LANG ANDREW

THE LIBRARY

Andrew Lang
The Library

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=25229892
The Library:

Содержание

PREFATORY NOTE 4
CHAPTER I. 6
CHAPTER II. 30
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента. 39

Andrew Lang
The Library

PREFATORY NOTE

The pages in this volume on illuminated and other MSS. (with the exception of some anecdotes about Bussy Rabutin and Julie de Rambouillet) have been contributed by the Rev. W. J. Loftie, who has also written on early printed books (pp. 94–95). The pages on the Biblioklept (pp. 46–56) are reprinted, with the Editor's kind permission, from the *Saturday Review*; and a few remarks on the moral lessons of bookstalls are taken from an essay in the same journal.

Mr. Ingram Bywater, Fellow of Exeter College, and lately sub-Librarian of the Bodleian, has very kindly read through the proofs of chapters I., II., and III., and suggested some alterations.

Thanks are also due to Mr. T. R. Buchanan, Fellow of All Souls College, for two plates from his "Book-bindings in All Souls Library" (printed for private circulation), which he has been good enough to lend me. The plates are beautifully drawn and coloured by Dr. J. J. Wild. Messrs. George Bell & Sons, Messrs. Bradbury, Agnew, & Co., and Messrs. Chatto & Windus, must be thanked for the use of some of the woodcuts which illustrate the concluding chapter.

A. L.

CHAPTER I.
AN APOLOGY FOR THE BOOK-HUNTER

"All men," says Dr. Dibdin, "like to be their own librarians." A writer on the library has no business to lay down the law as to the books that even the most inexperienced amateurs should try to collect. There are books which no lover of literature can afford to be without; classics, ancient and modern, on which the world has pronounced its verdict. These works, in whatever shape we may be able to possess them, are the necessary foundations of even the smallest collections. Homer, Dante and Milton Shakespeare and Sophocles, Aristophanes and Molière, Thucydides, Tacitus, and Gibbon, Swift and Scott, – these every lover of letters will desire to possess in the original languages or in translations. The list of such classics is short indeed, and when we go beyond it, the tastes of men begin to differ very widely. An assortment of broadsheet ballads and scrap-books, bought in boyhood, was the nucleus of Scott's library, rich in the works of poets and magicians, of alchemists, and anecdotists. A childish liking for coloured prints of stage characters, may be the germ of a theatrical collection like those of Douce, and Malone, and Cousin. People who are studying any past period of human history, or any old phase or expression of human genius, will eagerly collect

little contemporary volumes which seem trash to other amateurs. For example, to a student of Molière, it is a happy chance to come across "La Carte du Royaume des Prétieuses" – (The map of the kingdom of the "Précieuses") – written the year before the comedian brought out his famous play "Les Précieuses Ridicules." This geographical tract appeared in the very "Recueil des Pieces Choisies," whose authors Magdelon, in the play, was expecting to entertain, when Mascarille made his appearance. There is a faculty which Horace Walpole named "serendipity," – the luck of falling on just the literary document which one wants at the moment. All collectors of out of the way books know the pleasure of the exercise of serendipity, but they enjoy it in different ways. One man will go home hugging a volume of sermons, another with a bulky collection of catalogues, which would have distended the pockets even of the wide great-coat made for the purpose, that Charles Nodier used to wear when he went a book-hunting. Others are captivated by black letter, others by the plays of such obscurities as Nabbes and Glapthorne. But however various the tastes of collectors of books, they are all agreed on one point, – the love of printed paper. Even an Elzevir man can sympathise with Charles Lamb's attachment to "that folio Beaumont and Fletcher which he dragged home late at night from Barker's in Covent Garden." But it is another thing when Lamb says, "I do not care for a first folio of Shakespeare." A bibliophile who could say this could say anything.

No, there are, in every period of taste, books which, apart

from their literary value, all collectors admit to possess, if not for themselves, then for others of the brotherhood, a peculiar preciousness. These books are esteemed for curiosity, for beauty of type, paper, binding, and illustrations, for some connection they may have with famous people of the past, or for their rarity. It is about these books, the method of preserving them, their enemies, the places in which to hunt for them, that the following pages are to treat. It is a subject more closely connected with the taste for curiosities than with art, strictly so called. We are to be occupied, not so much with literature as with books, not so much with criticism as with bibliography, the quaint *duenna* of literature, a study apparently dry, but not without its humours. And here an apology must be made for the frequent allusions and anecdotes derived from French writers. These are as unavoidable, almost, as the use of French terms of the sport in tennis and in fencing. In bibliography, in the care for books *as* books, the French are still the teachers of Europe, as they were in tennis and are in fencing. Thus, Richard de Bury, Chancellor of Edward III., writes in his "Philobiblon:" "Oh God of Gods in Zion! what a rushing river of joy gladdens my heart as often as I have a chance of going to Paris! There the days seem always short; there are the goodly collections on the delicate fragrant book-shelves." Since Dante wrote of —

> "L'onor di quell' arte
> Ch' allumare è chiamata in Parisi,"

"the art that is called illuminating in Paris," and all the

other arts of writing, printing, binding books, have been most skilfully practised by France. She improved on the lessons given by Germany and Italy in these crafts. Twenty books about books are written in Paris for one that is published in England. In our country Dibdin is out of date (the second edition of his "Bibliomania" was published in 1811), and Mr. Hill Burton's humorous "Book-hunter" is out of print. Meanwhile, in France, writers grave and gay, from the gigantic industry of Brunet to Nodier's quaint fancy, and Janin's wit, and the always entertaining bibliophile Jacob (Paul Lacroix), have written, or are writing, on books, manuscripts, engravings, editions, and bindings. In England, therefore, rare French books are eagerly sought, and may be found in all the booksellers' catalogues. On the continent there is no such care for our curious or beautiful editions, old or new. Here a hint may be given to the collector. If he "picks up" a rare French book, at a low price, he would act prudently in having it bound in France by a good craftsman. Its value, when "the wicked day of destiny" comes, and the collection is broken up, will thus be made secure. For the French do not suffer our English bindings gladly; while we have no narrow prejudice against the works of Lortic and Capé, but the reverse. For these reasons then, and also because every writer is obliged to make the closest acquaintance with books in the direction where his own studies lie, the writings of French authorities are frequently cited in the following pages.

This apology must be followed by a brief defence of the taste

and passion of book-collecting, and of the class of men known invidiously as book-worms and book-hunters. They and their simple pleasures are the butts of a cheap and shrewish set of critics, who cannot endure in others a taste which is absent in themselves. Important new books have actually been condemned of late years because they were printed on good paper, and a valuable historical treatise was attacked by reviewers quite angrily because its outward array was not mean and forbidding. Of course, critics who take this view of new books have no patience with persons who care for "margins," and "condition," and early copies of old books. We cannot hope to convert the adversary, but it is not necessary to be disturbed by his clamour. People are happier for the possession of a taste as long as they possess it, and it does not, like the demons of Scripture, possess them. The wise collector gets instruction and pleasure from his pursuit, and it may well be that, in the long run, he and his family do not lose money. The amusement may chance to prove a very fair investment.

As to this question of making money by collecting, Mr. Hill Burton speaks very distinctly in "The Book-hunter:" "Where money is the object let a man speculate or become a miser.. Let not the collector ever, unless in some urgent and necessary circumstances, part with any of his treasures. Let him not even have recourse to that practice called barter, which political philosophers tell us is the universal resource of mankind preparatory to the invention of money. Let him confine all his

transactions in the market to purchasing only. No good comes of gentlemen-amateurs buying and selling." There is room for difference of opinion here, but there seems to be most reason on the side of Mr. Hill Burton. It is one thing for the collector to be able to reflect that the money he expends on books is not lost, and that his family may find themselves richer, not poorer, because he indulged his taste. It is quite another thing to buy books as a speculator buys shares, meaning to sell again at a profit as soon as occasion offers. It is necessary also to warn the beginner against indulging extravagant hopes. He must buy experience with his books, and many of his first purchases are likely to disappoint him. He will pay dearly for the wrong "Cæsar" of 1635, the one *without* errors in pagination; and this is only a common example of the beginner's blunders. Collecting is like other forms of sport; the aim is not certain at first, the amateur is nervous, and, as in angling, is apt to "strike" (a bargain) too hurriedly.

I often think that the pleasure of collecting is like that of sport. People talk of "book-hunting," and the old Latin motto says that "one never wearies of the chase in this forest." But the analogy to angling seems even stronger. A collector walks in the London or Paris streets, as he does by Tweed or Spey. Many a lordly mart of books he passes, like Mr. Quaritch's, Mr. Toovey's, or M. Fontaine's, or the shining store of M.M. Morgand et Fatout, in the Passage des Panoramas. Here I always feel like Brassicanus in the king of Hungary's collection, "non in Bibliotheca, sed in gremio Jovis;" "not in a library, but in paradise." It is not given

to every one to cast angle in these preserves. They are kept for dukes and millionaires. Surely the old Duke of Roxburghe was the happiest of mortals, for to him both the chief bookshops and auction rooms, and the famous salmon streams of Floors, were equally open, and he revelled in the prime of book-collecting and of angling. But there are little tributary streets, with humbler stalls, shy pools, as it were, where the humbler fisher of books may hope to raise an Elzevir, or an old French play, a first edition of Shelley, or a Restoration comedy. It is usually a case of hope unfulfilled; but the merest nibble of a rare book, say Marston's poems in the original edition, or Beddoes's "Love's Arrow Poisoned," or Bankes's "Bay Horse in a Trance," or the "Mel Heliconicum" of Alexander Ross, or "Les Oeuvres de Clement Marot, de Cahors, Vallet de Chambre du Roy, A Paris, Ches Pierre Gaultier, 1551;" even a chance at something of this sort will kindle the waning excitement, and add a pleasure to a man's walk in muddy London. Then, suppose you purchase for a couple of shillings the "Histoire des Amours de Henry IV, et autres pieces curieuses, A Leyde, Chez Jean Sambyx (Elzevir), 1664," it is certainly not unpleasant, on consulting M. Fontaine's catalogue, to find that he offers the same work at the ransom of £10. The beginner thinks himself in singular luck, even though he has no idea of vending his collection, and he never reflects that *condition*– spotless white leaves and broad margins, make the market value of a book.

Setting aside such bare considerations of profit, the sport given

by bookstalls is full of variety and charm. In London it may be pursued in most of the cross streets that stretch a dirty net between the British Museum and the Strand. There are other more shy and less frequently poached resorts which the amateur may be allowed to find out for himself. In Paris there is the long sweep of the *Quais*, where some eighty *bouquinistes* set their boxes on the walls of the embankment of the Seine. There are few country towns so small but that books, occasionally rare and valuable, may be found lurking in second-hand furniture warehouses. This is one of the advantages of living in an old country. The Colonies are not the home for a collector. I have seen an Australian bibliophile enraptured by the rare chance of buying, in Melbourne, an early work on – the history of Port Jackson! This seems but poor game. But in Europe an amateur has always occupation for his odd moments in town, and is for ever lured on by the radiant apparition of Hope. All collectors tell their anecdotes of wonderful luck, and magnificent discoveries. There is a volume "Voyages Littéraires sur les Quais de Paris" (Paris, Durand, 1857), by M. de Fontaine de Resbecq, which might convert the dullest soul to book-hunting. M. de Resbecq and his friends had the most amazing good fortune. A M. N – found six original plays of Molière (worth perhaps as many hundreds of pounds), bound up with Garth's "Dispensary," an English poem which has long lost its vogue. It is worth while, indeed, to examine all volumes marked "Miscellanea," "Essays," and the like, and treasures may possibly lurk, as Snuffy Davy

knew, within the battered sheepskin of school books. Books lie in out of the way places. Poggio rescued "Quintilian" from the counter of a wood merchant. The best time for book-hunting in Paris is the early morning. "The take," as anglers say, is "on" from half-past seven to half-past nine a.m. At these hours the vendors exhibit their fresh wares, and the agents of the more wealthy booksellers come and pick up everything worth having. These agents quite spoil the sport of the amateur. They keep a strict watch on every country dealer's catalogue, snap up all he has worth selling, and sell it over again, charging pounds in place of shillings. But M. de Resbecq vows that he once picked up a copy of the first edition of La Rochefoucauld's "Maxims" out of a box which two booksellers had just searched. The same collector got together very promptly all the original editions of La Bruyère, and he even found a copy of the Elzevir "Pastissier Français," at the humble price of six sous. Now the " Pastissier Français," an ill-printed little cookery-book of the Elzevirs, has lately fetched £600 at a sale. The Antiquary's story of Snuffy Davy and the "Game of Chess," is dwarfed by the luck of M. de Resbecq. Not one amateur in a thousand can expect such good fortune. There is, however, a recent instance of a Rugby boy, who picked up, on a stall, a few fluttering leaves hanging together on a flimsy thread. The old woman who kept the stall could hardly be induced to accept the large sum of a shilling for an original quarto of Shakespeare's "King John." These stories are told that none may despair. That none may be over confident, an author

may recount his own experience. The only odd *trouvaille* that ever fell to me was a clean copy of "La Journée Chrétienne," with the name of Léon Gambetta, 1844, on its catholic fly-leaf. Rare books grow rarer every day, and often 'tis only Hope that remains at the bottom of the fourpenny boxes. Yet the Paris book-hunters cleave to the game. August is their favourite season; for in August there is least competition. Very few people are, as a rule, in Paris, and these are not tempted to loiter. The bookseller is drowsy, and glad not to have the trouble of chaffering. The English go past, and do not tarry beside a row of dusty boxes of books. The heat threatens the amateur with sunstroke. Then, says M. Octave Uzanne, in a prose *ballade* of book-hunters – then, calm, glad, heroic, the *bouquineurs* prowl forth, refreshed with hope. The brown old calf-skin wrinkles in the sun, the leaves crackle, you could poach an egg on the cover of a quarto. The dome of the Institute glitters, the sickly trees seem to wither, their leaves wax red and grey, a faint warm wind is walking the streets. Under his vast umbrella the book-hunter is secure and content; he enjoys the pleasures of the sport unvexed by poachers, and thinks less of the heat than does the deer-stalker on the bare hill-side.

There is plenty of morality, if there are few rare books in the stalls. The decay of affection, the breaking of friendship, the decline of ambition, are all illustrated in these fourpenny collections. The presentation volumes are here which the author gave in the pride of his heart to the poet who was his "Master," to the critic whom he feared, to the friend with whom he was

on terms of mutual admiration. The critic has not even cut the leaves, the poet has brusquely torn three or four apart with his finger and thumb, the friend has grown cold, and has let the poems slip into some corner of his library, whence they were removed on some day of doom and of general clearing out. The sale of the library of a late learned prelate who had Boileau's hatred of a dull book was a scene to be avoided by his literary friends. The Bishop always gave the works which were offered to him a fair chance. He read till he could read no longer, cutting the pages as he went, and thus his progress could be traced like that of a backwoodsman who "blazes" his way through a primeval forest. The paper-knife generally ceased to do duty before the thirtieth page. The melancholy of the book-hunter is aroused by two questions, "Whence?" and "Whither?" The bibliophile asks about his books the question which the metaphysician asks about his soul. Whence came they? Their value depends a good deal on the answer. If they are stamped with arms, then there is a book ("Armorial du Bibliophile," by M. Guigard) which tells you who was their original owner. Any one of twenty coats-of-arms on the leather is worth a hundred times the value of the volume which it covers. If there is no such mark, the fancy is left to devise a romance about the first owner, and all the hands through which the book has passed. That Vanini came from a Jesuit college, where it was kept under lock and key. That copy of Agrippa "De Vanitate Scientiarum" is marked, in a crabbed hand and in faded ink, with cynical Latin notes. What pessimist two hundred

years ago made his grumbling so permanent? One can only guess, but part of the imaginative joys of the book-hunter lies ‘ in the fruitless conjecture. That other question “Whither?” is graver. Whither are our treasures to be scattered? Will they find kind masters? or, worst fate of books, fall into the hands of women who will sell them to the trunk-maker? Are the leaves to line a box or to curl a maiden’s locks? Are the rarities to become more and more rare, and at last fetch prodigious prices? Some unlucky men are able partly to solve these problems in their own lifetime. They are constrained to sell their libraries – an experience full of bitterness, wrath, and disappointment.

Selling books is nearly as bad as losing friends, than which life has no worse sorrow. A book is a friend whose face is constantly changing. If you read it when you are recovering from an illness, and return to it years after, it is changed surely, with the change in yourself. As a man’s tastes and opinions are developed his books put on a different aspect. He hardly knows the “Poems and Ballads” he used to declaim, and cannot recover the enigmatic charm of “Sordello.” Books change like friends, like ourselves, like everything; but they are most piquant in the contrasts they provoke, when the friend who gave them and wrote them is a success, though we laughed at him; a failure, though we believed in him; altered in any case, and estranged from his old self and old days. The vanished past returns when we look at the pages. The vicissitudes of years are printed and packed in a thin octavo, and the shivering ghosts of desire and hope return to their

forbidden home in the heart and fancy. It is as well to have the power of recalling them always at hand, and to be able to take a comprehensive glance at the emotions which were so powerful and full of life, and now are more faded and of less account than the memory of the dreams of childhood. It is because our books are friends that do change, and remind us of change, that we should keep them with us, even at a little inconvenience, and not turn them adrift in the world to find a dusty asylum in cheap bookstalls. We are a part of all that we have read, to parody the saying of Mr. Tennyson's Ulysses, and we owe some respect, and house-room at least, to the early acquaintances who have begun to bore us, and remind us of the vanity of ambition and the weakness of human purpose. Old school and college books even have a reproachful and salutary power of whispering how much a man knew, and at the cost of how much trouble, that he has absolutely forgotten, and is neither the better nor the worse for it. It will be the same in the case of the books he is eager about now; though, to be sure, he will read with less care, and forget with an ease and readiness only to be acquired by practice.

But we were apologising for book-hunting, not because it teaches moral lessons, as "dauncyng" also does, according to Sir Thomas Elyot, in the "Boke called the Gouvernour," but because it affords a kind of sportive excitement. Bookstalls are not the only field of the chase. Book catalogues, which reach the collector through the post, give him all the pleasures of the sport at home. He reads the booksellers' catalogues eagerly, he

marks his chosen sport with pencil, he writes by return of post, or he telegraphs to the vendor. Unfortunately he almost always finds that he has been forestalled, probably by some bookseller's agent. When the catalogue is a French one, it is obvious that Parisians have the pick of the market before our slow letters reach M. Claudin, or M. Labitte. Still the catalogues themselves are a kind of lesson in bibliography. You see from them how prices are ruling, and you can gloat, in fancy, over De Luyne's edition of Molière, 1673, two volumes in red morocco, *doublé* ("Trautz Bauzonnet"), or some other vanity hopelessly out of reach. In their catalogues, MM. Morgand and Fatout print a facsimile of the frontispiece of this very rare edition. The bust of Molière occupies the centre, and portraits of the great actor, as Sganarelle and Mascarille (of the "Précieuses Ridicules"), stand on either side. In the second volume are Molière, and his wife Armande, crowned by the muse Thalia. A catalogue which contains such exact reproductions of rare and authentic portraits, is itself a work of art, and serviceable to the student. When the shop of a bookseller, with a promising catalogue which arrives over night, is not too far distant, bibliophiles have been known to rush to the spot in the grey morning, before the doors open. There are amateurs, however, who prefer to stay comfortably at home, and pity these poor fanatics, shivering in the rain outside a door in Oxford Street or Booksellers' Row. There is a length to which enthusiasm cannot go, and many collectors draw the line at rising early in the morning. But, when we think of the sport of book-

hunting, it is to sales in auction-rooms that the mind naturally turns. Here the rival buyers feel the passion of emulation, and it was in an auction-room that Guibert de Pixérécourt, being outbid, said, in tones of mortal hatred, "I will have the book when your collection is sold after your death." And he kept his word. The fever of gambling is not absent from the auction-room, and people "bid jealous" as they sometimes "ride jealous" in the hunting-field. Yet, the neophyte, if he strolls by chance into a sale-room, will be surprised at the spectacle. The chamber has the look of a rather seedy "hell." The crowd round the auctioneer's box contains many persons so dingy and Semitic, that at Monte Carlo they would be refused admittance; while, in Germany, they would be persecuted by Herr von Treitschke with Christian ardour. Bidding is languid, and valuable books are knocked down for trifling sums. Let the neophyte try his luck, however, and prices will rise wonderfully. The fact is that the sale is a "knock out." The bidders are professionals, in a league to let the volumes go cheap, and to distribute them afterwards among themselves. Thus an amateur can have a good deal of sport by bidding for a book till it reaches its proper value, and by then leaving in the lurch the professionals who combine to "run him up." The amusement has its obvious perils, but the presence of gentlemen in an auction-room is a relief to the auctioneer and to the owner of the books. A bidder must be able to command his temper, both that he may be able to keep his head cool when tempted to bid recklessly, and that he may disregard the not very

carefully concealed sneers of the professionals.

In book-hunting the nature of the quarry varies with the taste of the collector. One man is for bibles, another for ballads. Some pursue plays, others look for play bills. "He was not," says Mr. Hill Burton, speaking of Kirkpatrick Sharpe, "he was not a black-letter man, or a tall copyist, or an uncut man, or a rough-edge man, or an early-English dramatist, or an Elzevirian, or a broadsider, or a pasquinader, or an old brown calf man, or a Grangerite, [1] or a tawny moroccoite, or a gilt topper, or a marbled insider, or an *editio princeps* man." These nicknames briefly dispose into categories a good many species of collectors. But there are plenty of others. You may be a historical-bindings man, and hunt for books that were bound by the great artists of the past and belonged to illustrious collectors. Or you may be a Jametist, and try to gather up the volumes on which Jamet, the friend of Louis Racine, scribbled his cynical "Marginalia." Or you may covet the earliest editions of modern poets – Shelley, Keats, or Tennyson, or even Ebenezer Jones. Or the object of your desires may be the books of the French romanticists, who flourished so freely in 1830. Or, being a person of large fortune and landed estate, you may collect country histories. Again, your heart may be set on the books illustrated by Eisen, Cochin, and Gravelot, or Stothard and Blake, in the last century. Or

---

[1] This is the technical name for people who "illustrate" books with engravings from other works. The practice became popular when Granger published his "Biographical History of England."

you may be so old-fashioned as to care for Aldine classics, and for the books of the Giunta press. In fact, as many as are the species of rare and beautiful books, so many are the species of collectors. There is one sort of men, modest but not unwise in their generations, who buy up the pretty books published in very limited editions by French booksellers, like MM. Lemerre and Jouaust. Already their reprints of Rochefoucauld's first edition, of Beaumarchais, of La Fontaine, of the lyrics attributed to Molière, and other volumes, are exhausted, and fetch high prices in the market. By a singular caprice, the little volumes of Mr. Thackeray's miscellaneous writings, in yellow paper wrappers (when they are first editions), have become objects of desire, and their old modest price is increased twenty fold. It is not always easy to account for these freaks of fashion; but even in book-collecting there are certain definite laws. "Why do you pay a large price for a dingy, old book," outsiders ask, "when a clean modern reprint can be procured for two or three shillings?" To this question the collector has several replies, which he, at least, finds satisfactory. In the first place, early editions, published during a great author's lifetime, and under his supervision, have authentic texts. The changes in them are the changes that Prior or La Bruyère themselves made and approved. You can study, in these old editions, the alterations in their taste, the history of their minds. The case is the same even with contemporary authors. One likes to have Mr. Tennyson's "Poems, chiefly Lyrical" (London: Effingham Wilson, Royal

Exchange, Cornhill, 1830). It is fifty years old, this little book of one hundred and fifty-four pages, this first fruit of a stately tree. In half a century the poet has altered much, and withdrawn much, but already, in 1830, he had found his distinctive note, and his "Mariana" is a masterpiece. "Mariana" is in all the collections, but pieces of which the execution is less certain must be sought only in the old volume of 1830. In the same way "The Strayed Reveller, and other poems, by A." (London: B. Fellowes, Ludgate Street, 1849) contains much that Mr. Matthew Arnold has altered, and this volume, like the suppressed "Empedocles on Etna, and other Poems, by A." (1852), appeals more to the collector than do the new editions which all the world may possess. There are verses, curious in their way, in Mr. Clough's "Ambarvalia" (1849), which you will not find in his posthumous edition, but which "repay perusal." These minutiæ of literary history become infinitely more important in the early editions of the great classical writers, and the book-collector may regard his taste as a kind of handmaid of critical science. The preservation of rare books, and the collection of materials for criticism, are the useful functions, then, of book-collecting. But it is not to be denied that the sentimental side of the pursuit gives it most of its charm. Old books are often literary *relics*, and as dear and sacred to the lover of literature as are relics of another sort to the religious devotee. The amateur likes to see the book in its form as the author knew it. He takes a pious pleasure in the first edition of "Les Précieuses Ridicules," (M.DC.LX.) just as

Molière saw it, when he was fresh in the business of authorship, and wrote "Mon Dieu, qu'un Autheur est neuf, la première fois qu'on l'imprime." All editions published during a great man's life have this attraction, and seem to bring us closer to his spirit. Other volumes are relics, as we shall see later, of some famed collector, and there is a certain piety in the care we give to books once dear to Longepierre, or Harley, or d'Hoym, or Buckle, to Madame de Maintenon, or Walpole, to Grolier, or Askew, or De Thou, or Heber. Such copies should be handed down from worthy owners to owners not unworthy; such servants of literature should never have careless masters. A man may prefer to read for pleasure in a good clear reprint. M. Charpentier's "Montaigne" serves the turn, but it is natural to treasure more "Les Essais de Michel Seigneur de Montaigne," that were printed by Francoise le Febre, of Lyon, in 1595. It is not a beautiful book; the type is small, and rather blunt, but William Drummond of Hawthornden has written on the title-page his name and his device, *Cipresso e Palma*. There are a dozen modern editions of Molière more easily read than the four little volumes of Wetstein (Amsterdam, 1698), but these contain reduced copies of the original illustrations, and here you see Arnolphe and Agnes in their habits as they lived, Molière and Mdlle. de Brie as the public of Paris beheld them more than two hundred years ago. Suckling's "Fragmenta Aurea" contain a good deal of dross, and most of the gold has been gathered into Miscellanies, but the original edition of 1646, "after his own copies," with the

portrait of the jolly cavalier who died *ætatis suae* 28, has its own allurement. Theocritus is more easily read, perhaps, in Wordsworth's edition, or Ziegler's; but that which Zacharias Calliergi printed in Rome (1516), with an excommunication from Leo X. against infringement of copyright, will always be a beautiful and desirable book, especially when bound by Derome. The gist of the pious Prince Conti's strictures on the wickedness of comedy may be read in various literary histories, but it is natural to like his "Traité de la Comedie selon la tradition de l'Eglise, Tirée des Conciles et des saints Pères," published by Lovys Billaine in 1660, especially when the tract is a clean copy, arrayed in a decorous black morocco.

These are but a few common examples, chosen from a meagre little library, a "twopenny treasure-house," but they illustrate, on a minute scale, the nature of the collector's passion, – the character of his innocent pleasures. He occasionally lights on other literary relics of a more personal character than mere first editions. A lucky collector lately bought Shelley's copy of Ossian, with the poet's signature on the title-page, in Booksellers' Row. Another possesses a copy of Foppens's rare edition of Petrarch's "Le Sage Resolu contre l'une et l'autre Fortune," which once belonged to Sir Hudson Lowe, the gaoler of Napoleon, and may have fortified, by its stoical maxims, the soul of one who knew the extremes of either fortune, the captive of St. Helena. But the best example of a book, which is also a relic, is the "Imitatio Christi," which belonged to J. J. Rousseau. Let M.

Tenant de Latour, lately the happy owner of this possession, tell his own story of his treasure: It was in 1827 that M. de Latour was walking on the quai of the Louvre. Among the volumes in a shop, he noticed a shabby little copy of the "Imitatio Christi." M. de Latour, like other bibliophiles, was not in the habit of examining stray copies of this work, except when they were of the Elzevir size, for the Elzevirs published a famous undated copy of the "Imitatio," a book which brings considerable prices. However, by some lucky chance, some Socratic dæmon whispering, may be, in his ear, he picked up the little dingy volume of the last century. It was of a Paris edition, 1751, but what was the name on the fly-leaf. M. de Latour read *à J. J. Rousseau*. There was no mistake about it, the good bibliophile knew Rousseau's handwriting perfectly well; to make still more sure he paid his seventy-five centimes for the book, and walked across the Pont des Arts, to his bookbinder's, where he had a copy of Rousseau's works, with a *facsimile* of his handwriting. As he walked, M. de Latour read in his book, and found notes of Rousseau's on the margin. The *facsimile* proved that the inscription was genuine. The happy de Latour now made for the public office in which he was a functionary, and rushed into the bureau of his friend the Marquis de V. The Marquis, a man of great strength of character, recognised the signature of Rousseau with but little display of emotion. M. de Latour now noticed some withered flowers among the sacred pages; but it was reserved for a friend to discover in the faded

petals Rousseau's favourite flower, the periwinkle. Like a true Frenchman, like Rousseau himself in his younger days, M. de Latour had not recognised the periwinkle when he saw it. That night, so excited was M. de Latour, he never closed an eye! What puzzled him was that he could not remember, in all Rousseau's works, a single allusion to the "Imitatio Christi." Time went on, the old book was not rebound, but kept piously in a case of Russia leather. M. de Latour did not suppose that "dans ce bas monde it fût permis aux joies du bibliophile d'aller encore plus loin." He imagined that the delights of the amateur could only go further, in heaven. It chanced, however, one day that he was turning over the "Oeuvres Inédites" of Rousseau, when he found a letter, in which Jean Jacques, writing in 1763, asked Motiers-Travers to send him the "Imitatio Christi." Now the date 1764 is memorable, in Rousseau's "Confessions," for a burst of sentiment over a periwinkle, the first he had noticed particularly since his residence at *Les Charmettes*, where the flower had been remarked by Madame de Warens. Thus M. Tenant de Latour had recovered the very identical periwinkle, which caused the tear of sensibility to moisten the fine eyes of Jean Jacques Rousseau.

We cannot all be adorers of Rousseau. But M. de Latour was an enthusiast, and this little anecdote of his explains the sentimental side of the bibliophile's pursuit. Yes, it is *sentiment* that makes us feel a lively affection for the books that seem to connect us with great poets and students long ago dead. Their hands grasp ours across the ages. I never see the

first edition of Homer, that monument of typography and of enthusiasm for letters, printed at Florence (1488) at the expense of young Bernardo and Nerio Nerli, and of their friend Giovanni Acciajuoli, but I feel moved to cry with Heyne, "salvete juvenes, nobiles et generosi; *χαίρετέ μοι καὶ ἐν Ἀΐδαο δόμοισι*."

Such is our apology for book-collecting. But the best defence of the taste would be a list of the names of great collectors, a "vision of mighty book-hunters." Let us say nothing of Seth and Noah, for their reputation as amateurs is only based on the authority of the tract *De Bibliothecis Antediluvianis*. The library of Assurbanipal I pass over, for its volumes were made, as Pliny says, of *coctiles laterculi*, of baked tiles, which have been deciphered by the late Mr. George Smith. Philosophers as well as immemorial kings, Pharaohs and Ptolemys, are on our side. It was objected to Plato, by persons answering to the cheap scribblers of to-day, that he, though a sage, gave a hundred minae (£360) for three treatises of Philolaus, while Aristotle paid nearly thrice the sum for a few books that had been in the library of Speusippus. Did not a Latin philosopher go great lengths in a laudable anxiety to purchase an Odyssey "as old as Homer," and what would not Cicero, that great collector, have given for the Ascraean *editio princeps* of Hesiod, scratched on mouldy old plates of lead? Perhaps Dr. Schliemann may find an original edition of the "Iliad" at Orchomenos; but of all early copies none seems so attractive as that engraved on the leaden plates which Pausanias saw at Ascra. Then, in modern times,

what “great allies” has the collector, what brethren in book-hunting? The names are like the catalogue with which Villon fills his “Ballade des Seigneurs du Temps Jadis.” A collector was “le preux Charlemaigne” and our English Alfred. The Kings of Hungary, as Mathias Corvinus; the Kings of France, and their queens, and their mistresses, and their lords, were all amateurs. So was our Henry VIII., and James I., who “wished he could be chained to a shelf in the Bodleian.” The middle age gives us Richard de Bury, among ecclesiastics, and the Renaissance boasts Sir Thomas More, with that “pretty fardle of books, in the small type of Aldus,” which he carried for a freight to the people of Utopia. Men of the world, like Bussy Rabutin, queens like our Elizabeth; popes like Innocent X.; financiers like Colbert (who made the Grand Turk send him Levant morocco for bindings); men of letters like Scott and Southey, Janin and Nodier, and Paul Lacroix; warriors like Junot and Prince Eugène; these are only leaders of companies in the great army of lovers of books, in which it is honourable enough to be a private soldier.

CHAPTER II.
THE LIBRARY

The Library which is to be spoken of in these pages, is all unlike the halls which a Spencer or a Huth fills with treasure beyond price. The age of great libraries has gone by, and where a collector of the old school survives, he is usually a man of enormous wealth, who might, if he pleased, be distinguished in parliament, in society, on the turf itself, or in any of the pursuits where unlimited supplies of money are strictly necessary. The old amateurs, whom La Bruyère was wont to sneer at, were not satisfied unless they possessed many thousands of books. For a collector like Cardinal Mazarin, Naudé bought up the whole stock of many a bookseller, and left great towns as bare of printed paper as if a tornado had passed, and blown the leaves away. In our modern times, as the industrious Bibliophile Jacob, says, the fashion of book-collecting has changed; "from the vast hall that it was, the library of the amateur has shrunk to a closet, to a mere book-case. Nothing but a neat article of furniture is needed now, where a great gallery or a long suite of rooms was once required. The book has become, as it were, a jewel, and is kept in a kind of jewel-case." It is not quantity of pages, nor lofty piles of ordinary binding, nor theological folios and classic quartos, that the modern amateur desires. He is content

with but a few books of distinction and elegance, masterpieces of printing and binding, or relics of famous old collectors, of statesmen, philosophers, beautiful dead ladies; or, again, he buys illustrated books, or first editions of the modern classics. No one, not the Duc d'Aumale, or M. James Rothschild himself, with his 100 books worth £40,000, can possess very many copies of books which are inevitably rare. Thus the adviser who would offer suggestions to the amateur, need scarcely write, like Naudé and the old authorities, about the size and due position of the library. He need hardly warn the builder to make the *salle* face the east, "because the eastern winds, being warm and dry of their nature, greatly temper the air, fortify the senses, make subtle the humours, purify the spirits, preserve a healthy disposition of the whole body, and, to say all in one word, are most wholesome and salubrious." The east wind, like the fashion of book-collecting, has altered in character a good deal since the days when Naudé was librarian to Cardinal Mazarin. One might as well repeat the learned Isidorus his counsels about the panels of green marble (that refreshes the eye), and Boethius his censures on library walls of ivory and glass, as fall back on the ancient ideas of librarians dead and gone.

The amateur, then, is the person we have in our eye, and especially the bibliophile who has but lately been bitten with this pleasant mania of collecting. We would teach him how to arrange and keep his books orderly and in good case, and would tell him what to buy and what to avoid. By the *library*

we do not understand a study where no one goes, and where the master of the house keeps his boots, an assortment of walking-sticks, the "Waverley Novels," "Pearson on the Creed," "Hume's Essays," and a collection of sermons. In, alas! too many English homes, the Library is no more than this, and each generation passes without adding a book, except now and then a Bradshaw or a railway novel, to the collection on the shelves. The success, perhaps, of circulating libraries, or, it may be, the Aryan tendencies of our race, "which does not read, and lives in the open air," have made books the rarest of possessions in many houses. There are relics of the age before circulating libraries, there are fragments of the lettered store of some scholarly great-grandfather, and these, with a few odd numbers of magazines, a few primers and manuals, some sermons and novels, make up the ordinary library of an English household. But the amateur, whom we have in our thoughts, can never be satisfied with these commonplace supplies. He has a taste for books more or less rare, and for books neatly bound; in short, for books, in the fabrication of which *art* has not been absent. He loves to have his study, like Montaigne's, remote from the interruption of servants, wife, and children; a kind of shrine, where he may be at home with himself, with the illustrious dead, and with the genius of literature. The room may look east, west, or south, provided that it be dry, warm, light, and airy. Among the many enemies of books the first great foe is *damp*, and we must describe the necessary precautions to be taken against this peril. We will

suppose that the amateur keeps his ordinary working books, modern tomes, and all that serve him as literary tools, on open shelves. These may reach the roof, if he has books to fill them, and it is only necessary to see that the back of the bookcases are slightly removed from contact with the walls. The more precious and beautifully bound treasures will naturally be stored in a case with closely-fitting glass-doors. [2] The shelves should be lined with velvet or chamois leather, that the delicate edges of the books may not suffer from contact with the wood. A leather lining, fitted to the back of the case, will also help to keep out humidity. Most writers recommend that the bookcases should be made of wood close in the grain, such as well-seasoned oak; or, for smaller tabernacles of literature, of mahogany, satin-wood lined with cedar, ebony, and so forth. These close-grained woods are less easily penetrated by insects, and it is fancied that book-worms dislike the aromatic scents of cedar, sandal wood, and Russia leather. There was once a bibliophile who said that a man could only love one book at a time, and the darling of the moment he used to carry about in a charming leather case. Others, men of few books, preserve them in long boxes with glass fronts, which may be removed from place to place as readily as the

---

[2] Mr. William Blades, in his "Enemies of Books" (Trübner, 1880), decries glass-doors, – "the absence of ventilation will assist the formation of mould." But M. Rouveyre bids us open the doors on sunny days, that the air may be renewed, and, close them in the evening hours, lest moths should enter and lay their eggs among the treasures. And, with all deference to Mr. Blades, glass-doors do seem to be useful in excluding dust.

household gods of Laban. But the amateur who not only worships but reads books, needs larger receptacles; and in the open oak cases for modern authors, and for books with common modern papers and bindings, in the closed *armoire* for books of rarity and price, he will find, we think, the most useful mode of arranging his treasures. His shelves will decline in height from the lowest, where huge folios stand at case, to the top ranges, while Elzevirs repose on a level with the eye. It is well that each upper shelf should have a leather fringe to keep the dust away.

As to the shape of the bookcases, and the furniture, and ornaments of the library, every amateur will please himself. Perhaps the satin-wood or mahogany tabernacles of rare books are best made after the model of what furniture-dealers indifferently call the "Queen Anne" or the "Chippendale" style. There is a pleasant quaintness in the carved architectural ornaments of the top, and the inlaid flowers of marquetry go well with the pretty florid editions of the last century, the books that were illustrated by Stothard and Gravelot. Ebony suits theological tomes very well, especially when they are bound in white vellum. As to furniture, people who can afford it will imitate the arrangements of Lucullus, in Mr. Hill Burton's charming volume "The Book-hunter" (Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1862). – "Everything is of perfect finish, – the mahogany-railed gallery, the tiny ladders, the broad winged lecterns, with leathern cushions on the edges to keep the wood from grazing the rich bindings, the books themselves, each shelf uniform with its

facings, or rather backings, like well-dressed lines at a review." The late Sir William Stirling-Maxwell, a famous bibliophile, invented a very nice library chair. It is most comfortable to sit on; and, as the top of the back is broad and flat, it can be used as a ladder of two high steps, when one wants to reach a book on a lofty shelf. A kind of square revolving bookcase, an American invention, manufactured by Messrs. Trübner, is useful to the working man of letters. Made in oak, stained green, it is not unsightly. As to ornaments, every man to his taste. You may have a "pallid bust of Pallas" above your classical collection, or fill the niches in a shrine of old French light literature, pastoral and comedy, with delicate shepherdesses in Chelsea china. On such matters a modest writer, like Mr. Jingle when Mr. Pickwick ordered dinner, "will not presume to dictate."

Next to damp, dust and dirt are the chief enemies of books. At short intervals, books and shelves ought to be dusted by the amateur himself. Even Dr. Johnson, who was careless of his person, and of volumes lent to him, was careful about the cleanliness of his own books. Boswell found him one day with big gloves on his hands beating the dust out of his library, as was his custom. There is nothing so hideous as a dirty thumb-mark on a white page. These marks are commonly made, not because the reader has unwashed hands, but because the dust which settles on the top edge of books falls in, and is smudged when they are opened. Gilt-top edges should be smoothed with a handkerchief, and a small brush should be kept for brushing the

tops of books with rough edges, before they are opened. But it were well that all books had the top edge gilt. There is no better preservative against dust. Dust not only dirties books, it seems to supply what Mr. Spencer would call a fitting environment for book-worms. The works of book-worms speak for themselves, and are manifest to all. How many a rare and valuable volume is spoiled by neat round holes drilled through cover and leaves! But as to the nature of your worm, authorities differ greatly. The ancients knew this plague, of which Lucian speaks. Mr. Blades mentions a white book-worm, slain by the librarian of the Bodleian. In Byzantium the black sort prevailed. Evenus, the grammarian, wrote an epigram against the black book-worm ("Anthol. Pal.," ix. 251): —

> Pest of the Muses, devourer of pages, in crannies that lurkest,
> Fruits of the Muses to taint, labour of learning to spoil;
> Wherefore, oh black-fleshed worm! wert thou born for the evil thou workest?
> Wherefore thine own foul form shap'st thou with envious toil?

The learned Mentzelius says he hath heard the book-worm crow like a cock unto his mate, and "I knew not," says he, "whether some local fowl was clamouring or whether there was but a beating in mine ears. Even at that moment, all uncertain as I was, I perceived, in the paper whereon I was writing, a little insect that ceased not to carol like very chanticleer, until, taking a magnifying glass, I assiduously observed him. He is about the

bigness of a mite, and carries a grey crest, and the head low, bowed over the bosom; as to his crowing noise, it comes of his clashing his wings against each other with an incessant din." Thus far Mentzelius, and more to the same purpose, as may be read in the "Memoirs of famous Foreign Academies" (Dijon, 1755–59, 13 vol. in quarto). But, in our times, the learned Mr. Blades having a desire to exhibit book-worms in the body to the Caxtonians at the Caxton celebration, could find few men that had so much as seen a book-worm, much less heard him utter his native wood-notes wild. Yet, in his "Enemies of Books," he describes some rare encounters with the worm. Dirty books, damp books, dusty books, and books that the owner never opens, are most exposed to the enemy; and "the worm, the proud worm, is the conqueror still," as a didactic poet sings, in an ode on man's mortality. As we have quoted Mentzelius, it may not be amiss to give D'Alembert's theory of book-worms: "I believe," he says, "that a little beetle lays her eggs in books in August, thence is hatched a mite, like the cheese-mite, which devours books merely because it is compelled to gnaw its way out into the air." Book-worms like the paste which binders employ, but D'Alembert adds that they cannot endure absinthe. Mr. Blades finds too that they disdain to devour our adulterate modern paper.

"Say, shall I sing of rats," asked Grainger, when reading to Johnson his epic, the "Sugar-cane." "No," said the Doctor; and though rats are the foe of the bibliophile, at least as much as

of the sugar-planter, we do not propose to sing of them. M. Fertiault has done so already in “Les Sonnets d’un Bibliophile,” where the reader must be pleased with the beautiful etchings of rats devouring an illuminated MS., and battening on morocco bindings stamped with the bees of De Thou. It is unnecessary and it would be undignified, to give hints on rat-catching, but the amateur must not forget that these animals have a passion for bindings.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, купив полную легальную версию на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.