

**RAMBLES IN BOOK-
LAND; SHORT ESSAYS
ON LITERARY SUBJECTS**

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Rambles in book-land; short essays on literary subjects by Wm. Davenport Adams

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WM. DAVENPORT ADAMS

**RAMBLES IN BOOK-
LAND; SHORT ESSAYS
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RAMBLES IN BOOK-LAND

Short Essays on Literary Subjects

BY

William
WM. DAVENPORT ADAMS

AUTHOR OF 'BY-WAYS IN BOOK-LAND,' 'A DICTIONARY OF
ENGLISH LITERATURE,' ETC.

'Circumcursans hinc illinc.'
CATULL. *Carm.* lviii.

LONDON
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW
1889

ENCOURAGED by the kind reception accorded, on both sides of the Atlantic, to his 'By-Ways in Book-Land,' the author has ventured to prepare another volume—similar in aim, character, size, and appearance—in the hope that it may meet with similar good fortune. Here, as in the former case, the aim is unambitious. The writer deals lightly, briefly, and therefore not exhaustively, with some literary topics which have interested him, and which, he trusts, will prove not less acceptable to the reader.

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RAMBLES IN BOOK-LAND.

THE TREATMENT OF BOOKS.

THIS may seem to some a simple matter, and one on which there is scarcely need of advice or exhortation. Everybody, it may be said, knows how to treat books. 'What is there of mystery about it? What is there to learn? You cut a book open, you read it, and you lay it down. What more is necessary?' One can imagine these questions being put, but they are heart-breaking to a bibliomaniac. What indifference, what frivolity, what lack of reverence! To the book-worshipper it seems terrible that the subject should be approached so flippantly. How to treat books

—why, it is an art in itself ; a method which comes, no doubt, by nature to the true believer, but which the most careless can acquire in time if they will but give their minds to it.

Of course the method applies only to the books which are really books—to those which, in exterior as well as internally, have a right to claim the privileges of preservation. From this point of view there are publications, commonly called books, which do not count ; new volumes in paper-covers, for example. They are very excellent, no doubt, in the matter of letter-press (especially when they are French) ; but what is to be done with them ? How are they to be treated ? It is fair to assume that they are meant either not to last or to be bound. Their corners turn up at the edges, and their pages come unstitched. It is impossible to regard them with respect. They are fit only for the base uses of the smoking-room or the easy-chair. They can be dog's-eared, or pencilled, or what not, without shame coming on the dog's-carer or the penciller. Till

they are attired in cloth, or in something even more permanent than that, they are hardly books at all, and cannot hope or expect to be dealt with as such.

Nor, indeed, can the ordinary 'railway-novel' of everyday commerce look for much more respectful or more kindly treatment. Compassionate or avaricious people do indeed set store by these yellow, 'decorated' emanations; ranging them, when read, in a dingy, dilapidated row along a melancholy bookshelf. But such persons are not bibliophiles of the true kind. The genuine book-lover may peruse the florin 'shocker,' but either he leaves it in the railway-carriage in which it has been read, or, if perchance he takes it home, he relegates it to some obscure cupboard where it ranks, not as a book, but as mere lumber. He is even disposed to be discourteous to the rich relation of the florin 'shocker,' the two-volume or three-volume novel. This, to be sure, goes into the best houses of the best people, and, for the time, basks in the sunlight of prosperity. But it