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Linwood Library Gazette

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Vol. 2 No. 8



MAY-JUNE 1937

A NOTE ON THE MOST URGENT POLICY PROBLEM OF THE SMALL LIBRARY

By SYDNEY C. ALLEN, M.D., F.R.C.S.
Member of Library Committee, New Plymouth

When asked by my good friends Mr Brettell and Mr Wiltshire to contribute a short article to the Linwood Library Gazette, I readily consented to do so on personal grounds and because of my admiration of the work that is being done at the Linwood Library. But when I attempt to put my thoughts on paper, I realise that I have neither the knowledge nor the experience to speak with authority on library affairs. From experience gained at New Plymouth as member of a smaller library committee on the one hand, and on the other as delegate to library conferences where one meets the representatives of the large libraries, I have come to realise that great differences exist in the policy problems confronting the directorate of the two categories of libraries.

The common problem of New Plymouth and Linwood is to adapt our methods and come into the scheme of a central library with an organisation so different from our own. Our foundation and development has hitherto been individualistic. Linwood is still practically supported by the subscriptions of its members. Our New Plymouth library started in 1848 on a subscription basis, and after many bitter struggles and vicissitudes, it still relies for the greater part of its sustenance on subscription. But particularly in later years, the local body has tended to identi-

fy itself with the library by granting increasing financial assistance by way of subsidy. Such a position, according to the ideas of modern librarians, is eminently unsatisfactory. It arose from, and is perpetuated by two factors: the desire of subscribers to keep their individuality and the unwillingness of local bodies to accept the financing of an essential public service so long as any group of enthusiastic readers display their willingness to carry on their own shoulders this public utility. In this cynical neglect of their responsibility, they can rely on the support of the non-literary rate payer who is unaware of what he is missing in not having an adequate supply of good reading matter.

The individualistic nature of the small library is thus both its weakness and its strength. While it is absolutely true that nearly all libraries in New Zealand owe their existence to individual effort, yet they are all faced with the inevitable necessity of linking up with larger and stronger units to form a National Dominion-wide Library with headquarters at Wellington.

We smaller libraries will have to make a reorientation of our ideas. Although we may seem to be on the point of being swamped by our larger neighbours, and may have to give up ideas which appear to us to be very important, I am convinced that we will gain more than we lose by a system of co-operation.

Under the compulsion of the traditional conceptions of library service it is of course impossible, from the nature of the

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financial structure on which the Linwood Library is built, to alter the existing foundations, but the conditions of library service are undergoing a radical change. Yet, despite an altered viewpoint, the main spring of a successful library will ever rest on the enthusiastic work of a few, and never will individual effort be at a discount. A unit in a larger scheme will, I think, retain its individuality in as marked a degree as at present obtains, and it will operate with the additional advantage of a wider field for its activities. The committees of smaller libraries should cultivate a bias in the direction favourable to co-operation with kindred institutions in anticipation of changes which cannot be long delayed. Although I am ignorant of local conditions at Christchurch, the proposed transfer of control of the Christchurch Public Library from Canterbury College to the City Council may present the opportunity for Linwood to co-operate in the distribution of books to the citizens of Christchurch. If some measure of co-operation has been already arranged the Linwood Library can congratulate itself on having progressed in the right direction and if nothing has been mooted, I would in all earnestness suggest that the Linwood Library should make an attempt to arrange some scheme of co-operation with the city library. From this distance, there does not appear to be any insuperable obstacle to such an arrangement provided that the unique individuality of the Linwood Library is preserved, and that the service which you have hitherto given to your subscribers so competently and satisfactorily be maintained and provided that the experience of the present directorate be available to conduct the library with the same high standard of idealism and enthusiasm as has brought it to the praiseworthy position it occupies among the libraries of New Zealand.

NEW NOVELS

New Moon Through a Window by Maysie Greig is a novel based on the old superstition that to see the new moon through glass brings bad luck and certainly the principal characters, Leila and Jerry, have their full measure of troubles from having done this at the very commencement of their honeymoon. There is a car smash in which Leila is crippled; money runs short and Jerry has no job and despite all their

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endeavours life seems utterly hopeless. At this juncture chance brings Susan Lafrey, a spoilt out lovely and wilful young lady, who has everything she wants except Jerry with whom she has fallen in love. The two women make a fantastic bargain which with its results will intrigue the reader; the characters bring good portraits of feeling people who love and hate as normal people do. Anticipation, humour, pathos and drama make it one of the most appealing of this author's books.

A Minor Operation by J. J. Connington. The author is well known for his clever detective mystery stories and this one is in no way behind his others. Early one morning the police found the house occupied by Mrs Lethbridge apparently ransacked, blood on the floor of one room and Mrs Lethbridge herself had disappeared and no trace of a large sum of money, which investigations showed had been in her possession, could be found. Enquiries also showed that she was living under an assumed name and that two of her relatives had been imprisoned for fraud. In searching the premises the inspector found a curious little machine which was unknown to him but which later proved a clue from which Sir Clinton Driffeld and his friend Wendover find a second trail. A motor accident proves a third trail and from the converging evidence of these three lines they solve the mystery.

The Man of a Ghost by P. C. Wren. This popular author has here given us another thriller which will claim the attention of his readers. The theme is good although somewhat improbable and deals with heroics on a scale more incredible than impressive.

Captain Wendover is in charge of a fort which he heroically defends against heavy odds until relief arrives. At the very moment the fort is relieved, however, this gallant officer is found inexplicably drunk and incapable of duty with disastrous results to his reputation. By a ruse a confession which clears Wendover is obtained from Captain Breckinge and some treacherous sepoys. Breckinge dies to save Wendover's life, the sepoys die performing deeds of devotional valour and Wendover refuses to use the confession fearing that his own rehabilitation would damage Breckinge's memory.

**EXTRACT FROM THE N.Z. LIBRARY
ASSOCIATION BULLETIN FOR APRIL**

Just too late to be read at the recent Conference, arrived a letter from Mr Ralph Munn, one of the Association's first Life Members, one of the surveyors and compilers of the Munn-Barr Report, containing these heartening words:—"Progress may seem slow to those of you who are at the scene; from my detached viewpoint I can see a healthy development in public opinion as evidenced in the first municipal grant at Christchurch in material improvement as shown by Wellington's new building and in many other ways."

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Linwood Library Gazette

The Official Organ of the
Linwood Public Library

Vol. 2 May-June 1937 No. 8

The Public Library System of Christchurch, of which Linwood Library forms no mean part, is unique in New Zealand. The Canterbury Library is controlled by the Canterbury University College authorities and until quite recently received no financial assistance from the Christchurch City Council. The suburban libraries are controlled by independent bodies of voluntary workers, elected as committees by their respective subscribers, monetary grants being granted by the City Council. Each unit is self-contained and each has its own scale of charges for subscriptions. Rules and regulations are independently framed to suit local needs and each suburban library ploughs a lonely furrow in the vast field of literary wants. Much good work has been done in the past by these libraries and doubtless much will be done in the future, even under the present system; but when the day dawns, as eventually it must, upon a co-ordinated plan of library administration, then will Christchurch be able to look with pride upon its cultural attainments in the world of books.

Meanwhile, the subscription system of membership is supplying the readers of city and suburbia with literary fare for an absurdly low payment. In the case of

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our own library, which incidentally has members in all parts of Christchurch, the annual subscription is but six shillings a year, or less than three halfpence a week. Were the committee commercially minded and planned to run the library as a business concern, this low fee would of necessity be abandoned and other methods of raising revenue devised. The plan already in operation elsewhere of charging a nominal fee for membership, say one shilling, and thereafter threepence for every book taken out, would bring in a substantial income. But, following precedent, older books and cheap reprints would only be supplied upon payment of threepence. To obtain the newer books, costing seven shillings each and upwards, a fee of sixpence would be imposed, to cover the cost of books and to show a profit to the library.

While this would be profitable to the library committee, subscribers would find that their reading matter was costing them considerably more. By taking out two of the newer books each week, the subscriber would find that, instead of paying six shillings a year, as at present, he would find his literary entertainment had cost him two pounds twelve shillings.

More need not be said upon this matter at the moment, but we would urge our members to enrol their friends as subscribers to Linwood Library and so partake of the literary feast available at such a modest charge.

FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL CHAIR

The April meeting of the New Zealand Library Association, Canterbury Branch, was held at the Addington Public Library on the invitation of the Addington Committee, and subsequent meetings will, we hope, be held in other suburban libraries. The object is to stress the importance of something being done along the lines recommended by Messrs Munn and Barr in their report on the survey of New Zealand

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Libraries. They say:—

"The executive of the Libraries Association is urged to undertake a programme of work whereby the objects for which it was formed may be more speedily and effectively achieved. The tour of inspection which the writers made through New Zealand has convinced them that there is an urgent need for a strong Library Association to stimulate the efforts which are being made towards improving libraries, especially in the secondary cities. Committees are realising the need for library development, but they do not know what steps they should take to bring about necessary improvements. The first work that the Libraries Association should take in hand is the giving of the necessary guidance to the authorities of small libraries which need and desire such help. So far library endeavour has been only a series of disjointed efforts. The following objects should be formulated and put into practice as quickly as possible:—First, education of public opinion as to the place and function of libraries in the community, taking as models the library systems of Great Britain, the United States and other countries in which library service has been developed. The reforms desired will have to emanate from those possessing precise and practical knowledge of library administration; they will not be achieved from the outside. This requires extensive and intensive propaganda among individuals and organisations to bring about the desired results. . . . Co-ordination of libraries with all cultural educational and social organisations should be the primary aim of annual meetings of Conference." Next month we hope to continue extracts from this same authority.

SOME RECENTLY PURCHASED FICTION

All Love Excelling Dorothy Blake
As We Lie K. R. G. Browne
Backs to the Wall Capt. C. D. Mitchell
Bread into Roses Kathleen Norris
Call and I'll Come Mary Burchell
Comrades of the Colt John K. Bassett
The Cowpunchers of Badwater A. P. Nelson
The Croquet Player H. G. Wells
Cut Flowers Guy Fletcher
The Dance Goes On Louis Golding
The Door in the Wall Lawrence W. Meynell
Double Events Alexander Wilson
Emmy Untamed Helen R. Martin
Fade Out Naomi Jacob
Fellside Folk Harold Bindloss
Flyers of the Northland John Allen
Galloway's Daughter Richard Starr
Gallows Bird Leslie Storm
The General Died at Dawn Chas. Booth
Half Shot Joan Butler
The Happy Return C. S. Forester
The Havana Hotel Murder Frank Dudley
Hidden Cypher Capt. A. O. Pollard
Honeyball Farm Ethel M. Dell
The Huddle Carolyn Wells
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It Howls at Night Norman Berrow
It Wasn't a Nightmare Elliott Hay

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The Man Who Played Patience .. Seldon Truss
Maxine Paul Trent
The Minor Operation J. J. Connington
Murder by Proxy Peter Drax
Murder with Pictures Geo. Harmon Cox
Mystery of Mr Jessop E. R. Punshon
New Moon Through the Window .. Maysie Greig
North of the Law Christopher Cully
North Wind B. M. Bower
Old Man Murray Will Lawson
The Old Manor Crime Wyndham Martyn
The Paradox of Mr Pond G. K. Chesterton
Policeman's Holiday Rupert Penny
Prince Charming Oliver Sandys
Red Bunting Hazel Adair
Second Class Angel Helena Grose
The Shaggy Legion Hal G. Evarts
Sheriff of Olansha Chas. H. Snow
A Soldier of the Legion Ottwell Binns
The Staff at Simpsons Frederick Niven
Strange Fortuna Dorothy B. Upson
Tenderfoot Trail S. Macdowell
The Top of the Tree Effie A. Rowlands
True Lovers' Knot Rupert Hughes
When Cobb and Co. Was King Will Lawson

NON-FICTION BOOKS RECENTLY PUBLISHED

Men of the Last Frontier by "Grey Owl. This book describes the retreat of all life, human (Indian) and animal, before the onrush of hunters, lumbermen, prospectors and others, and "Grey Owl" while recognising the inevitable, finds it hard to accept, and voices his regret in words that often run like a flood. Right through the book his language has an arresting, holding quality that burns into one, a penetrating force and power that one rarely meets. In the chapter on "The Altar of Mammon" he writes with stinging force of the greed of man in destroying forest, beaver and other animals, and often the Indian in his lust for gold. There is not a page that lacks its charm or attraction. We can recommend this book with every confidence as good reading.

A Cottage in Majorca by Lady Sheppard. Lady Sheppard has here given us a book that will bring delight to all those lucky enough to get it. The Balearic Isles are written about but rarely, but here we get lovely pictures of the many scenic beauties of the islands and some vivid descriptions of a very attractive people, their simple life, unchanged for many, many years, their customs, beliefs and superstitions, traceable to ancient and various origins, as well as incidents of smugglers, and a bull-fight. The search through the different islands for a cottage is most interesting and when found, its internal transformation not only gave intense satisfaction to the author, but to those who made the transformation as well. In these picturesque surroundings the author lived for some years until Revolution came and disturbed the peace.

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Yesterday and Today in Sinai by C. S. Jarvis. Sinai is frequently thought of as little else but a huge desert land, but this book corrects that impression and the manner of making that correction is most interesting. Also we learn something about the Arab, the man himself, his law and customs. The history of the Sinaiatic Peninsula is one of change and struggle and the chapter devoted to Exodus and the forty years' wandering of the Children of Israel, with the aid of the map, help one to understand the great event with a clearer and larger background. The business of smuggling hashish and other drugs is quite a large and complicated one, and we read of the adventures of those whose duty it is to track and capture the smugglers. We can recommend this book as most enjoyable and interesting reading.

I Saw For Myself by John Brown. John Brown has here given us, perhaps a truer picture of both Germany and Russia, than many of the authors who write about these countries.

The title well suits the matter contained in the book for if he wished to test by his own observation, conditions existing in any district or to interview any high official he just went ahead, brushing aside all obstructions and warnings, and eventually got what he was after. He should have been shot or stabbed many a time but his apparent blindness to danger always got him through. A book that stimulates and inspires and worth reading more than once.

New Zealand from Within by Donald Cowie. A bright and interesting summing up of the New Zealander.

England's Character by S. P. B. Mais. Tells of the open air, of natural beauty and of sport, the prominent characteristics of an average Britisher.

The Life of John Rushworth, Earl Jellicoe by Admiral Sir Reginald Bacon. The official life of Earl Jellicoe. The truth told.

Scapel and Sword by Sir James Elliott. A book that will interest all New Zealanders.

My Legacy Cruise by Mrs Alec-Tweedie. One of Mrs Alec-Tweedie's best.

Loose End by Neal Harman. Plenty of adventure.

Shipwrecks: New Zealand Disasters, 1795 to 1936 by C. W. N. Ingram and P. A. Wheatley. History, romance and tragedy find their places in these live and vivid pages.

Warships Today by M. W. Burgess. This is a most unusual type of book, as the subject of the navy is mostly of the hush-hush style. In this book it gives one a very clear idea of the strength and mobility of the navy—dealing with all types of fighting ships from submarines to the capital ships of today. There are some very detailed diagrams and plans of the various ships and some wonderful photographs. Everyone interested in the navy—and all in New Zealand should be—can get some very interesting data from this volume.

J.H.