

**HINTS FOR HOME
READING: A SERIES
OF CHAPTERS ON
BOOKS AND THEIR USE**

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Hints for Home Reading: A Series of Chapters on Books and Their Use by Lyman Abbott

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LYMAN ABBOTT

**HINTS FOR HOME
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HINTS
FOR
HOME READING

A SERIES OF CHAPTERS ON BOOKS AND THEIR USE

BY
CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER, M. F. SWEETSER, F. B. PERKINS, CYRUS
HAMLIN, HAMILTON W. MABIE, EDWARD EVERETT HALE,
JOSEPH COOK, HENRY WARD BEECHER AND
LYMAN ABBOTT

Edited with an Introduction by

LYMAN ABBOTT

WITH WHICH IS INCLUDED A NEW AND REVISED EDITION OF

SUGGESTIONS FOR LIBRARIES

BY GEORGE PALMER PUTNAM

TOGETHER WITH PRICED LISTS OF SUGGESTED SELECTIONS OF 500, 1,000 AND 2,000 VOLUMES
OF THE MOST DESIRABLE AND IMPORTANT BOOKS

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK LONDON
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INTRODUCTION.

THE home ought no more to be without a library than without a dining room and kitchen. If you have but one room, and it is lighted by the great wood fire in the flaming fireplace, as Abraham Lincoln's was, do as Abraham Lincoln did : pick out one corner of your fireplace for a library, and use it. Every man ought to provide for the brain as well as for the stomach.

This does not require capital ; there are now cheap editions of the best books ; it only requires time and forecast. We write in a private library, and a fairly good one for working purposes, of three thousand and odd volumes ; we began it twenty years ago, on a salary of \$1,000 a year, with five books—a commentary in four volumes and a dictionary. The best libraries are not made ; they grow.

In forming a library, if your means are small, do not buy what you can beg or borrow. Depend, as Joseph Cook does,

as many of the greatest authors have done, on public libraries—the District Library, the Lyceum, the Book Club, the Circulating Library—or on more fortunate friends. Buy only what you cannot borrow.

At first buy only books that you want immediately to read. Do not be deluded into buying books because they are classics, or cheap, or that you may get rid of an agent. One book read is worth a dozen books looked at. No book is possessed till it is read.

Reference books constitute an exception, and an important exception, to this rule. These are the foundations of a good library. The essential reference books are Webster's Dictionary—for the family use Webster is incomparably the best—a good atlas and a cyclopædia. Any school atlas will do (and a second-hand one can be had for almost nothing), though, if you are able to purchase it, a good atlas is much better; and best of all is a wise selection of atlases. There is no best cyclopædia; your choice must depend upon your resources, pecuniary and mental.

In purchasing books, exercise a choice in editions. The lowest priced books are not always the cheapest. Buy books of transient interest or minor importance—all novels, for example, and current books of travel—in cheap forms. On the other hand, histories, classics of all sorts, and generally all

permanent books, should be bought in good binding and good type. It takes well-seasoned lumber to make a good family library.

Have a place for your library. Respectable hanging-shelves can be bought in our cities and towns for a dollar and upward. A dollar spent in pine lumber, and a little mechanical skill, will make a larger and better one. Varnished pine is handsome enough for any parlor. A place for books will cry to be filled till it gets its prayer answered. Book-shelves preserve books. One shelf of books gathered together is a better library than twice the number scattered from attic to cellar.

Finally, a taste for reading is an essential pre-requisite to a useful library. A well is of no use if you never draw water from it. At the same time a good library in the household, accessible to all, from baby to grandmother, is one of the best influences with which to develop a taste for reading. Have no books so fine that they cannot be used. Have few or none under lock and key. Books were made for readers, not readers for books.

These articles, contributed by different writers, out of their own wide observation and life experience, were originally sought for the columns of *The Christian Union*, in the hope that they would conduce to the development of family libraries