

**APPLETONS' HOME
BOOKS. THE
HOME LIBRARY**

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Appletons' Home Books. The Home Library by Arthur Penn

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ARTHUR PENN

**APPLETONS' HOME
BOOKS. THE
HOME LIBRARY**

Appletons' Home Books.

THE
HOME LIBRARY.

BY
ARTHUR PENN,
EDITOR OF "THE REYNOLDS."

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I.—A PLEA FOR THE BEST BOOKS	5
II.—ON THE BUYING AND OWNING OF BOOKS	13
III.—ON READING	27
IV.—ON FICTION (<i>with a List of a Hundred Best Books</i>)	39
V.—ON THE LIBRARY AND ITS FURNITURE	48
VI.—ON BOOK-BINDING	63
VII.—ON THE MAKING OF SCRAP-BOOKS	79
VIII.—ON DIARIES AND FAMILY RECORDS	91
IX.—ON THE LENDING AND MARKING OF BOOKS	101
X.—HINTS HERE AND THERE	115
APPENDIX—LIST OF AUTHORS WHOSE WORKS SHOULD BE FOUND IN THE HOME LIBRARY	125

THE HOME LIBRARY.

I.

A PLEA FOR THE BEST BOOKS.

ONE library differs from another library just as one book differs from another book. The "Franklin Square Library" is a wholly different affair from the Bloomsbury Square Library, perhaps better known to fame as the British Museum. The library of the late Mr. Lenox, which he gave more or less to the citizens of New York, and which has hundreds of Bibles, old and new, in all tongues, bears but little resemblance to the library of a certain free-thinking and free-living gentleman in Paris, who does not own a single book that the Society for the Suppression of Vice would not seize with avidity and destroy with alacrity. There was even an Englishman whose taste was akin both to the late Mr. Lenox's and to the unnamed Parisian collector; and of this copious library of Lord Guilford his sister, Lady Charlotte Lindsay, used to say, aptly enough, that "Frederick's library

contains but two sorts of books—books that can not be read, and books that ought not to be read !”

All three of these libraries differ greatly from one which Mr. Thackeray mentions somewhere in one of his stirring romances—at least we think it was the author of that gay military novel, “Vanity Fair,” who introduces us to a young gentleman whose library “consisted principally of old boots.” Of course, this last is an extreme case of biblio-poverty, yet it is not quite as extreme as it may seem at first glance. Anecdotes are not wanting to show that to many people boots are as fitting furniture for a library as books. A New York paper recently told a story of an enriched couple who were about to decorate their new mansion in the highest style of the latest art, and who, therefore, went about seeking hints that they might devour and digest to their own profit. Among the houses which they got leave to examine was the home of a prominent publisher ; and the sight of the library therein was suggestive to the lady, for she turned to her lord with the pertinent query, “Don’t you think we might have some books, too.”

Right in the middle of one of the most bookish quarters in New York, right under the shadow of the Astor and the Mercantile Libraries, close to the treasuries of old books guarded by Bouton and Scribner, in Broadway just by Astor Place, a store not long ago was occupied by a “book-butcher”; it was some sort of a literary “dollar-store.” Beneath the flaming and incendiary placards which offered a million volumes within, for a mere song, and on an improvised stand in the

street itself, were a hundred or more copies of a bulky and gaudily bound book. Curiosity urged me to discover what book it was which was thus selling off regardless of cost. It proved to be a tawdry subscription book—a biography of General Grant, supplemented by an account of his travels, and lavishly illustrated in the usual style. It had originally been published at three or four dollars a copy, and now it was offered at ninety-five cents! Nay, more; by way of adding insult to injury, the poor tomes were surmounted by a fiery placard, which besought the passer-by to purchase this great work for the small sum of ninety-five cents, adding—with all the dignity of small-caps—that it was “WORTH MORE THAN THIS PRICE JUST TO FILL UP THE BOOK-CASE.”

Now, between the gentleman who buys a book just to fill up his book-case and the gentleman whose library consisted mainly of old boots, there is no great difference. That there is some small difference, however, it is but fair to admit. Perhaps the boot-librarian may be taken as the lowest form, and the buyer of books just to fill up as the next lowest. Immediately above this last would come the person who likes to read—now and then—but who judges the book he is reading more by the outside than the inside. At a watering-place not far from Philadelphia, a year or two ago, a lady of literary taste, and, indeed, of a literary family, was besought by one of the tribe of summer boarders to lend a book or two. The lady of literary taste had brought no books with her on her journey, but had from time to time bought odd numbers of one of the omnipresent pamphlet