10-1937

Bulletin of the Rhode Island Library Association v. 10, no. 1

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BULLETIN
OF THE
RHODE ISLAND LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
VOL. 10 OCTOBER, 1937 No. 1

Green Hall, the new library and administration building at
Rhode Island State College

PROGRAM
FALL MEETING OF THE RHODE ISLAND LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
Thursday, October 14, 1937
RHODE ISLAND STATE COLLEGE LIBRARY, KINGSTON, R. I.

Morning Session
9:45 GREETINGS
Raymond G. Bressler, L. L. D., President of R. I. State College

BUSINESS Reports of Committees
PRESENTATION OF STATE LIBRARIAN, Miss Grace M. Sherwood
10:30 "LITERARY FORGERIES OF THE 19th CENTURY"
By Theodore W. Koch, Librarian Northwestern University

11:30 ROUND TABLE CONFERENCES:
   a. Relations with the State—how can we best cooperate?
      Miss Grace M. Sherwood, State Librarian, Chairman
   b. The Challenge of Youth—
      Miss Aimee F. Draper, Librarian, Wanskuck Branch, Providence
      Public Library, Chairman
   c. Among the New Books—
      Miss Ruth C. Coombs, Reader's Advisor, Providence Public
      Library, Chairman

1:00 LUNCHEON Served in the College Cafeteria

Afternoon Session
2:30 BETTER PUBLICITY
Herbert M. Hoford, Ph. B., Assistant Professor of Journalism,
Rhode Island State College

3:30 INSPECTION OF COLLEGE BUILDINGS
4:00 TEA: KINGSTON INN Hospitality Committee will act as Hostesses.
STATE LIBRARIAN

On August first Miss Grace M. Sherwood became State Librarian and State Record Commissioner. A year ago the post was vacated by the resignation of Mr. C. W. Brigham. Rhode Island librarians are unanimous in their regret over the retirement of Mr. Brigham. He has made four years of invaluable service to the State. Under his régime the State Library and the Department of Records have been developed to a rare degree of efficiency.

The appointment of Miss Sherwood to succeed Mr. Brigham was well deserved, coming at a time when the State Library service in the State Library had been developed to a rare degree of efficiency.

The building is situated apart from the quadrangle of the campus which gives adequate space for lawn, garden and landscape development. There are pleasant views from it, including the location suited for quiet study. Viewed from the exterior it is massily constructed of granite, which blends with the other campus buildings.

The store was obtained from quarries at Westerly, R. I. Architecturally well balanced in the shape of a "T" it comprises two stories plus a large basement and attic. Two chimneys, a cupola with clock and weather vane, and the large windows of the reading rooms on the second floor, finish what comprises a dignified and distinctive building.

To Mr. F. Ellis Jackson, architect of the firm of Jackson, Borcherdt, Adams of Providence goes the major portion of credit for the building, architecture and design. In the main, the building is not only pleasing but also satisfactory for library purposes.

The above is quoted from an article prepared by Mr. P. F. Allen, librarian of Rhode Island State College, for the Library Journal.

The following two articles are from the Spring meeting held at the Spring meeting of the R. I. Library Association. In the first the question "Is mediocrity a menace?" is propounded by Mr. J. Kapstein of Brown University Library. The opposite viewpoint is presented by Miss Esther Johnson, librarian in charge of the circulation at the New York Public Library.

IS MEDIOCRITY A MENACE?

Of all public servants, including even teachers, it has always seemed to me that the librarian has the greatest potentialities. He requires more patience and endurance than all others. This is because the librarian, unlike public servants, has to meet the public; and the public is not very bracing company. Anybody who is familiar with the public is that of the servant who knows more than the master. Yet no one is that I have come in sympathy with you. As it happens, my sympathies lie the other way—"with the public," not with you.

But before I explain this last statement, let me offer you a very easy solution of your difficulties. If you would be free of the public if you could be as un-public as other public servants, and so make your work easier and get rid of the public. This is easy to do. You have only to give your patrons what is expected of you; at least, what a decent, inarticulate public. Perhaps, "We can't help it, we must give the public what it wants" is the refrain you say when you think you are being unfair to the public. It is a refrain that you cannot always buy what is wise and honest. It is a refrain that you cannot always buy what is foolish and false and ephemeral. For this, you sigh patiently and say in self-sympathy, "Perhaps, "We can't help it, we must give the public what it wants." "Perhaps, "We can't help it, we must give the public what it wants." Perhaps, "We can't help it, we must give the public what it wants." Possibly, "We can't help it, we must give the public what it wants." The works of Goethe will never be, as the public has had them. The works of Shakespeare will be, perhaps, "We can't help it, we must give the public what it wants."
The following two articles are from the Rhode Island History held at the Spring meeting of the R. I. Library Association. In the first the question is mediocrity a menace? The second article is by Prof. I. J. Kapstein of Brown University and the opposite viewpoint is presented by Miss Esther Johnson, librarian in charge of the circulation at the New York Public Library.

IS MEDIOCRITY A MENACE?

Of all public servants, including even teachers, it has always seemed to me that the librarian has the greatest burden of mediocrity. I mean the very nature of the public, if it is impossible for you to have magnificent libraries, the public won't let you. I know this is a sin of regret to you that you must spend good money buying bad books, and that you must continually be throwing good money after bad books because the public used books so much and so hard. It is regrettable that for every single copy of a novel by Virginia Woolf you should have to buy four copies of a silly saccharine romance by Temple Bailey. It is regrettable that you cannot always buy what is wise and honest and enduring, and that you must buy what is foolish and false and ephemeral. For this, you patiently and say in self-sympathy, "We can't help it; we must give the public what it wants."

But here I explain this last statement, let me offer you very easy solution of your difficulties. If you would be free of the public, if you would be as un-public as other public servants, and so make your work as easy as possible, you'd be rid of the public. This is easy to do. You have only to fill your libraries with what Matthew Arnold has called the "best that has been thought and said in the world." This means that painters of interest will have no place in your display, the libraries in the exhibit cases in the corridors of the Home Economics Building, the library may be visited throughout the day, the exhibits of interest will have no place in your library, but the public uses books which are pleasing to the eye, and the ephemeral can be free of the public.

The business meeting of the R. J. Library Association will take place in the Auditorium of the Home Economics Building at the State College. There will be an opportunity for members to see some of the buildings of the college at the close of the afternoon session, and the College Library may be visited throughout the day.

A cafeteria luncheon will be served in the College Cafeteria at one o'clock. It will be served at Kingston Inn from four to six, and while in the village it will be possible to visit the Kingston Free Library on Kingston Hill.

Mr. Francis F. Allen, librarian of the Rhode Island State Library Association is invited for his cooperation in making possible this meeting at Kingston.
I. 

Aides with a growing demand for culture, where Truth is a public library. Wherever there are no depressions, no civil wars, no fashions, no political turmoil, no strikes, no suffering, no discord, no evil. For bitter reality, they want something better. They want to be helped, not stifled. It is too easy for them to lose faith in their environment, for the truth of life. It is my belief that this improvement in public taste may, to some extent, coincide with the increase of public libraries in the country in the last forty years. Certainly, it is not something that the public does not want. It is a world where truth grows less from year to year. The truth of life is so much easier and simpler than that. You want them to understand that the noblest thing in life in all its twisted complexity, its horror, its cruelty, its sadness, is to go on doing the right things in order to get on in society generally, nevertheless, culture, where it is, is better than no culture at all. This growing search for culture should be fostered—and it is the duty of the public library to foster it. Little as I know of public libraries, I know that a great deal is being done in the way of adult education. It seems to me important that this work should be continued. I feel, however, that it must be something worse than that they should flee from the truth of life. For bitter reality, they want something better. They want to be helped, not stifled. It is too easy for them to lose faith in their environment, for the truth of life.
are servants of the public you must give the public what it wants. You should never be so presum- ing as to think that the public does not know what it wants, does not know what it wants. It is not and it is most drastically, that if the public won't read better books, then let the public read the movies. I will not argue so, but I will say that you expect too much of the public. You want the public to read the best that has been thought and said in the world—your ideal, like Matthew Arnold's, is the "perfection of society," but because you, like the school teacher, are bookish people, you, like me, are apt to forget what people are really like. The truth is that the public does not want to read the best that has been thought and said in the world, because the best that has been thought and said is often too soulful for the average person to endure... 

But you want your readers of novels to read not Thomas Hardy, Nobel Prize, Rilke, Glyn, Ethel M. Dell, Ursula Parrott, and so on—you want them to read Conrad, Hardy, Galsworthy, Bennett, Lewis, Santayana, Mann, Hamsun, Baroja, Gorki, and so on. And you are right to want them to read in preference to the others. But these great novelists write about life and love and life and love—they write about life in all its twisted complexity, its fascination, its horror, its Probability, its cruelty. You want your readers to understand with Conrad that the noblest thing in life is to know that a man must die to be true to his ideals in Victory. Lord Jim, Nostromo. You want them to understand with Hardy that we are the creatures of chance and destiny, that a moment of mischance means a lifetime's change—"I refer you to Finnegans Wake!" 

From the Madding Crowd, Jude the Obscure, The Return of the Native Your duty, therefore, is not to argue with Galsworthy something of man's inhumanity to man, or the perversity of the gulf that tragi-comically separates not only class from class, but man from his fellow. You feel that if they understood life as it really is, as it has been re-presented in novels, they would not be so foolishly absorbed in the movies. You feel that if they understood life as it is, they would not be so interested in the movies. You feel that if they would read the books of a generation ago that were bad—no depositions, no civil wars, no anger, no long-suffering, no discord, no sorrow, no trouble, no suffering—then they would be better for it. The effect of great literature, you feel, should be salutary—it should open the readers' eyes to the truth; it should make him realize in what respects his own life and character and social class are at fault; it should inspire him so, vitalize him so, so that he will strive by the power of the intellect, so that he will create a better home environment for the better. But, unfortunately, what your average reader needs is not a warning to be afraid, not a warning to be ashamed. He wants to be soothed, not stimulated. Life has been none too easy for him these past eight years—he has known enough of sorrow, enough of suffering, enough of the grimness of life. And a great many average readers still know these things. In their present condition, a bitter tonic that will eventually set them right would be too enterprising, too drastic. Their hearts are not yet ready to be told how sick they are—they know it, and want to forget it. They are not ready to get jewel books. They are not ready to get novel books. Hardy is not going to make them feel any better. It is what is not going to do more to hard he is going to do. But, oh, the soothing aspirin of Zaide Grey, of S. S. Van Dine, of Margaret Widdemer, of Alice Duke Miller! In short, you must calm the patient here you can begin to cure him.

All of us weary occasionally of the routine of life, the daily grind at trivial tasks that are of little consequence, never variably, its cruelty, which must be got out of the way. Even the best of us, no matter how profound our intellects, are inclined to thicken the backbones, must yield occasionally, to the irresistible pressure of daily routine. And so for me. As for me, I gobble detective stories. And so do many of my colleagues. And so do many of you. The greater the pressure, the greater the need for release. And very few people, very few of your public, have succeeded, during recent years or in their careers at all, in making complete the heavy responsibilities of the irritating pressure of everyday reality. Consequently, while they face them during the day, what is more easily and more naturally that they should think and dream and write at night? They want to dream of a simpler world, a happier world, the best writers of yesterday or today, that they will be better for it. The effect of great literature, you feel, should be salutary—at least it should open the readers' eyes to the truth; it should make him realize that what is reflected, however mechanically, in one world of a Book of the Month club it is true that a good many people are interested in it, and finally, and most drastically, that if the public won't read better books, then let the public read the movies.
In a previous talk, the low estate to which we descend when we speak, write and buy books for the "average man" was neglected. The menace of mediocrity which levels men to an average was considered.

Perhaps this so-called "average man" will bear further scrutiny. He is a creature devised by statisticians and he now threatens to become a Frankenstein. The "average man" is a useful term in life expectancy calculations. A Thomas Chatterton dying at eighteen, Sherlock Holmes at ninety-two are of no more weight than any of their less gifted contemporaries. Averages are necessary in life insurance but in the writing of books, plays or anything else, the acceptance of a level—rightly called a "dead" level—is destructive and leads to below average writing.

The so-called average man has found expression in three recent books from three countries. Thornton Wilder's "Heaven's My Destination," portraying a man who frequents libraries in his aspiration to achieve some personal perfection; Paul Valéry's "Little Man, What Now?"—the young German caught in the economic view wishing to achieve a goal that involves himself and his family; and Duhamel's "Salvino—the French Levant," filled with the mediocrity of his life and trying to gain distinction through quaintness. All of these show how necessary men are to escape from mediocrity.

For the men who use the public libraries, the term the "common reader" is a far better designation than the "average man." Dr. Johnson writes "I rejoice to concur with the common reader, for by the common sense of readers, unencumbered by literary prejudices, after all the refinements of nobility and the dogmas of learning must be generally decided all claim to poetical honors."

It is for this common reader that the bulk of the library books are bought. Is our common reader of Common Prayer written? Yet the common reader of that day was considered able to stand the impact of greatness expressed with nobility. The common man received the Gospels not translated into the eight hundred words of the Thordnik vocabulary but into the richness of the finest period of the English language. The common man is the one for whom Chaucer wrote in the young English tongue, for whom Shakespeare and Burns and Gray wrote, to whom Lincoln directed the Gettysburg address. But now when there are more literate men than ever before, the diffusion of learning is too often accompanied by its dilution.

We need to keep a sharp distinction between simplicity and acuteness. The excuse for offering the common reader so much second-rate stuff because he is at a later period, is simpler. But is it? Elementary books are useful in every field but they should be as reliable in their facts as the more technical ones. Writing in a chummy way about the pretty stars does not bring them within our comprehension but confines us. A man interested in automobiles, acrobatics, radio, air conditioning may need an elementary book but he demands an accurate one not a condescending one.

does this not hold true of fiction, also? The endearing writers have a simplicity that is without trace of pedantry and underlying mediocrity. The presence in popular taste is indicated in the best seller lists over a period of twenty years, and the emphasis on excellence can be placed as never before. The duplication of good titles and the imagination of the librarian in the use of his tools are now showing an underwriting far more than an underrating of intelligence by the purchase of third-rate stuff. The casual laborer as well as the clerk and the professional man is likely to waste his time on fiction that is false and improbable, or on non-fiction that is written without preparation for the question, "Do you expect a tired miner to read Marcel Proust or a waitress to enjoy Ezra Pound?" Not often, but it does not surprise us when they do. We do not expect all lawyers, doctors and teachers to enjoy them. The interest in those writers is a limited one and their writings are intended for a limited reading public.

Whose are the requests for Lewis and Whitman, Dreiser and Thomas Wolfe, Steinbeck and Rolland, Thomas Mann and Undset, Pearl Buck and Hervey Allen, and a myriad others who write penetratingly and well of the current scene? The common reader, the same man who is reading good non-fiction. This common reader may find in the lower order of movies, the drug store books, the pulp magazines his like, the light reading, and if he cannot substitute for Sartre elsewhere for good fiction and for inspired prose, he needs a library and a shortage of leisure. He does not find substitutes elsewhere. He comes to the Library for what the other man cannot give. Why should not librarians help him to avoid mediocrity and thereby avoid for ourselves?"
THE COMMON READER

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For the men who use the public libraries, the term common reader is far better designation than the "average man." Dr. Johnson writes "I rejoice to concur with the common reader, for by the common sense of readers, uncorrupted by literary prejudices, after all the refinements of nobility and the dignities of learning must be generally decided all the merits of poetical honors."

It is a common reader that the bulk of the library books is bought. Is our common reader, of course, reader spiritually, an intellectuality of lower estate, but he is more impoverished than the common man for whom the Bible was translated into the vulgar tongue, for whom the Book of Common Prayer was written? Yet the common reader of that day was considered able to stand the impact of greatness expressed with nobility. The common man received the Gospels not translated into the Thorndike vocabulary but into the richness of the finest period of the English language. The common man is the one for whom Chaucer wrote in the young English tongue, for whom Shakespeare and Burns and Gray wrote, to whom Lincoln directed the Gettysburg address. But now when there are more literate men than ever before, the diffusion of learning is too often accompanied by its dilution.

We need to keep a sharp distinction between simplicity and mediocrity. The excuse for offering the common reader so much second-rate and above the accurate simpler. But is it? Elementary books are useful in every field but they should be as reliable in their facts as the more technical ones. Writing in a chummy way about the pretty stars does not bring them within our comprehension but confuses us. A man interested in automobiles, aeroplanes, radio, air conditioning may need an elementary book but he does not want an inaccurate one nor a condescending one.

Does this not hold true of fiction, also? The endearing writers have a simplicity that is without trace of pat language and underestimating the reader's patience in popular taste is indicated in the best sellers lists over a period of twenty years, and the emphasis on excellence can be placed as never before. The duplication of good titles and the im­agination of the librarian in the use of his materials established a market in popular regard far more than an underestimating of intelligence by the over­boasting of third-rate stuff. The mental laborer as well as the clerk and the professional men are busy to waste his time on fiction that is false and improbable, or on non-fiction that is written without preparation for the question, "Do you expect a tired miner to read Marcel Proust or a waitress to enjoy Ezra Pound?" Not often, but it does not surprise us when they do. We do not expect all lawyers, doctors and teachers to enjoy them. The interest in those writers is a limited one and their writings are intended for a limited reading public.

Whose are the requests for Lewis and Walpole words, Dreiser and Thomas Wolfe, Steinbeck and Rolland, Thomas Mann and Undset, Pearl Buck and Hervey Allen, and a myriad others who write penetratingly and well of the current scene? The common reader, the same man who is reading good fiction. This common reader may find in the lower order of movies, the drug store books, the pulp magazines his substitute for the light reading. But he cannot find substitutes elsewhere for good fiction and for inspired non-fiction, and he comes to the Library for what the periodical literature cannot supply. Why should not librarians help him to avoid mediocrity—and thereby avoid it for ourselves?

ESTHER JOHNSTON

WHATS IN A NAME.

The village of Kingston which today proudly boasts a very new college library and a very old free library building has survived a series of applications that were turned down or an inaccurate one nor a condescending one.

"How to budget your last $5.00000."

or

"A word to the wise, etc."

$1.00 R. L. A. dues

$3.00 R. L. A. dues

$1.00 A. L. A. Section of library work with children.

Signed:

WEST DeROCCO

Membership Committee for A. L. A. Section of Library Work with Children.

KINGSTON FREE LIBRARY

KINGSTON Free Library, on the main street of the village, is housed in the old Court House, which was used for court sessions from 1776 until the new Court House in West Kingston was built, about 1885. The building was also used for the sessions of the General Assembly, as Kingston, once called Rochester, was in the early days one of the capitals.

The building originally had a barn roof, and the present roof, as well as the south staircase and vestibule were added later. The court room was upstairs, where a desk and table faced a semi-circle of benches which had spindle backs, and were topped with mahogany. The lower room, now the library, was used for town meetings, and also for social affairs. Some of the panels in this room are strikingly large, one of them measuring 3 feet, 10 inches, by 5 feet, 8 inches, it being a single board. The material for the building was cut in the early days of the nation; it was supplied to builders by the government when it was a means of providing work for the unemployed. The building was completed in 1812 and it is in excellent condition. The exterior is made up of granite blocks and the interior of the building is paneled with wood. The main entry is through the south staircase and vestibule.

The building has been used for many purposes over the years, including as a school, a courthouse, and a public library. It is now a museum and a historical landmark. The interior of the building is beautifully preserved, with its original woodwork and plaster. The library is located on the main floor, with the museum on the second floor. The building is open to the public and is a popular destination for visitors to the area. It is located at 10 Main Street, Kingston, Rhode Island.
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