

**ON BOOKS AND
THE
HOUSING OF THEM**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649252121

On Books and the Housing of Them by W. E. Gladstone

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

W. E. GLADSTONE

**ON BOOKS AND
THE
HOUSING OF THEM**

It is well to remember concerning "Books and the Housing of Them" that the books themselves should be worthy the care the owner bestows on them. To that end it is important first, to select the best, or at least good editions of such standard works as are without question worthy of a permanent place in a well-selected library. This applies more especially to print and illustration, and in a great degree to the binding,—bearing in mind always that unless a book is well bound it had better remain unbound, that is to say in the original cloth. Could a book speak it would doubtless say "I should like to be well dressed." Of course they should be appropriately dressed, according to the use to which they are to be put. The sober garments of history and philosophy, would be out of place in poetry and romance. Strength and beauty should be harmoniously blended, as necessity may require. Give your books pleasant homes and fit them to ornament them. Then you will enjoy them.

—*Publisher's Note.*



665
G 54

ON BOOKS

345-77

AND

THE HOUSING OF THEM

BY

W. E. GLADSTONE



NEW YORK

DODD, MEAD & COMPANY

1890

Press of J. J. Little & Co.
Astor Place, New York.

On Books and The Housing of Them.

IN the old age of his intellect (which at this point seemed to taste a little of decrepitude), Strauss declared * that the doctrine of immortality has recently lost the assistance of a passable argument, inasmuch as it has been discovered that the stars are inhabited; for where, he asks, could room now be found for such a multitude of souls? Again, in view of the current estimates of prospective population for this earth, some people have begun to entertain alarm for the probable condition of England (if not Great Britain) when she gets (say) seventy millions that are allotted to her against

* In *Der alte und der neue Glaube*.

six or eight hundred millions for the United States. We have heard in some systems of the pressure of population upon food ; but the idea of any pressure from any quarter upon space is hardly yet familiar. Still, I suppose that many a reader must have been struck with the naïve simplicity of the hyperbole of St. John,* perhaps a solitary unit of its kind in the New Testament : "the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

A book, even Audubon (I believe the biggest known), is smaller than a man ; but, in relation to space, I entertain more proximate apprehension of pressure upon available space from the book population than from the numbers of mankind. We ought to recollect, with more of a realized conception than we commonly attain to,

* xxi. 25.

that a book consists, like man, from whom it draws its lineage, of a body and a soul. They are not always proportionate to each other. Nay, even the different members of the book-body do not sing, but clash, when bindings of a profuse costliness are imposed, as too often happens in the case of Bibles and books of devotion, upon letter-press which is respectable journeyman's work and nothing more. The men of the Renaissance had a truer sense of adaptation; the age of jewelled bindings was also the age of illumination and of the beautiful *miniatura*, which at an earlier stage meant side or margin art,* and then, on account of the small portraitures included in it, gradually slid into the modern sense of miniature. There is a caution which we ought to carry with us more and more as

* First of all it seems to have referred to the red capital letters placed at the head of chapters or other divisions of works.

we get in view of the coming period of open book trade, and of demand practically boundless. Noble works ought not to be printed in mean and worthless forms, and cheapness ought to be limited by an instinctive sense and law of fitness. The binding of a book is the dress, with which it walks out into the world. The paper, type, and ink are the body, in which its soul is domiciled. And these three, soul, body, and habiliment, are a triad which ought to be adjusted to one another by the laws of harmony and good sense.

Already the increase of books is passing into geometrical progression. And this is not a little remarkable when we bear in mind that in Great Britain, of which I speak, while there is a vast supply of cheap works, what are termed "new publications" issue from the press, for the most part, at prices fabulously high, so that the class of real purchasers