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Linwood Library Gazette

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

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THE STORY OF LINWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY

As an old subscriber to Linwood Public Library I sometimes allow my thoughts to go back to those days in its emergence as an actual fact and then trace through the years the development of the vision held by the men who launched it on its career.

The founders of our Library included in their number men possessing sound judgment and vision; cultured, yet eminently practical. While their ideal was yet ahead somewhere in the future, they paid careful attention to their foundational activities. They attempted to achieve something more and better than the usual suburban library, and by offering facilities to readers of all tastes hoped to gradually build up a library in the truest and widest sense. To illustrate. Mr A. Marshall, an ex-Mayor of Linwood, expressed himself in these words: "There is no book too good for our shelves, money must be found for the best." And another founder, Mr W. W. Tanner, M.P. for Avon for 18 years, was equally emphatic. He said: "We aimed to found a library of the best books money could buy."

In connection with the views expressed above, it is interesting to mention a recent experience. When Jonathan Cape published T. E. Lawrence's notable work "Seven Pillars of Wisdom" the Committee decided to purchase four copies of the work, and in view of the numerous enquiries drew up a list of subscribers in order of application. It is now some fourteen months since these four copies were

put into circulation, and many months yet will elapse ere the list will be exhausted.

On June 11th, 1909, the library was formally opened by Mr C. C. Allison, Mayor of Christchurch, and speeches were made by Mr W. W. Tanner and the Hon. W. G. Russell. At the opening there were about 240 books on the shelves and a few magazines, all donated by generous friends. Since then approximately 35,000 books have been catalogued, and about half of this number have been either worn out or discarded. To-day the stock is roughly fiction, 12,000; juvenile, 2,500; non-fiction, 3,800; with 37 magazines and many periodicals and newspapers, the annual issue being nearly 110,000.

Last year 1804 volumes were placed on the shelves, 1428 being fiction, 230 juvenile, and 146 non-fiction. During the last four months 843 volumes have been placed on the shelves.

Two features are worthy of notice. First, that the institution was to be a library only.

No social, or card or billiard room, thus the whole of the Committee had but one interest upon which they could focus their thought and energy.

Second, that one subscription entitled the member to one book only, any extra volumes to be paid for at the rate of 3d. each.

Regarding the first item, the committee have been, and are, just as earnest in their allegiance to the principle "A Library only" as were the founders 27 years ago, and the second item is held in an equally emphatic manner. The amount received