Mr. Edmundson's interest in literature, of course, stretches far beyond matters of technique. There are two rooms at 3333 Grand Avenue devoted especially to the student. The smaller is his study upstairs, given over to reading, correspondence, investigation, bulletins, periodicals, inquiries, quotations, casual delving into books of reference, and the like. The tables and shelves are well filled with books and pamphlets and current material, all without disorder, however, for in every activity he has found real delight in order and system.

To this room come first the notable books of the day which he reads with avidity — the Ludwig biographies of Bismarck, Napoleon, and the Kaiser, Snyder's new volume on Burns, Jeans's *The Universe Around Us* (which Edmundson pronounces "a devastating book"), Warshow's *Story of Wall Street,* Smith's *John Jacob Astor,* Van Loon's Rembrandt, and others. His interest, which is omnivorous, ranges from the classics to the publications strictly down to date. Fortunately his sight has been such that steady reading has been possible, a matter of immeasurable mo-

ment and especially to one largely dependent upon books to consume the lengthening years.

Downstairs is the fine library where is to be found a rich collection of the great books of the last eighty years or more. The room is large, thirty-two feet by sixteen, with cases of books on both sides and one end. At the other end is a large table with dictionaries. On the north side also is a very large fireplace, the fire-back of which is a charioteer and horses, from Ben Hur, in relief in metal, while above the mantel is a large plaster model showing a facade of the Coliseum. In those cases, with their glass fronts, is one of the finest and best selected private collections of books to be found in the State. Also, on the north wall near the fireplace is the reference desk with its high stool and shaded lamp, its cases on both sides filled with such works as the *Age of Chivalry* and *Age of Fable* by Bulfinch, Harper's *Encyclopedia of United States History,* Thomas's *Pronouncing Dictionary of Biography and Mythology,* Appleton's *Cyclopedia of American Biography,* the annual reports of the Adjutant General of the State of Iowa during the Civil War, the *Encyclopedia Americana,* Lippincott's *New Gazetteer of the World,* a multitude of other reference publications, and a number of fine atlases.

Mr. Edmundson has long been a passionate

student of Lincoln. He has read and owns among others the following authorities: Ward H. Lamon's Lincoln (he knew Lamon at Carlsbad years ago), Barton, Holland, Tarbell, Stevenson, Laughlin (*Death of Lincoln*), Herndon, Raymond, Cathey (*Genesis of Lincoln*), Dittenhoefer (*How We Elected Lincoln*), *In Lincoln's Chair, The Perfect Tribute,* Drinkwater's play, Sumner (*Lincoln as a Man Among Men*), *Abraham Lincoln A New Portrait* by Hertz, and, of course, the Debates. His volume of the latter is all underscored and full of marginal markings. He is of the opinion that the greatness of Lincoln's mind was never more powerfully portrayed than in the debates with Douglas.

The length of his life has given opportunity to gather notable books of popular writers in particular periods, such as Ik Marvel, Artemis Ward, Petroleum V. Nasby, Joe Miller's *Jest Book, Prue and I* by Curtis, Josh Billings, Josiah Allen's Wife, Sut Lovingood, Mrs. Partington, Widow Bedott, Fanny Fern, and, of course, all the old favorites — Hawthorne, Dickens, Scott.

Though an adherent of no formal creed or organization, he has a host of books on the religions of the world, their conflicts with science, and the growth of liberal thought. To show the breadth of his interest in this theme, a survey of his library

shelves reveals volumes on the history of Christianity, immortality, Mohammedism, spiritualism, supernatural phenomena, faith, comparative religion, and interpretations of the Bible. Philosophers as diverse as Paine and Nietzsche are represented. And of course there are Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, Spencer, Hegel, Draper, and others.

He is passionately devoted to the great poets and quotes at length from memory. A favorite study since youth is Poe, on which subject he is an authority. His library contains several editions of Poe's works, as well as the best which has been written about that literary genius. Many parts of "The Haunted Palace" are stamped on his memory, notably those lines rich in their initial imagery yet carrying their note of nostalgia as they close:

> Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
> On its roof did float and flow
> (This — all this — was in the olden
> Time long ago).

In "The Valley of Unrest" he regrets the fancy that led Poe to omit in publication these lines with which the poem began as first written:

> Far away — far away —
> Far away — as far at least
> Lies that valley as the day
> Down within the golden east —
> All things lovely — are not they
> Far away — far away?

Obviously the words "at least" are far from poetical but the haunting appeal of the remainder one would say might carry even that burden. For "Israfel", "Annabel Lee", "Dreams", "Lenore", "The Coliseum", "Ulalume", "The Raven", "For Annie", his ninety-four years have in no degree weakened their mystical charm. For three quarters of a century the brilliant genius and tragic career of Poe have held a fascination for Edmundson notwithstanding his frequent comment, "I wish he had been a more admirable character" — a kind of poignant regret such as a father might feel for the waywardness of a gifted son. A new book on Poe sets his blood to tingling.

He faces life and death with a superb spirit. Clear-eyed and unafraid, and aware of the mystery at every turn, he has found no time for cynicism or bitterness. Tolerant, notable to-day and always for his response to the obligation to share in the social service of his time, keenly alive to the major problems confronting the world and with definite convictions regarding their solution, his life has been ruled by the wise philosophy of a great soul. He sometimes quotes these words which, as I recollect it, are from the Chinese: "When we come into the world we cry while everyone laughs. Let us so live that when we die, everyone will cry, while we laugh."

He has a prodigious memory stored with passages that are immortal. It is with a smile that he quotes from Coleridge:

> When I was young? Ah, woful when!
> Ah for the change since now and then!

Or this:

> 'Tis the month before the month of May
> And Spring comes slowly up this way.

He draws from Keats many a thrilling passage, as that of the sea:

> It keeps eternal whisperings around
> Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell
> Gluts twice ten thousand caverns.

Or that line from the "Ode to a Grecian Urn":

> Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time.

Shelley is another favorite, to whom his memory returns again and again.

> How wonderful is death, death and his brother, sleep!

The verses "To a Skylark" he has made his own and his memory is haunted by the lines at Shelley's grave, from *The Tempest*:

> Nothing of him that doth fade,
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange.

Looking about the world to-day he recalls with longing Shelley's lines in "Queen Mab":

And when reason's voice,
Loud as the voice of nature, shall have waked
The nations; and mankind perceive that vice
Is discord, war, and misery; that virtue
Is peace, and happiness and harmony.

One Sunday afternoon I sat in Mr. Edmundson's library with him and Major Byers — both then aged ninety-two years. I had received and read to them a letter from Constantinople. As I mentioned the place from which it came, Edmundson interrupted with Byron's lines:

Though I fly to Istambol,
Athens holds my heart and soul.

And Byers, the poet, not to be outdone, leaned back in his chair and, as if at ninety-two years to justify his Muse, repeated these wonderful lines by Austin Dobson:

All passes. Art alone
Enduring stays to us;
The Bust outlasts the throne, —
The Coin, Tiberius;
Even the Gods must go;
Only the lofty Rhyme
Not countless years o'erthrow, —
Not long array of time.

Long before his first trip abroad, certain lines from the German kept ringing in his ears, inscribed, it was said, on the wall of a chapel in the

Old World. The day came when he transcribed from the walls of the little chapel in the churchyard at St. Gilgen, Austrian Tyrol, these lines of unknown origin, translated by Longfellow:

Look not mournfully into the Past. It comes not back again. Wisely improve the Present. It is thine. Go forth to meet the shadowy Future, without fear, and with a manly heart.

He sympathizes with Schiller's famous statement, "The Gods themselves are powerless against stupidity".

The sea is a theme to which he turns often as the one phase of nature untouched by time and which man can not render commonplace. On this he quotes Byron's lovely lines:

Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow
Such as creation's dawn beheld thou rollest now.

And the lines of the same poet, who so loved the sea:

I wantoned with thy breakers . . .
And trusted to thy billows far and near,
And laid my hand upon thy mane, — as I do here.

There is space here to give but a hint of the intensity of the appeal to his spirit made by the imperishable gems of literature that the world has come to revere. The commanding fact with respect to the subject of this sketch is the quality of

eternal youth that marks the mind and spirit. His intellectual enthusiasms are not one whit dulled or subdued by the gathering years. To a new book or poem, or even one line, instinct with the spark of genius, he responds literally with the eagerness of youth — touched at times with a joy so keen and poignant as to bring tears from fountains that almost a century has not made dry.

Physically he has always been delicate, but obviously there was in his inheritance a constitutional tenacity of life of unusual strength. At ninety-four, though of course not in active business now for over a quarter of a century, he has an office and a desk which in seasonable weather he visits regularly. If limbs refuse to hurry as in the past, or ears to catch the voice as easily as once, the gathering years have taken no toll of spirit or interest or grasp in his contact with the world of to-day — whether it be the world of literature or that of current problems and events. With great capacity as a business man has been from the beginning an equal sense of social obligation — a willingness, universally recognized, to do his full share in lifting the burden from lives less fortunate.

How rich a life, how full of lessons to us all, how truly American! The people of Iowa can not fail to feel a glowing pride in this splendid

native Iowan, in whose ninety-four years shine so resplendently honor, industry, human sympathy, material success, service to society, and a fervent response to the intellectual triumphs of the great minds of all time.

Of the famous trio mentioned in the earlier part of this sketch, "Jim, Marsh, and John", the last named has passed on. But Jim and Marsh remain, the latter reaching his ninety-fourth milestone exactly to a day four months before Jim reached his. I will close with the lines of Major Byers to his old pal on the occasion of the last anniversary of the birthday of Mr. Edmundson.

To Jim at Ninety-Four

Well Jim, across the desert
A health to you and me.
And health to all the old friends
Wherever they may be.

How well we two have weathered
The change of many a moon —
Not all was bleak December,
Not all was rosy June.

Life's but a game, we've played it
The best that we knew how;
Perhaps 'twas worth the candle,
I sometimes doubt it now.

Life's but a game, we've played it
  These four and ninety years,
Sometimes with fun and laughter,
  Sometimes with bitter tears.

So now upon the bleachers
  We sit and watch the game,
Whoever gains or loses
  To us 'tis much the same.

But midst the wild hurrahing
  And music of the band,
As in the days now vanished
  Again I take your hand.

Good luck, Jim, and good wishes
  Whate'er the fates may be —
One glass to those who love us,
  And one to you and me.

— Marsh

JAMES B. WEAVER