

GIVE THIS JOURNAL TO A FRIEND

# Linwood Library Gazette

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

Vol. 2, No. 3.



DECEMBER, 1936.

## LIBRARIES AND HOW TO USE THEM

By Dr. J. GUTHRIE.

Proposals are being considered for the re-establishing of our Library system on a municipal basis, more in keeping with the practice in most other cities of the world. In doing so, it is hoped that more adequate financial provision will be found for upkeep, and for a rate of expansion which will keep abreast of the growth in population. The proposed changes will also place the libraries under more direct public control.

Hitherto financial stringency has seriously starved the growth and development of all our Library resources. Yet we must acknowledge our deep indebtedness to the efforts of the Canterbury College Council for the fact that the Library is still in existence.

It is hoped that the new scheme will be of a comprehensive nature, embracing a central and various district libraries, the central library to feed the latter, thereby saving much overlapping and expense in buying books.

The foundation of a Public Library is its Reference Department. It is here that the reader is able to find, not only the knowledge and wisdom of the past, but the changing thought of the present. This is more than ordinarily necessary in a small isolated community such as ours. How can our builders, architects, industrialists, technicians, engineers, teachers, and artists keep abreast of the flowing stream of knowledge, and avoid the sluggish backwater of complacency without this vital point of contact with the outside world? It serves the needs of the few,

certainly, but what an important section are this few! They are the leaven of our active trades and professions. On their efforts our national progress depends.

Let it not be thought that the Circulating Department is to be belittled. This department performs an analogous function for the majority of readers. It will be found on analysis that the reading of the average man responds to urges which fall roughly under one of two categories—entertainment or enlightenment.

Many people, after a day's work, don't want to be enlightened. They want only to be entertained. Life is dull enough for them. They need mental rest. They find this by becoming engrossed in the telling of a story. If the story be well told they can, in reading it, hardly escape a little instruction, and it will have been painlessly instilled. The fact that it is always the same story, with perhaps some difference in the telling, will not deter the fiction-reader from wanting to hear it just once again.

Reading for enlightenment, on the other hand, is a habit that grows, and can be cultivated. Its pursuit will reward the reader by providing him with an outlook on life through many more windows. He will see more of life and understand more of the meaning and gist of human affairs. Appreciation will grow and multiply. His intellectual stature will increase. He will find that what he read with difficulty yesterday he will read easily to-morrow.

Readers are not to be praised nor blamed for their preferences. Their choice is first a matter of temperament, later of habit. Each has his own reasons for