

GIVE THIS JOURNAL TO A FRIEND

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

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OUR LIBRARIES.

By A. BRETTELL.

In the front page article on "Christchurch Libraries" by Mr E. J. Bell last month, we find much food for thought. Stressing the lack of co-operation between the Central Library and the suburban Libraries (which are controlled by voluntary workers, a system unusual, and unique in the Dominion, and probably the British Empire), he goes on to say that, in a city as large as Christchurch, at least £3000 should be expended on these libraries as they exist today. If this amount be divided and £1500 be allocated to the central and the other £1500 to the suburban libraries, it follows that not only do each of these at once receive the original subsidy, but it is doubled.

As for the central library, this amount would enable Mr E. J. Bell to bring his library nearer to the standard of the libraries in the other main centres, and not only relieve him of much anxious thought, but would soon prove to be a boon to the subscribers of the central library. The splendid results resulting from the gift of £250 made by the Christchurch City Council helps one to visualise the enormous difference £1500 would produce under the very capable management of Mr Bell. Instead of being harassed and worried (if ever Mr Bell does get worried) there would be little hindrance then to the introduction, in all departments, of the most modern methods, and also wider purchasing, resulting in the attainment of the highest efficiency. His wide knowledge of librarianship, gained through a

life-long acquaintance with libraries, and capped by the recent tour through U.S.A. and Canada, would then find opportunity to enrich the library of which he is in charge and those to benefit most would be the citizens of Christchurch.

Passing on to the matter of suburban libraries he suggests that all subscriptions be made uniform and that 6/- per annum be charged by all, both central and suburban. This has been a subject often keenly discussed by suburban library committees, but without tangible result. But is it not quite obvious that uniformity would in time prove beneficial, not only to the libraries themselves, but to an increasing number of subscribers.

If those of us most closely concerned would develop the "Rate Supported Library Spirit" and take a broad view of this matter, as it affects Christchurch and surrounding districts, we would then lose the local and parochial outlook. Further, the increased amount of subsidy under this tentative proposal would eliminate all financial anxieties, for instance, a library receiving £50 under the present subsidy, £700, would, under a subsidy of £1500 receive more than double, which would offset any loss by virtue of the decreased subscription, and in addition there is the almost inevitable increase of subscribers at the cheaper rate.

This would more readily give us a broad foundation on which to work, and the compromise necessary to accomplish the greater object, would seem almost puerile in their relation to the final objective. Mr Bell also stresses the development of a Non-Fiction Section. It is speci-