

Linwood Library Gazette

"Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body." —Steele.

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THE LOVE OF READING

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I have been asked to write something for the first birthday number of this little magazine, and it has been suggested to me that I should take as my subject the desirability of patrons of the Library giving more support to the non-fiction section.

I comply with the suggestion made to me. And yet I am not very hopeful of being able to influence people to depart from their established reading habits. I do not dogmatize about the matter, but I have an idea that the only chance of so influencing people is to "get them young." I have read many brilliant exhortations on the subjects of "how to read," "the pleasure of reading," and so forth, but that was the end of it. I have no recollection of ever having applied those excellent maxims put forth for the instruction of the public. I have just read what I wanted to read, when, where, and how I liked. I have little right, therefore, to moralise on the subject, and, apart from official and necessary things, I have read for my own pleasure, always suiting the mood of the moment.

It just happens, however, that my tastes run to the heavier side of literature. Normally, I do several hours a day of serious reading—but only because I like it. And let me make another shocking confession—most of my reading is done in bed. An hour and a half in the early morning, and another hour and a half in the late hours of the night—except on

Sundays, when a comfortable arm-chair is requisitioned. I assume the reader's displeasure, and bow my head in silent submission to his (or more probably "her") reproach. But bad habits die hard. In that respect I think I am beyond redemption. But it is a very pleasant bad habit, and I have no other defence to offer.

I wish that I could claim that my attraction to serious literature was the product of some noble and self-sacrificing motive of public service and self-improvement. Alas! It was nothing of the kind. It happened this way. In the days of my early boyhood I had a flair for disputation on a wide range of subjects. In most of these encounters I had a complacent feeling of success and triumph. But there came a time when my complacency was rudely shattered by another lad of my own age, who seemed to know more about everything than I did. To retrieve my lost laurels, I commenced to read. Somehow or other, I secured the funds necessary to enable me to pay a library subscription. I had a lady relative, who was a school teacher, and I borrowed books from her. And if she should happen to read these lines she will say, "Yes, you scamp; you never returned them."

But the love of reading grew and became the ruling passion. It was a parental task of vast magnitude to get me to leave my books at night and go to bed. There came sad days like those we have been passing through in recent years, when the fiends of depression and unemployment were striking at the homes and lives of the people, and to assist the family income I voluntarily went out and delivered newspapers in the morning, and sold them after school, in the streets, till a late hour each evening. But not even the weariness