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BULLETIN

OF THE

RHODE ISLAND LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

VOL. 5.

APRIL, 1932.

NO. 2



AN ATTRACTIVE PROVIDENCE DOORWAY.
THE ENTRANCE OF THE ROCHAMBEAU BRANCH OF THE PROVIDENCE PUBLIC LIBRARY.

BULLETIN

OF THE
RHODE ISLAND LIBRARY ASSOCIATION.

Published every now and then,
and designed to be of interest
to librarians of Rhode Island.

R. I. L. A. BULLETIN COMMITTEE
JOSEPHINE A. HOPE, PROVIDENCE PUBLIC LIBRARY
ANNISE KANE, CLASSICAL HIGH SCHOOL, PROVIDENCE
MRS. DOROTHY H. HELLEN, ELMWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY, PROVIDENCE

Vol. 5. APRIL, 1932. No. 2.

ARE WE VICTIMS OF AN INWARD NEURASTHENIA?

In spite of the scathing comments of Mr. James W. Polling, in a recent issue of the **Outlook**, wherein he discourses on the rarity of the chaste lady and wonders if she exists in such small numbers that the public hopes only to encounter her between the covers of a book, and that the advertisements and shelves of book-shops bear out his theory of a flood of so-called virgin-novels having swamped the reading public; in spite of the varied assortment of Ex-novels, of which Ex-It seems much in evidence in the downtown drug store; in spite of gangster plots, love-nests and jazz, the reading public which frequents our public libraries seems to have either outgrown or been fed up with the class of novel which Mr. Polling terms the outward expression of an inward neurasthenia.

Perhaps the readers frequenting the lending libraries will still demand the novel, which, to quote Hugh Walpole, its authors write "in suspensive dots and dashes; mention all the parts of the human body in full, count every tick of the clock, and call their book 'Disintegration', or 'Dead Moons' or 'Green Queens,'" and considering that this was written over a decade ago, we might with all truthfulness omit the dots and dashes.

Under existing conditions, I believe that all librarians will bear me out in the fact that men, some having no more than high school education, many with less, who, of unemployed necessity, are depending more and more upon the public library to fill their enforced idleness with reading material, are turning to the old titles, which, in their carefree or busy youth, were overlooked or neglected. With the constant facing of grim reality, their minds do not crave the lure and vicarious satisfaction of the so-called sex novel, but the pictures of life, which, though they may be sordid in spots, are, like life, made up of small kind-

nesses, small braveries and love, that, while it flames not so luridly as its caricatures in the dozens of titles launched monthly by the publishing world, burns with a steady glow, that heartens and does not scorch.

An attempt to attract this class of men of enforced leisure, with a shelf full of books, labeled "Unemployed Problems," met with small response. Either those in that class were too disheartened to care about "How to secure a job and keep it," or those not in that class shut their eyes to the fact that around every corner lurks the spectre that may mean "no job" for that particular individual. On the other hand, three shelves of books, posterred, "Books of interest to the business man," covering a selection ranging from social and economic problems, various phases of pure business, to biographies of leaders in the world of finance, founders of great fortunes, and, also, please note, a number of books which had originally been included in those on the Unemployment Problems shelf, and were changed to this more recent selection, immediately met with a demand, an interesting commentary on the value of a positive, constructive suggestion, rather than a negative one, and upon the psychology of appeal from a different angle.

When one receives daily requests for the latest books on Russia, scientific discoveries, inspirational biographies of men and women, both of today and the past, who have achieved a place among their fellows, books of travel, where one may be transported to the far reaches of Asia, or the England of Hardy, the traffic in lurid literature seems more or less concentrated in the so-called lending libraries and book departments of our greater emporiums. The sordidness of a "Hatter's Castle", with its stark strength and character delineation of a caliber comparative with older writers, whose work has stood the test of time and a capricious public; the colorful beauty, against a background of reality, of a "Judith Paris"; the reactions, mental and physical, of white men submerged in the tropics of a "Mala'sie"; the primitive simplicity of a novel such as Hamsun's "August," all show definite and rich achievement from three different countries; and, while these very titles may provoke a protest from the prudish, the life they present is real, with a weighing of values that the discriminating reader recognizes as true.

Indicative of a general taste, the books quoted recently, as those most in demand in January, are as follows: Fiction: Aldrich. White bird flying; Barnes. Westward passage; Cather. Shadows on the rock; Galsworthy. Maid in waiting; McFee. Harbour-

master; Young. Mr. and Mrs. Pennington. Non-fiction: Adams. Epic of America; Allen. Only yesterday; Culbertson. Summary of contract bridge; O'Neill. Mourning becomes Electra; Washington merry-go-round; Young. A fortune to share.

This is a fairly representative list of the books in demand in the reserve file of the average public library. To these titles may be added a few others: Carveth Well's "Adventure," with his earlier books still equally popular; Walpole's "Rogue Herries" as well as "Judith Paris"; books along scientific and psychological lines, such as those of Jeans and Jastrow, as well as the recent "How to be happy though human." As is always the case, there is the bulk of fiction running to the lighter type of love or adventure story, closely seconded, if not outstripped, by the mystery and detective tales whose titles are legion, and the bulk of non-fiction, comprising the entire stock of books on palmistry and character reading from hand-writing; the recent plays, both of this country and abroad; self-improvement and the building up of personality; games, travel and adventure.

So that, to return to Mr. Polling, whose lament of decadent tendencies in the reading public of this country will be of interest to all who come in contact with books and the demand thereof, we can but wonder whether, given the opportunity, and access to the sensational, the public library patron would be definitely attracted to the class of literature with which publishers are flooding the market. It would be interesting to have the opinion of librarians, more mature in experience and with a vision that comes after a broader service in the work with the reading public than the writer can boast of, as to how deeply the sensational novel actually penetrates. I would like to venture a modest guess that the verdict would be in favor of a rather rational reaction, both from our librarians and the public too, were it allowed the opportunity to speak for itself.

DOROTHY H. HELLEN,
ASSISTANT.
ELMWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY.

THE NEW HAMPSHIRE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION MEETING AT BETHLEHEM.

The Executive Committee of the Rhode Island Library Association has accepted the invitation of the New Hampshire Library Association to participate in the Northeastern Library Conference to be held at the Maplewood Club in Bethlehem from June 27 to July 2.

The New Hampshire Library Association is intent on putting forth every effort to make this occasion as memorable as the A. L. A. meetings at the Fabyan House in 1890, and at the Mount Washington Hotel in Bretton Woods in 1909.

The Maplewood Club is one mile from Bethlehem Village, in a location which commands a perfect view of Mount Washington, and is near none of the other hotels. It is large enough to accommodate the entire conference under one roof. There are ample opportunities for out-door sports of all kinds, with the added inducement of an excursion through the famous White Mountain notches.

All rates are per person per day, the American plan. The hotel will extend the conference rates from June 25 to July 5 so that persons who wish to make the conference a time for a vacation may have more than a week at special reduced rates. They range from \$5.00 to \$7.00 as follows: for one person, room with bath, \$7.00; room without bath, \$5.50; for two or more persons, room with bath, \$6.00; room without bath, \$5.00. Garage space is \$1.00 a night. The golf fees are \$1.00 a day or \$3.00 for five days. The Maplewood Club is easily accessible by railroad, bus-line and automobile road from all important points.

A BUYING GUIDE FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARIES.

Since 1927, when the co-operative plan of establishing and operating libraries in junior high schools was inaugurated by the Providence Public Library and the Providence School Department, the administration of the Public Library has had considerable experience in the selecting of books for the seven school libraries which have been established under this plan. Several calls have been received from other Rhode Island towns where junior high school libraries are in the process of establishment or already in existence, for assistance in book buying. The Supervisor of Young People's Reading, Miss Mary R. Lucas, has at her disposal preliminary buying lists for both small and large school libraries, and anyone in the State who is interested is welcome to make use of these lists in working out his own problems.

THE ECONOMIC SITUATION.

As a result of a meeting of the A. L. A. Executive Board, a list of books on the economic situation was compiled, and it was decided that the libraries could do their part to lighten the situation by encouraging reading on eco-

conomic subjects and making it possible for people to know about them and think rationally of them as a result.

The Providence Public Library has responded to the situation by a permanent exhibit of books on the world situation politically and economically. They have circulated well from the start. Also, the programs of the National Advisory Council on Radio in Education have been posted each week, together with appropriate books.

The Watchemoket Library reports an increased interest in books on economics and has also maintained a continuous exhibit of such books.

The Westerly Public Library has lists for free distribution prominently displayed; a collection of timely books and magazines; and a bulletin board listing radio talks and supplementary reading.

Other libraries, although they have planned nothing definite in this line, have done their bit by endeavoring to meet extra demands of all sorts.

THE CELEBRATION OF THE WASHINGTON BICENTENNIAL.

Although Washington's birthday has passed, 1932 has been decreed as a Washington festival. Accordingly, this issue of the R. I. L. A. Bulletin furnishes a good opportunity for libraries to exchange ideas about methods and schemes for celebration.

The library at Anthony has posted material from the Bicentennial Commission, sent for booklets, and endeavored to make its book collection on Washington more complete.

The Elmwood Public Library had a display of books and pictures in the reference room. The period in which Washington lived was illustrated in the display case. A film, for the children, "The life and times of George Washington," has been shown. Material has been obtained from Washington, and copies of a book entitled "Complete Washington anniversary programs" have been very useful.

The Harr's Institute Library has had an elaborate display of Washington material and has aroused the interest of the public school children by exhibiting their drawings on the subject.

The Jamestown Philomenian Library has also added to its Washington material, by purchasing more books and sending for government material.

The People's Library, Newport, has used posters and a special collection of books and magazines.

The Pontiac Free Library had an attractive display on Feb. 22, of books, posters and pamphlets, decorated with flags and bunting. Later it plans to

show a film on the life of Washington.

The Providence Public Library had on display cardboard models of Mount Vernon, the room where Washington died, and familiar scenes from Washington's career, as well as finely illustrated books on famous portraits of Washington, from the art collection of the library.

The library of the Rhode Island College of Education also exhibited pictures and material.

The Rhode Island Historical Society held a loan exhibition from Feb. 15 to 21, and sponsored a talk on Feb. 18, "George Washington: a friend of the people."

The Westerly Public Library has exhibited an unusual group of Washington prints, loaned by a local collection; a bronze replica of Houdon's Washington, loaned by the Gorham Manufacturing Co., Providence; and an early Washington flag. A special story hour was held, where children, in costume, danced the minuet. Special collections have been maintained in both the juvenile and adult departments.

MATERIAL THAT MAY BE OBTAINED FOR THE WASHINGTON BICENTENNIAL

A series of sixteen pamphlets, edited by Dr. Albert Bushnell Hart, Historian of the United States Washington Bicentennial Commission.

Twelve supplemental papers for clubs, patriotic societies and other organizations.

Address:

George Washington Bicentennial
Committee,
Washington Building,
Washington, D. C.

"The life and times of Washington," a motion picture—May be secured for fee of \$10.00 from Miss Millie Arnold, 42 Waterman Street, Providence. Made by Eastern Kodak Company and authorized by the Bicentennial Commission.

A WASHINGTON LIST FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Embree. A child's life of Washington. Dutton \$2.50
Knipe. Everybody's Washington. Dodd \$3.00

Moses. The master of Mount Vernon. Appleton \$2.00

For ages 10-13 and primarily a picture of Washington's home relationships.

Ogden. George Washington. Century \$3.00

For ages 12-13 and gives a particularly comprehensive view of the battles of the Revolution.

Turner. In the days of young Washington.

For older children. Houghton \$2.00
Vivier. Peeps at George Washington. Stokes \$1.50

For ages 4-6. Unusually delightful and charmingly illustrated with silhouettes.

Washburn. George Washington Gabriel \$1.00

For ages 7-10. Makes Washington very real and vivid.

FROM HERE AND THERE.

The Harris Institute Library reports that its circulation has almost doubled this year. Its rooms are crowded afternoon and evening, and the available space is inadequate to the demands.

Jamestown reports an adult reading class in co-operation with the Superintendent of Schools, that uses a group of books selected by Professor Robinson of the Rhode Island College of Education. The selection was a broad one and has proved most stimulating.

The People's Library, Newport, has been holding Americanization classes twice a week under the auspices of the school board. Free lectures, touching on everything from trees to literary and historic Newport, as well as strictly literary subjects, have been well attended. This library also reports a very successful stamp club made up of boys and girls from nine to fourteen, and an interesting loan exhibit of fossils in the Children's Room, two of the pieces having been found in Rhode Island. The Librarian, Miss May V. Crenshaw, is resigning April 1, but has no definite plans.

The Pontiac Free Library has moved from its former quarters on Main Street to a remodeled building on Greenwich Ave., Pontiac. It opened in its new quarters on Feb. 4, after closing one day for moving.

The Providence Public Library reports the construction of a new branch building on Candace Street, the Smith Hill Branch. The open winter has helped the contractors to make very satisfactory progress.

Several important changes in the library staff went into effect Feb. 1. Miss Alice G. Hathaway, Librarian of the Nathan Bishop Branch, became Librarian at the Tockwotten Branch, her place being taken by Miss G. Eleanor Hanson, Librarian of the Nathanael Greene Branch. Miss Edna A. Shea, assistant at Nathan Bishop, has been appointed Librarian of the Roger Williams Branch. Miss Helen L. Fitts, Librarian of the George J. West

Branch, has been transferred to the Nathanael Greene Branch, and Miss Marianna Spizzirri, formerly assistant at the Esek Hopkins Branch, has been appointed Acting Librarian in her place.

This winter, a series of book talks was offered to the public that use the Rochambeau and South Providence branches: "Reading and the reading public", by Clarence E. Sherman, Librarian; "The new crop of fiction", by Miss Ruth C. Coombs, Reader's Advisor; "Books for reading aloud", by Miss Mary R. Lucas, Supervisor of Young People's Reading; "Seeing the world", by Miss Bess McCrea, Assistant Librarian.

In order to make the transition from juvenile to adult books more gradual and logical for adolescent boy or girl, the Providence Public Library has been maintaining a Young People's alcove in main room on first floor of the library, and Miss Draper, the Librarian for Boys and Girls, is on duty there for a certain length of time every school-day afternoon. In this connection, a list has been compiled, "Leisure reading for young people", which the schools have adopted for their official reading list. Another phase of the work with older boys and girls is the high school senior reading club, which has done some extremely interesting and stimulating work in discussing and reviewing books. Becker's "Adventures in reading" is being used for a guide, and the membership is limited to fifteen.

The Redwood Library has just fitted a sunny and attractive room for a children's alcove and supplied it with attractive editions of books. There has been an immediate and continued response from the children of members. An exhibition throughout the winter of a fine collection of incunabula and other early printed books has attracted much attention. A portion of the Gutenberg Bible, four Caxtons, a Nuremberg chronicle, classics from 15th century presses, a King James Bible and a first folio Shakespeare are included.

The library at Valley Falls has just been re-finished inside.

The outstanding event at the Westernly Public Library has been the "Next-door neighbors" exhibit in the museum, to show the interdependence of the nations of the world. Various schools in the town have allotted spaces in which are shown the sources of supply of basic materials used in manufacturing common commodities. There is a room attractively furnished with articles from more than twenty countries. Another feature of the exhibit is the display of articles from the homelands of foreign groups of the town.