

## CHILDREN ASSIST IN CHOOSING BEST BOOKS

### Local School Leaders Evolve Scientific Plan for Selection of Reading Material

Editor's Note: The accompanying article is the second of a brief series relative to the Scientifically Graded Book List for Children worked out by Superintendent of Schools Washburne and his research assistants. The Winnetka Graded Book List is a scientific study of children's tastes in reading, including a list of 700 books which boys and girls have read and enjoyed, annotated with the children's own comments, and based on the opinions of 36,500 children in 34 cities and towns. It is to be published in December by the American Library association.

By MABLE VOGEL

(Research assistant, Winnetka public schools.)

(Continued from last week)

To determine the general causes back of the selection of books by children, a special study was made in the public libraries and in school libraries. Four members of the research staff questioned children as they were looking over books on the shelves. 215 books were picked from the shelves and looked over. Out of these 215 books, 103 were taken and 112 were rejected. Of those taken the majority were taken because of the subject matter. A large percentage were taken because of their appearance and a very few were taken because of recommendation. Of the 112 books which were rejected 63 per cent were rejected on appearance and 37 per cent were rejected on subject matter. This study showed that there was real selection of books going on and that children had definite reasons for reading or choosing the books which they took. It seems safe to assume that many of the books which were read and graded on our list were chosen in some such manner as those just described.

Here are a few examples of statements made by the children as to their reasons for taking or not taking a book. A 14 year old girl in the eighth grade took "The Dragon's Secret," by Seaman. She said: "I like Seaman's books. They are full of mystery and not too deep. They are nice for girls." A 15 year old boy in eighth grade rejected a book called "Pets for Pleasure and Profit." He said: "This book is too long. I have to read three books for credit, and this one would take too long." A 12 year old boy in sixth grade took "The Wolf Hunters." He looked at the pictures, and said: "See there, that's grand. That's what I call a good book." An 8 year old girl in the fourth grade took "Wood and Water Babies." She said: "It is a big, big book. I like to read a book with many pages."

There were, of course, many comments and remarks made which would be very helpful in selecting books, but they are too numerous to write.

The books have been arranged in the "Winnetka Graded Book List" by reading grades. Within each grade there were several possible ways of arranging the titles. They could, for example, be arranged according to the interest value given by children according to the number of cities in which each book was read, or according to the number of children who read each book. Upon examining the data on several books an arrangement

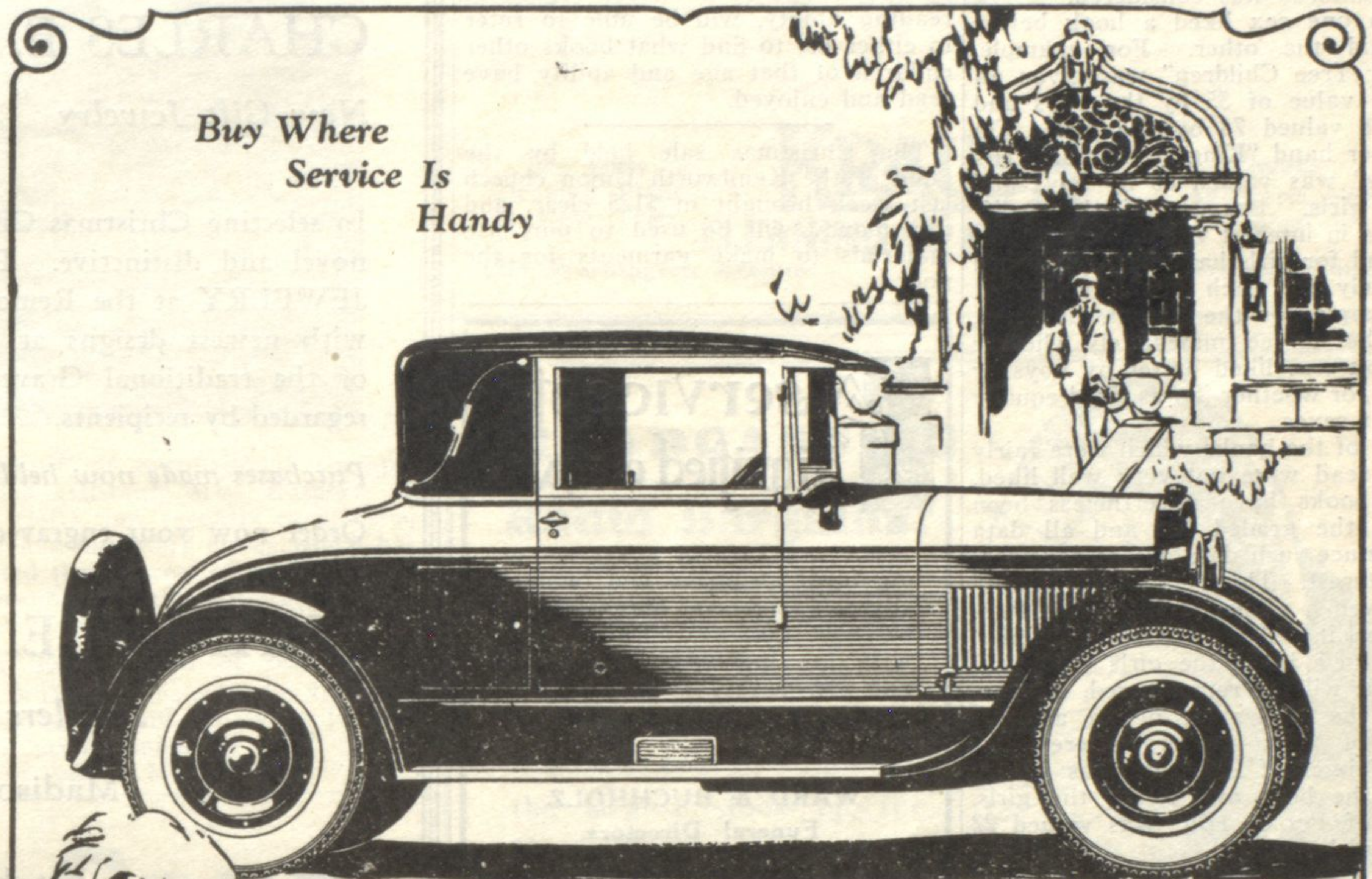
which took account both of the number of cities where each book was read and of the number of children reading it, an index number was obtained by multiplying the number of children who read and liked each book by the number of cities in which that book was read. A book might be read by a great many children but only in one or two cities. This book is obviously not as popular as one which is read by the same number of children but in a larger number of cities. In such a case the book may have been on the course of study or have been suggested in a certain class room or by a certain teacher. For example "Stories

of William Tell" was read and enjoyed by 100 children but only in four different cities. Another book, "Stories of American Life and Adventure," was read by 43 children but in ten different cities. The former book was read by many more children than the latter but in fewer cities. By obtaining the product of the two measures, these two books would be of about equal rank on the graded list.

#### Determine Average Interest

In grading a book according to the average reading grade of the children who liked the book we considered that

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