

**OF MUCH LOVE AND  
SOME KNOWLEDGE  
OF BOOKS**

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Of much love and some knowledge of books by Henry Eduard Legler

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BY  
HENRY EDUARD LEGLER

LET ME LOVE THE INSIDES OF  
BOOKS WITH DR. JOHNSON AND  
HAVE RESPECT UNTO THEIR OUT-  
SIDES WITH DAVID GARRICK.

—DeWitt Miller's bookplate inscription.



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## I

Let it be understood at the very outset that this is to be no listing of books in any fashion as guides for reading or for study; no cataloguing of volumes warranted to comprise the hundred best books, nor a thousand; no measurement of shelf-space to contain selected works that no gentleman's library should be without. One may be pardoned for choosing his own titles, whether they be a baker's dozen or overrun the allotted limits of a measured shelf. If one gives in the choosing no evidence of good taste, as determined by experts in culture, at any rate one exercises the privilege of declaring for himself what tastes good.

We get no good  
By being ungenerous, even to a book,  
And calculating profits . . . so much help  
By so much reading. It is rather when  
We gloriously forget ourselves and plunge  
Soul-forward, headlong, into a book profound,  
Impassioned for its beauty and salt of truth—  
'Tis then we get the right good from a book.

Books naturally fall into three classes, as Prof. Woodberry points out: those that are outlived,

because the experience they contain and address is shallow or transitory; those that are arrived at late because the experience involved is mature; and those, the greatest, which give something to the youngest and have something left to give to the oldest, which keep pace with life itself and like life disclose themselves more profoundly, intimately, and in expanding values with familiarity.

"The secret of appreciation," he says, "is to share the passion for life that literature itself exemplifies and contains; out of real experience, the best that one can have, to possess oneself of that imaginary experience which is the stuff of larger life and the place of the ideal expansion of the soul, the gateway to which is art in all forms and primarily literature; to avail oneself of that for pleasure and wisdom and fulness of life. It is those minds which are thus experienced that alone come to be on the level of the greatest works and to absorb their life; but the way is by a gradual ascent, by natural growth, by maintaining a vital relation with what is read. So long as the bond between author and reader is a living bond, appreciation is secure.

"The act of reading is a blending of two souls, nor is it seldom that the reader brings the best part, vivifying his author with his own memory and aspiration and imparting a flame to the words from his own soul. The appreciation of literature is thus by no means a simple matter; it is not the ability to read, nor even a canon of criticism



and rules of admiration and censure that are required; but a live soul, full of curiosity and interest in life, sensitive to impressions, acute and subtle in reception, prompt to complete a suggestion, and always ready with the light of its own life to serve harmonious and enhancing environment of scenes of love or tragedy. That reader does best who in his use of literature insists on the presence of this immediate appeal to himself in the books he reads. If the book does not have this effect with him, if it does not co-operate with his own taste and interest, it may be the best of books for others, but it is not for him—at least it is not yet for him.”

There are books of facts, representing the literature of information; there are also books of imagination, representing the literature of power in the building of personality and character.

Concerning the first type of books, there must be knowledge, but only an erratic fancy could lavish love upon them. Of the other, knowledge but presupposes love. Now love of books may be, as it is in human relationship which books symbolize, of three kinds: physical, intellectual, and emotional. The one form creates the bibliographe; the next too often produces the bibliotaphe; the other begets the unbalanced bibliomaniac. In a merging of the three elements of book love is found that finer spirit summed up in the term bibliophile. Abbé Rive, librarian of the Duke de Vallière, in his lexicon of the booklover described the bibliophile as “a lover of books, the only one of the class who appears to

read them for his own pleasure," while a later biblio-lexicographer has expanded this definition thus: "The Simon-Pure lover of books, God bless him! Much rarer he than people think him to be. Bibliophile is a title which belongs to those who seek books for themselves alone, hurried into no excesses of the passion of the bibliomaniac, and free from the selfish and miserly cupidity of the bibliotaphe."

Reference again to Abbé Rive's biblio-lexicon, and Halkett Lord's biblio-dictionary, and George H. Ellwanger's little list of similar definitions discloses that in condensed terms the bibliotaphe is the undertaker of literature who buries his books behind locked doors; the bibliographe is he who deems a coldly scientific collation or description of books his chief duty toward them; the bibliomaniac is tersely identified by the Germans as a Bücher-narr, or book-fool. He is, to refer to Abbé Rive again, the indiscriminate accumulator, cock-brained and purse-heavy. He is learned only in titles, dates, and editions, and a connoisseur of colophons. Of what lies between the first and final pages, he careth naught, save perhaps an illustration or an error of typography. Him Sebastian Brant full four hundred years ago sent on a wild-goose voyage in his delectable Ship of Fools. "I am the first foole of all the whole navy," Brant caused him to say, and ever since it can be read of the bookworm in German, Latin and in English, and in Suabian dialect, too, what sort of fool he is:

Still am I besy bokes assemblynge  
For to haue plenty it is a pleasaunt thyng  
In my conceyt and to haue them ay in honde—  
But what they mean do I nat vnderstonde.

Lo in lyke wyse of bokys I haue store  
But fewe I rede, and fewer understonde.  
I folowe not theyr doctryne nor theyr lore—  
It is ynoughe to bere a boke in hande,  
It were to moche to be in suche a bande  
For to be bounde to loke within the boke—  
I am content on the fayre couerynge to loke.

Each of the latter three types, therefore, possesses one, and but one, of three otherwise excellent qualities, each of which is rendered ludicrous or odious only in being detached from the others and becoming over-accentuated. Refined and tempered by association, these qualities become the essence of that subtle love and knowledge of books which yield the Seven Joys of Reading. And the Seven Joys of Reading are these:\*

The first joy is the Joy of Familiarity,  
The second joy is the Joy of Surprise,  
The third joy is the Joy of Sympathy,  
The fourth joy is the Joy of Appreciation,  
The fifth joy is the Joy of Expansion,  
The sixth joy is the Joy of Shock,  
The last of the seven is the Joy of Revelation.

The last Joy? Nay, peradventure, not the last.  
There remain ninety-and-nine.

\*Plummer, Mary W. The Seven Joys of Reading.