

**AT THE  
LIBRARY TABLE**

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At the Library Table by Adrian Hoffman Joline

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**ADRIAN HOFFMAN JOLINE**

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# AT THE LIBRARY TABLE

BY

ADRIAN HOFFMAN JOLINE

Author of

"Meditations of an Autograph Collector"

"The Diversions of a Book Lover"

&c.



BOSTON

RICHARD G. BADGER

*The Gorham Press*

1910

02 Copy 13-5-9.

#### PREPARATORY NOTE

**T**HREE of the papers in this volume have been privately printed. I have added, however, some new matter to the sketches of Ainsworth and James; and it has been suggested to me that those sketches should be published, although I have some misgivings about them. The other paper I am reprinting merely to please myself. Two men have confided to me that they have read it, and possibly two more may be persuaded to do the same thing.

November, 1909.



## CONTENTS

	PAGE.
I. At the Library Table.....	5
II. The Deliberations of a Dofob.....	31
III. In a Library Corner.....	45
IV. Of the Old Fashion.....	67
V. William Harrison Ainsworth.....	83
VI. George P. R. James.....	125

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## AT THE LIBRARY TABLE

**W**HETHER there are many who take much interest in books about books is a matter of doubt. Multitudes of people like to think that they are fond of books merely as books, and derive great comfort from the innocent delusion that they delight in the possession of them. A neat and imposing library is an attractive ornament of the country house as well as of the city mansion, and if the volumes are bound in a becoming fashion, by Zaehnsdorf, Rivière, Lortic, or Cobden-Sanderson, they look well on the shelves and impart to the establishment an air of dignity and refinement. But it is a portentous question whether the majority of book-owners ever find occasion or opportunity to inquire within or to inform themselves about the contents of the tomes which line the walls of the comfortable library. The toilers who are absorbed in the drudgery of daily work have little leisure to expend on the inside of their books, and the merry idlers who devote their energies to sports, athletic or otherwise, amusements, and the varied diversions which occupy the minds of the members of our modern "society", have still less. My dear friend, the average man, deserving as he is of admiration and respect, cannot have much interest in books which are purely bookish, and my dearer friend, the average woman, who now and again plunges calmly but despairingly into the depths of "literature",—combining with others of her kind in so-called reading clubs, so as to share her afflictions

with her fellows—secretly longs for the sweets of fiction while she pretends to be fond of such stupid performances as essays and dissertations. In the recesses of her personality she regards works of that description as bores to be avoided; and very likely she is not far wrong.

Mind, I am not talking of inhabitants of Boston, Massachusetts. It may be that my notions are derived wholly from my New York environment. A New Yorker appears to think that it is an evidence of weakness to allow any one to find out that books are dear to him, and seems to be as loath to confess the passion as he would be to proclaim at the club or upon the house-tops his fond attachment to the lady of his choice. In the goodly number of years during which I have trodden the pavements and availed of the facilities of transit afforded by the street-railways of the city whereof we are justly proud, I do not remember hearing the subject of books or of things pertaining to books discussed or even referred to by any of my neighbors. But recently in Boston, while walking on Boylston Street, I passed two lads who were still in their later teens, and distinctly heard one of them say, "the Latin derivation of that word is"—I lost the rest of it. In New York he would have been uttering something in the vulgar argot used by the youth of our times,—preserved and fostered by the newspaper—about "de cops" or "de Giants", or the superiority of some novel brand of cigarettes. They would have blushed for shame to be discovered in the possession of any knowledge of such discreditable matters as "Latin" or "derivations" of any description. The gospel of "doing things" has been preached to them so strenuously that they have long since forgotten, if they ever knew, that there is any virtue in "knowing things".