

Books and Bindings.

ON my study shelves they stand,
Well known all to eye and hand,
Bound in gorgeous cloth of gold,
In morocco rich and old,
Some in paper, plain and cheap,
Some in muslin, calf, and sheep ;
Volumes great and volumes small
Ranged along my study wall.
But their contents are past finding
By their size or by the binding.

There is one with gold a gleam,
Like the sangreal in a dream,
Back and boards in every part
Triumph of the binder's art ;
Costing more, 'tis well believed,
Than the author e'er received.
But its contents? Idle tales,
Flappings of a shallop's sails !
In the treasury of learning
Scarcely worth a penny's turning.

Here's a tome in paper plain,
Soiled and torn and marred with stain,
Cowering from each statelier book
In the darkest, dustiest nook.
Take it down, and lo ! each page
Breathes the wisdom of a sage !
Weighed a thousand times in gold,
Half its worth would not be told,
For all the truth of ancient story
Crowns each line with deathless glory.

On my study shelves they stand ;
But my study walls expand,
As mind's pinions are unfurled,
Till they compass all the world.
Endless files go marching by,
Men of lowly rank and high,
Some in broadcloth, gem-adorned,
Some in homespun, fortune-scorned ;
But God's scales that all are weighed in
Heed not what each man's arrayed in.

—WILLIS FLETCHER JOHNSON, *in Book-Mart.*