such friends, grave or gay, needeth not to care whether he be rich or poor, whether he know great folk or they pass him by, for he is independent of society and all its whims, and almost independent of circumstances. His friends of this circle will never play him false nor ever take the pet. If he does not wish their company they are silent, and then when he turns to them again there is no difference in the welcome, for they maintain an equal mind and are ever in good humour. As he comes in tired and possibly upset by smaller people they receive him in a kindly fashion, and in the firelight their familiar faces make his heart glad. Once I stood in Emerson's room, and I saw the last words that he wrote, the pad on which he wrote them, and the pen with which they were written, and the words are these: "The Book is a sure friend, always ready at your first leisure, opens to the very page you desire, and shuts at your first fatigue."

As the bookman grows old and many of his pleasures cease, he thanks God for one which grows the richer for the years and never fades. He pities those who have not this retreat from the weariness of life, nor this quiet place in

which to sit when the sun is setting. By the mellow wisdom of his books and the immortal hope of the greater writers, he is kept from peevishness and discontent, from bigotry and despair. Certain books grow dearer to him with the years, so that their pages are worn brown and thin, and he hopes with a Birmingham book−lover, Dr. Showell Rogers, whose dream has been fulfilled, that Heaven, having a place for each true man, may be "a bookman's paradise, where early black−lettered tomes, rare and stately, first folios of Shakespeare, tall copies of the right editions of the Elzevirs, and vellumed volumes galore, uncropped, uncut, and unfoxed in all their verdant pureness, fresh as when they left the presses of the Aldi, are to be had for the asking." Between this man at least and his books there will be no separation this side the grave, but his gratitude to them and his devotion will ever grow and their ministries to him be ever dearer, especially that Book of books which has been the surest guide of the human soul. "While I live," says one who both wrote and loved books and was numbered among our finest critics, "while I live and think, nothing can deprive me of my value for such treasures. I can help the appreciation of them while I last and love them till I die, and perhaps if fortune turns her face once more in kindness upon me before I go, I may chance, some quiet day, to lay my overbeating temples on a book, and so have the death I most envy."