

**BOOKS AND THEIR USE; AN
ADDRESS, TO WHICH IS
APPENDED A LIST OF BOOKS FOR
STUDENTS OF THE NEW
TESTAMENT**

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Books and Their Use; An Address, to which is Appended a List of Books for Students of the New Testament by Joseph Henry Thayer

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JOSEPH HENRY THAYER

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THE NEW TESTAMENT**

THE CHANGE OF ATTITUDE TOWARDS
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BOOKS AND THEIR USE

An Address

TO WHICH IS APPENDED A LIST OF BOOKS FOR
STUDENTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

BY

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE following address on "Books and Their Use, from a Professional Point of View," was given, except a few paragraphs omitted for want of time, before the Harvard Divinity School at the opening of the present academic year in September. The purpose for which it was prepared will explain, and if need be apologize for, its colloquial character and the occasional freedom of its comments.

The List which follows it is a small selection of titles from a very voluminous literature. It has been drawn up, not for the professional bibliographer, but to meet the practical wants of the average theological student. This aim has affected both the selection and its proportions: has led to the mention of some books which, though not of the highest excellence, are peculiarly accessible or especially serviceable; and again, has caused the titles to be multiplied sometimes under the more recondite subjects as well as under the more important. The "Miscellaneous Topics" appended are specimens of subjects treated by my students in private essays or at social evening discussions.

To economize space, the title of a book, having been once given in full, is generally referred to afterwards in an abbreviated form, the full title being ascertainable by turning to

the page (or pages in the case of more than one book by the same author) designated in the Index by a full-faced numeral. The references have been restricted, for the most part, to books or other separate publications; for discussions in Reviews, the student must consult Poole (see p. 44) and the special Indexes to the several periodicals.

The outside dimensions of the books are given in centimetres; but fractions of the same have been disregarded. The prices named are taken mostly from the publishers' catalogues; those appended to many of the older foreign books are merely approximate. In adjusting foreign coinage to our currency, the shilling and the mark (100 Pfennige) may be roughly reckoned at twenty-five cents, and the franc at twenty. The cost of importation, however, varies with methods and dealers. Several of the foreign firms (the Messrs. Macmillan, Longman, Cassell, Bagster) have branch houses or special agents in this country.

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS,

October, 1892.

BOOKS AND THEIR USE

ALMOST every one interested in books has been possessed at some time with the desire to gather for himself a library, — a comparatively harmless kind of possession. It affords diversion, and, like the promiscuous collection of postage-stamps, coins, and the like, may bring to the accumulator not a little incidental instruction. But the engrossing work of life, and the limited resources of most of us, generally hold this disease well in check.

To be distinguished from the professional collector's greed, however, is the legitimate love of ownership. This is wholesome. Occasionally a student recoils so thoroughly from the sophomoric ambition to own a large library as to pride himself on getting along without books, doing his own thinking, as he calls it; about which much the same sort of fustian may be talked as about self-made men. But soon there grows up in a healthy mind quite a different feeling. It is not the book merely, but my edition, my copy, of it which I prize. Part of my intellectual history lies buried in its pages. The very sight of it starts anew impulses and reflections which it originated. Stimulus and assurance come to my wavering soul every time I turn its leaves. One would part with his copy of such a book almost as reluctantly as he would break with an old friend. There are volumes, moreover, about which no tender sentiments gather, but which the most impecunious student would blush not to own, —

volumes, in the treatment of which he can indulge his preferences; mark and annotate at will; humor his taste or help his memory by his own index of their contents, record of criticisms which approve themselves to him, and references to other writers who have treated the same topics. To ask a man to lend such a book is like asking to borrow his razor or his coat.

The ownership of a book is often salutary morally, — by reminding one of unfulfilled purposes; of fields of learning which he promised himself to explore, but has never made time to enter; of scholarly duties he neglects to perform. I have known men whose dusty Hebrew Bible was thus a means of grace to them; and others in whose case this means of grace was so long abused that, like other abused privileges, it resulted in judicial hardening. Good books owned but unused act as intellectual goads; just as a visit to our university library will reduce the inflated conceit of wisdom to a hopeful condition of collapse.

Just *what* books are to be included in the private library, as it may with strictest propriety be called, every man must, in the end, decide for himself. There are certain books, to be sure, about which there can be no question, — books which are *tools*, — the Bible, the Dictionary, the Concordance, Shakespeare. One would as soon expect to find a carpenter without a hammer or a saw, as a student without such necessary implements of his calling. But apart from the necessary implements of the craft, books may be said to have a relative as well as an intrinsic worth. Men's topics and methods of study vary, and cannot always be foreseen by them, still less by others. I remember once advising a student, who afterwards went as a missionary to Japan, to buy, among other books, "The Englishman's Greek Concordance," which cost at that time — before the publication of

Hudson's — some seven or eight dollars. Not long afterwards I received from him an emphatic admonition — for the benefit of other confiding inquirers — on the injudiciousness of my advice. That he has more than once since asked that advice may possibly indicate some change of judgment on his part, or at any rate that not all my suggestions seemed to him as wide of the mark as this one. But it is undeniably true that a book eminently serviceable to one man, another will find little use for. Accordingly, only general advice about buying can be safely given. It would be interesting to learn how many identical volumes were included in the lists of the "one hundred best books" which some of the journals, with more enterprise than discretion, solicited not long ago from leading literary men.

1. Nevertheless, with due allowance for personal differences, a few hints may be ventured upon. For instance, it holds true, in general, that the books out of which other books are made are the best books to own, viz., the recognized authorities on the main professional topics, and especially the best encyclopædias and works of reference. Both these classes of books, however, illustrate the instability of all things human, — the best authority to-day is liable to be superseded to-morrow; and as for encyclopædias and works of reference, they have so multiplied of late as to bid fair of themselves well nigh to exhaust a minister's book fund.

The advantages of a good encyclopædia, however, are obvious: it is a small library in itself, — a library, moreover, written for the most part by specialists; and by its copious bibliographical references putting one on the track of the principal works relating to any subject which he may wish to study more in detail. But even some of the best of them are singularly indifferent in certain respects to a student's convenience. Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," to be sure, as reëdited in this country by Drs. Hackett and Abbot, with its