A bookman's budget

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Good-bye, my Book. To other eyes,
   With equal mind, I now address you,
Since in Dame Fortune's lap it lies
   Either to ban you or to bless you.

You have been long a 'care not light':
   If those for whom you were intended
Refuse to read your page aright,
   You must not therefore feel offended.

This is a Game we play, my Book:
   Sometimes one scores, sometimes one misses,
And though the lot for which we look
   Be neither bread-and-cheese nor kisses,

The point is: Was your purpose good?
   Your meaning plain to comprehension?
Have you successfully withstood
   All tedium, tattle, spite, pretension?

Have you contrived no verbal haze
   To hide your poverty of matter?
Have you, unjustly, failed to praise,
   Or have you, feebly, stooped to flatter?

You won't be free from fault, I know.
   None would believe me if I said it.
But still—you did your best, and so,
   That should be counted to your credit.

A. D.
HOW SAD IS LIFE WITHOUT A FRIEND!

From a copperplate by William Blake in vol. III of Salzmann's 'Elements of Morality', 1791
A BOOKMAN'S BUDGET

COMPOSED AND COMPILED BY

AUSTIN DOBSON

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TO

ARTHUR WAUGH

1890–1917

Time marks our days with white and black
In his Perennial Almanack;
But there's one day I don't forget,
And that's the day when first we met.
PREFACE

DESPITE the pitfalls of a Preface, a few words are required to explain the origin and growth of this desultory miscellany. During an enforced suspension of plans and projects, I found it expedient to take up some temporary occupation. Casting about for the needful initial suggestion, I happened on an old note-book in which, for several years, it had been my practice to jot down extracts from my reading which had either appealed to me personally or had influenced my writing. These I began to transcribe; and speedily found them multiply under my pen. Then, in quest of further material, I went on to forage among certain forgotten causersies I had once contributed to a now-extinct periodical, adding, from time to time, divers stray copies of bookish verses not yet comprised in any collection of my poems. Presently an encouraging friend suggested that I might 'enliven my character' by including a few original adversaria on things in general. This I at once essayed to do; and thus came gradually to intersperse sundry detached passages from my printed prose—passages which, to my over-heated imagination, appeared to invite an attention they had not hitherto obtained. The outcome of my labours is the present compilation. As will be apparent, it is mainly literary. There
is no desire to compete with such stimulating aids to conversation as the historic Book of Riddles which Master Slender lent to Alice Shortcake, 'a fortnight before Michaelmas'; still less is there any unsound ambition to rival that ruthless retailer of bons mots whom Pascal classifies as 'mauvais caractère'. My volume is no more than it professes to be, namely, the disconnected and, possibly, contradictory commonplace-book of a journeyman of letters. My hope is that it may attract the notice of some whose tastes are akin to my own. If, by good fortune, it should reach a wider audience; so much the better.

AUSTIN DOBSON.

Ealing,
April, 1917.