



BY
THE VERY
REV. F. W. FARRAR,
D.D., F.R.S.,
Dean of Canterbury.

NOT be certain that these papers will be read by working men; but if they are, let me assure them that, whether they attach any suggestions or not, I am at any rate most sincerely believe and recommend. I are long past when a good book was the "luxuries"; when the possession even of a book was a bliss which could only be hoped for by the great nobles and religious communities; when a farmer would gladly have given a load of hay for a few pages of the Gospel of St. John in which he could understand. Two-and-a-half centuries ago the Preacher wrote "that of making books there is no end"; and we read in the Book of Daniel that "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." If that was true in days of old, how much more true is it now! We have reached a time when, in England alone, no less than a million books are published for every single day in the year. Books of priceless moral, spiritual, and intellectual value can be obtained for a few

pence. The multiplication of books is not an un-
desirable thing. Even the merest "Books of the Day"
which have a most ephemeral existence—
which contain information or other elements of
value. Still, it is most desirable that the incessant
outpouring of literature which has no permanent value
should not avert us—as it does avert millions—from
the constant and lifelong familiarity with works which are
of eternal importance. A man may occupy himself
every day with nothing but newspapers, and
yet deliberately revels in what is worst in their
contents. He may gain something; but he will undergo an
incalculable loss if such idle reading stands in the
way of his holding communion with the noblest and
truest minds. Therefore, in making suggestions for
the Working Man's Bookshelf, I shall mention
few books, yet such as cannot but help every
man to studies them to become a wiser and a better
man. Some of the greatest of mankind have been
fed by but few books. Wordsworth, in one of his
poems, tells us how often he returned to *Othello* and
Shakespeare's *Farie Queene*. "Dreams, books," he

"are both a world; and Books we know
Are a substantial world both pure and good:
Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness will grow.
There find I personal themes, a plenteous store,
Matter wherein right voluble I am,
To which I listen with a ready ear;
Two shall be named pre-eminently dear,—
The gentle Lady married to the Moor,
And heavenly Una with her milk-white Lamb."

More than one eminent man has been described
as *homo unius libri*—"a man of a single book."

1. Here, then, first of all, I would recommend every
working man to acquire, and, in every sense of the
word, to *possess*, a thoroughly good Bible. If he
has no other book, this alone may be to him a
treasure to his family an inexhaustible and an inestimable
treasure worth all others. For whatever change may
have been wrought by criticism in our estimate of the
Bible, the fact remains, and must always remain, that
it is, in a quite unique sense, "The Book of God."
The Book which, more than any other and than
all others put together, contains what is most necessary
for us to know about our own being, our relations
to our fellow men and our duty to God; and about the
inmost meaning of this mysterious and in general
measure unintelligible world. "I have but one Book,"
said the poet Collins, in the poverty of his declining
years, "but that is the best." "Give me the Bible,"
said Sir Walter Scott on his deathbed. "What
book?" asked his son-in-law Lockhart. "The Bible,"
answered Sir Walter; "the Bible: there is but one."

And in spite of the silly and superficial ecclesiastical
prejudices with which the Revised Version has been
received—prejudices reverberated by many of the
loudest, most popular, and most ignorant voices of
the day—I would recommend working men to buy and to study
a good copy of the *Revised Version*. It is quite true
that, for us of this generation, the phrases of the
Authorized Version "speak to the ear in a manner
which cannot be forgotten," and we recur to them

"As for some dear familiar strain
Untired we ask and ask again,
Ever in its familiar store
Finding new depths unheard before."