

**BYWAYS IN BOOKLAND;
CONFESSIONS
AND DIGRESSIONS**

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Byways in Bookland; confessions and digressions by Walter A. Mursell

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WALTER A. MURSELL

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BY

WALTER A. MURSELL

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1914

TO
THE MEMORY OF
M. D. R.
WHO LOVED BOOKS
AND NATURE AND HUMANITY

PREFACE

THE pages which follow make no pretension to literary criticism; they are a simple record of happy and memorable hours spent in the company of favourite books, and a tribute of gratitude to their authors. Books have been my companions from boyhood; and if the record here traced is only the means of introducing a few other boys to such congenial society, I shall not be ashamed of having been egotistic enough to set down some of my own impressions and confessions.

W. A. M.

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BYWAYS IN BOOKLAND

CHAPTER I

THE BIRTH OF A BOOK-LOVER

I CANNOT remember the time when I began to be a book-lover. It is so far back that I fancy it must be in that remote period when I had attained the dignified age of "a primordial, protoplasmal, atomic globule." Some things are in the blood, and we cannot help ourselves. Some men are born reading *The Times*, and they imbibe solid political opinions with their excellent pap. It was not *The Times* that won my infant suffrage; politics are a sealed book to me, and the news of the day is far too old to be of more than momentary interest. Events are limited and monotonous, and one could forecast the contents of the newspaper on any day of the week. But human nature is a perennial surprise, and so it comes to be that the interest of life is not in the things that happen, but in the men who see.

No; I was born reading a Book Catalogue, and life really began for me when I purchased my first book with my own money. It was not a high-class