

OUR BOOKSHELF

By Alice Rowe-Sleeman

READING FOR CHILDREN

Editor's Note—Our national leaders are showing deep concern over the lack of good reading amongst all our people, and especially are they disturbed by the scarcity of good books in our homes, as possessions. Alice Rowe-Sleeman well-known journalist and lecturer to clubs and radio audiences, has been engaged in extensive research on "Canadian Reading Habits." Today we publish an article by her dealing with this topic as it affects children, especially. Anyone wishing further information concerning this article, or any matter relevant to it, may communicate with "The Bookshelf," c/o The Statesman, Bowmanville. All information is freely given.—G. W. J.

"It is a great thing to start life with a few books of one's own," said A. Conan Doyle whose delight in reading was uncomplicated by the modern diversions of the radio, movies and television. Al-

though raised in comparative poverty, his family was well known in the Arts and Letters. This in nineteenth century Edinburgh was surprising to learn that even at ten years of age, young Doyle would sacrifice his meagre lunch money (2d) for a book from the barrel which stood outside the second hand bookshop near his school.

What can Arthur Conan Doyle do for children's reading in the year 1951? By precept and example, a great deal, especially for those who are charged with the responsibility for the education of today's boys and girls. Conan Doyle made his mark in medicine long before fame came to him as a writer. Books were his tools as well as his recreation. Had he spent his leisure in other ways, the world of the twentieth century would perhaps never have heard of Conan Doyle—

worse still, might never have known Sherlock Holmes. The key to any individual's develop-

ment is found in his use of leisure. In Conan Doyle's early life one discerns these significant influences: a sympathetic family, a library of his own and an unusually understanding dominie—in a community of enlightenment and culture. The paucity of similar wholesome influences for young Canadians, can explain to some extent the predicament of our Youth.

Importance of Leisure
There is plenty of evidence that a wave of apprehension concerning children's reading, is sweeping the Canadian nation. Anyone connected with the promotion of Young Canada Book Week (Nov. 11-18) must be aware of the "blind spot" in our national life—the lack of adequate library services outside of a few urban centres, and the dearth of good books permanently in the home. Our physical standard of living is the highest in the world. What of our cultural living standard? The answer is to be found in the use we make of our leisure time.

It can be demonstrated statistically that sport, radio, movies and television far outstrip reading as entertainment. In moderation these may with profit have a place in our living. But that they exercise almost a monopoly in the spare time of our children, is nothing short of tragic. One factor common to all these amusements is the time they usurp from a child's total leisure that would otherwise be spent in reading and in play. The latter two activities demand at least some effort and produce mental stimuli. Not so with radio, for the easy turning of a dial to produce diversion without participation, will in time dull a child's powers of concentration. Because no effort is required there is a condition of mental

transfer symbols into images, together with the qualities of such images, stimulates the mind as well as the imagination in a way that no other form of diversion is able to do. At the same time this demand on the brain expands and deepens artistic pleasure, for reading is still almost the only form of entertainment that permits a child the free use of his mind. If he reads by himself he chooses his images independently and the resultant thoughts are his own. As a defence against mob thinking these points are not lightly dismissed.

Home Influence—The Key to Character

Because a child is dependent on his elders for available reading matter, it is essential that any policy for advancing library facilities, must have the support of the general public. Herein lies a twofold danger, (1) mistaken adult notions about the value of books to children (2) the dissemination of half-formed theories in this age of rapid and widely communicated ideas. With reference to (1) may we suggest to parents the purchase of books of proven value and acceptability for children within specific groups—age and aptitudes. Your local library, bookstore and newspaper are in a position to advise if you wish. Give this suggestion a fair trial, bearing in mind that the younger the child the more likely he is to choose the enduring rather than the false. (2) The wholesome use of leisure time and the influence of a good home in an informed community are proven bulwarks against undesirable influences.

No amount of planning for the mental development of our children can be effective without

adult interest. Oxford University Press, \$2.50.

For the 8 yr. to 11 yr. group.—We have chosen themes that vary widely. Children over 8 will likely be studying music (instrumental) or crafts, and the geography lesson will have magic appeal for them. Any of the six books immediately noted, are suitable for more advanced ages as well.

The Little Magic Fiddler, by Lyn Cook.—This author has had marked success both as a writer of, and a story-teller to children. Donna, heroine of Miss Cook's latest success is a native of Winnipeg, and of Ukrainian ancestry. Like little Elin who wanted to skate, as a champion. Donna is obsessed with her violin. The basic years of her training for continental fame are an inspiration to childhood ambitions. MacMillans, \$2.75.

The Glad Summer, by Jeffery Farnol. This is a well-knit story with elements of mystery and intrigue. It portrays a pattern of life, basically wholesome and kind. The scene is laid in mid-nineteenth century in England. Characterization is excellent and diversity of dialect, authentic. Ryerson Press \$2.75.

Su-mei's Golden Year, by Marguerite Harmon Bro.—Even in the war-torn Orient little girls have happy dreams as they share with their parents the burden of work in the fields and in the home. The constant struggle between the traditional and the modern is potently developed for young folk. Throughout the story runs an undercurrent of assurance that these people will survive the present onslaught of alien aggression, as effectively as they have done for centuries past. Doubleday, \$3.00.

The Door in the Wall, by Marguerite de Angell.—England in the thirteenth century when the heroes were fighting in Scotland, mothers in attendance at Court. Robin, the hero, is stricken with polio and obliged to struggle back to self-reliance in quite the modern way. There is powerful emotional appeal: a joyful family re-union at Christmas brings Robin a well-earned rest from the responsibilities that fate thrust upon him. Distinctive drawings are as intriguing as the story itself. Excellent interpretation of medieval customs. Doubleday, \$3.00.

11 yr. to 14 yr. Group
The young adults in this group demand vigorous reading as well as play. Sport is a favorite topic for talk as well as for action. Hero worship is often intense. The taste is for the extreme rather than the moderate and adventure must be thrillingly dangerous. On this basis we confidently recommend these four:

Along Olympic Road, by Foster Hewitt, who needs no introduction to hockey fans. Syl Apps is the target for hero worship. The theme is timely and material factual. Wise counselling. Ryerson Press, \$1.50.

Gallows Rock by Morris Longstreth.—Smuggling, Mounties, and the treachery of fog-bound fishing grounds provide a colourful background for this story of realistic living, of strong contrasts in characters and descriptions. The scene is laid in Gaspé, Quebec. MacMillans, \$2.75.

Smoking Hoop by Gertrude Robinson.—This is an historical no-

vel of the American Revolution with locale around what is now the Quebec-American border. Young Timmy did an adult's job in scouting. Action is tense and exciting, warmed by the close comradeship of a boy and his horse. The story gives "the other side" of the Revolution, not told in our history books. Oxford Univ. Press, \$2.75.

Little Giant, by Olive Knox.—In reading this story of an adolescent boy, one is conscious of a warm admiration for a writer who can create so dramatically without overdoing it. Mrs. Knox has embellished factual background of the vivid descriptions of hunting and exploration around the early sites of York Factory, Port Nelson and Churchill on Hudson Bay. Henry Kelsey was an apprentice with the Hudson's Bay Co. at fourteen. His birth coincided with the founding of the company, whose business connections gave him his start in a career noted for so many "firsts." He was the first white person to preach amity to the warring Indians of the Plains, first to see the Saskatchewan River and to kill the ferocious wild animals peculiar to this region. Historical data is presented along with fascinating descriptions of natural lore and Indian customs. A monument to Henry Kelsey now stands at The Pas, Manitoba.

Perhaps if we familiarize our youth with heroic characters like "Little Giant" the qualities that make a hero will become more apparent to them.

WE RECOMMEND:
For all ages up to 8 years
Big and Little (Mother and Child) by Ylla.—Here are 28 full-page photographs of different animals (plus tortoise and swan) with brief descriptions in large type. British Book Service, \$2.00.

Sung and Serena Meet a Queen by Alison Uttley.—This book has a lovely childlike quality of fantasy with playful wit and originality. British Book Service, .70.

The New Singing Time by Satis N. Coleman.—28 songs with musical scores. There are action songs, lullabies and play themes—all within the range of young voices. Longmans, Green & Co., \$3.25.

For 8 yr. to 11 yr.
Judy's Book of Sweet-making by Muriel Goaman.—Should appeal to all children who like to make their own gifts. Easy-to-follow instructions for cooked and uncooked candy and cake icings. British Book Service \$1.25.

Gertie the Horse Who Thought and Thought, by Marguerite Glendinning. The scene is laid in Muskoka in summer. McGraw-Hill Co., \$3.00.

11 yrs. and over
Prairie School by Lois Lenski. Children of the rural prairie districts still ride to school on ponies. There is plenty of adventure for them in all seasons. This contains factual material and excellent illustrations by the author. Longmans' Green, \$3.50.

Abitibi Adventure, by Jack Hambleton.—Adults will enjoy this book which is based on sound knowledge of the development of our natural resources in Northern Ontario. Longmans' Green, \$2.75.

As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy.—Abraham Lincoln.

Principal Requests Noon Supervision At High School

Principal Louis Dippell pointed out at the last regular meeting of the Durham District High School Board, that the supervision at noon of pupils bringing their lunch to Bowmanville High School posed quite a problem.

He estimated between 160 and 170 pupils come within this category and requested that supervising teachers be remunerated for devoting their lunch hour to directing student activity along proper lines.

The problem does not exist in fine weather, observing that students usually devote their energy to outside activity. During the winter, however, inclement weather increases the numbers that remain indoors.

The B.H.S. staff expect to start organized volley ball in the gymnasium at lunch time, supervised

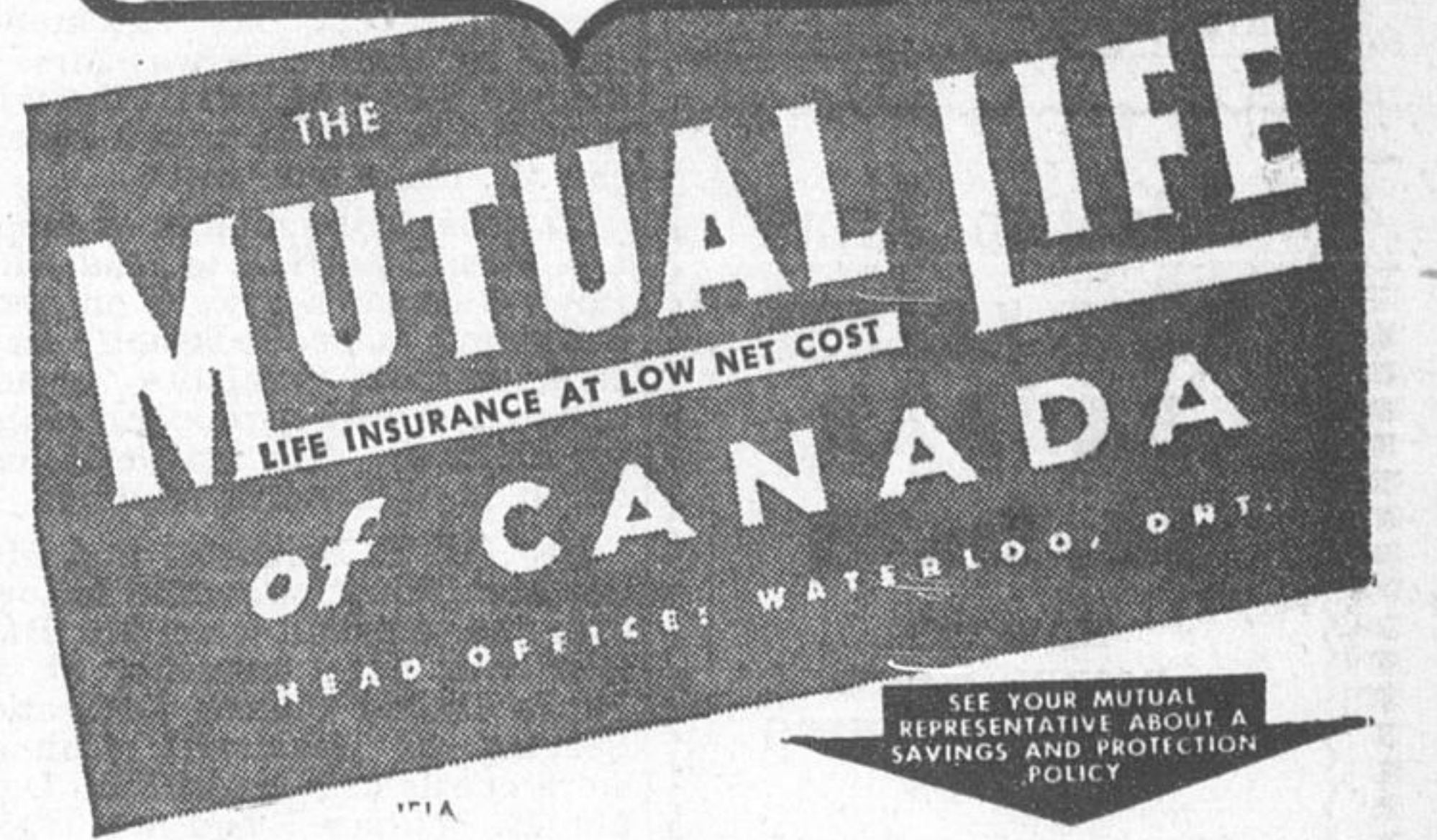
activity in the auditorium and have two study rooms with one teacher in charge of the halls. Six teachers will be needed to carry out the program which means approximately 1,000 teaching hours. Mr. Dippell suggested that a staggered noon hour be adopted next year to relieve the situation.

The Durham District High School Board did not choose to deal with the B.H.S. problem at their last meeting.

A piano was purchased by the Board for use in the Orono Continuation School. It was also announced that L. H. Winslow, Millbrook, was appointed to the High School Board at the November session of Counties Council.

The memory of the Bethlehem babe bears to mortals gifts greater than those of Magian kings—hopes that cannot deceive, that waken prophecy, gleams of glory, coronals of meekness, diadems of love.—Mary Baker Eddy.

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