

READING IN THE FAMILY: We are told that in spite of the installation of more and more television sets in Canadian homes, people are actually reading more books than they did a few years ago. This must mean that to some people—and evidently to a growing number of them—a good book has an attraction all its own; that more people are knowing the joy of companionship with the best minds of all time; are seeing new meaning and colour in everyday living as some writer of insight and skill interprets it; are thrilling to the music and majesty of poetry (we hope); are even *learning* with disciplined concentration, and liking it.

To children and young people a love of reading can mean still more. Parents are being told now that children who don't read fairy tales in Grade III, often turn up as retarded readers in Grade VII; that if a child doesn't acquire the reading habit as a child he won't know how to study for himself when he comes to grips with high school history and literature and science. Worse yet, he may never know the joy to be had from books all through a lifetime. As one authority expresses it: "One is not a child for very long, and if a child's first reading is not strong, rich and varied enough to stimulate his imagination, then he may never enter the fascinating world that is there for him to explore."

It seems pretty clear, then, that an interest in books should have its beginning in the family and before the child learns to read for himself. Children don't like to do things in isolation; they want someone to tell them a story, to read to them and with them. Annis Duff writes:

"I think very few mothers need to be told how to establish the 'pleasure value' of books. It will be, in the beginning, I think, a shared pleasure. One relaxed baby, bathed, fed and at peace with the world; one book of jolly coloured pictures; an accommodating parental lap, complete with owner who enjoys the book and shows it in face, hands, voice and whole self. These to be combined and taken slowly every evening with no interruptions allowed. The very choicest book can be used in this way with no fear of damage. The little companion can even help to hold it."

Next comes the stage of reading together. Happily, any book written for children that is really good literature can be enjoyed by adults too—take for example *Andersen's Fairy Tales*, *Just So Stories*, *Bambi*, *Wind in the Willows* as a few of the many. And what a treat the family have who read together *The Christmas Carol* as each Christmas season comes round; or at anytime of the year such a classic as Hawthorne's *The Great Stone Face*.

Of course we each want to do our private reading too; but in a family of readers what each one reads is sure to find its way into the conversation around the dinner table and a book recommended by one is likely to be read by the others. And speaking of personal reading, there's a lot to be said for a little planning. This need not detract from our enjoyment of books. It just means sitting down with our county or community librarian, finding what is available in fiction, biography, science, books on Canada and other parts of the world, poetry and essays, and choosing something that appeals to us from these varied fields.

We hear a great deal these days about the sale of objectionable literature. The problem is serious and calls for immediate action; but from a longer view one authority tells us that if every family had four books: the *Bible*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, a really great biography and a good anthology of poetry, and if both parents and children would read these books and talk about them, we could stamp out the taste for cheap literature in one generation.

Ethel Chapman