

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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THE CHILDREN'S LIBRARY

By E. B. ELLERM, The Leys Institute Public Library, Ponsonby, Auckland.

During the latter years of the last century many libraries established separate reading rooms for children, sometimes for boys only, but later to benefit both boys and girls, sometimes separated, sometimes together.

Although at first experimental and subsidiary, this children's reading room, usually combined with the lending section, has come to be an integral part of the modern library.

As children are the future reading public, they are entitled to have this portion of the library regarded as absolutely essential, and it is impossible to overrate the importance of this side of public library work.

To attain full success, librarian, teacher and parent must co-operate. Few parents take any interest in what their children read, and very often those few take too much; they do not realise that coercion is fatal to the true object of an apprenticeship in reading, and will assuredly not lead children to love and enjoy reading or to discover for themselves the values it can give to their own interests and pleasures. A boy will more often hate a book if he is

told he must read it. Rather by encouragement let him discover its merits and charms himself. The parent, by a wise interest and proper share of responsibility, goes a long way towards inculcating a love of books.

Other obvious points must be borne in mind by teachers, parents, and librarians. The mere posture in reading and the need for good light at the proper angle, are not minor points. Many children read far too much. The parent should see that they have a healthy outdoor life, and the teacher, that the charms of the book-world do not lead to the neglect of tasks set at school. Steady co-operation with teachers in leading children to find in books, aids to the business and the pleasures of life, is characteristic of those library systems where the children's department has been given its due place in the scheme.

The library is certainly part of the educational fabric, as on the one hand the teacher is aided enormously by the child's use of the library, all the more if the use made has been spontaneous and enjoyable. On the other hand, the children who find out the vital part a library can play in their work and recreations, who have become familiar with books of reference, with the uses of catalogues and a clear system of classification, will have acquired something of inestimable value in the process of self-development to be carried on, long after school days are over.