

# What Books Does London Read?

"Glad" Stories Have Biggest Following But "Best Sellers" Are Read Through Habit--Children Most Outspoken About Their Literary Likes--Thefts Uncommon.

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Illustrated by H. B. West.

What books does your neighbor read?

If he is serious and dignified and very impressive, does he read Thackeray and Dickens and Shakespeare?

If she's young and frivolous, does she read Scott Fitzgerald and Chambers and Elinor Glyn?

You never can tell.

For instance. He was a youth of the jazz-bo type. He wore a shirt of delicate mauve silk slashed with broad stripes of palest green. His overcoat was a form fitter. The lapels were generously wide and well cut away to show the proud shirt bosom surmounted by a low collar, from which hung a limp shoestring tie.

As he walked along Queen's avenue his checkered, bell-bottomed trousers caught up the loose snow. He swung up the steps of the public library.

But he did not go in to borrow "The Sheik." He returned a book on Horace and left with the complete works of Rupert Brooke.

As he went out the door, he nearly bumped into a very pompous old gentleman with eyeglasses and a cane. The pompous old gentleman went on in and waited thirty minutes trying to decide between a romance of the southern seas and a lurid detective mystery with a batting average of two murders per chapter.

No, you never can tell. To the student of human nature, to the psychologist, the library could be a textbook for the gathering of material. For there each day may be seen the rich man, poor man, beggarman, thief of the old nursery rhyme.

The library is the most cosmopolitan spot in London. Every day from nine in the morning until after nine at night there is a never-ending stream of traffic to and from the hospitable building at the corner of Wellington street and Queen's avenue. It is the common meeting ground of thousands. There merchant prince and pauper, professional man and maid-of-all-work rub elbows as they pore over the same volumes.

## "Best Sellers" Lead.

The most popular books at the library are, as elsewhere, the so-called "best sellers," the books by the authors who have made the greatest name for themselves in the field of appealing fiction. As soon as a Rupert Hughes or James Oliver Curwood book is announced through the press the library officials are deluged with inquiries for "the latest."

There are more than sixty-five thousand books in the library. Last year they were read by 393,993 people. Thousands of books were worn out and rebound only to be worn out again and then destroyed, to be replaced with new ones. Some really good stories were not read at all.

The library records show that the books which offer a pretty picture of sorrow giving way to happiness, of love triumphant over the petty jealousies and troubles which are a part of life, have the widest appeal.

Thus we find Ethel M. Dell leading the field in the daily popularity contest of authors. For every time one person asks for Barrie's "A Window in Thrums," a hundred clamor for Miss Dell's "The Unknown Quantity."

The happy ending insures a wide circulation. Whether the readers want to feel that life is not so bad; whether they wish to gloss over its imperfections through the medium of books, or whether they just want to take flights into the realms of loveliness through losing themselves between the covers of the "glad" books, statistics do not say. They do say, though, that men and women alike crave a story wherein is written in the last chapter, "And they lived happily ever after."

Librarian Richard E. Crouch explains it this way. Books are read for education or recreation. If they are to relax the mind they must be soothing. The doctors, harassed by a long day of professional worries, drop into the library on the way home to pick up a book that will carry them away from thoughts of the workaday world.

## Problems Need Soothing.

Men who are struggling with big problems in the downtown world like to sink into the depths of an armchair in the evening and bury themselves in a book that requires little or no mental effort to enjoy. They want rest. The library specializes in service to the citizens. The books are ready for them.

There is another reason. People are, at

## Public Library Shows Opposites In Human Character



R.E. CROUCH  
Librarian of London Public Library who succeeded Prof. Fred London over one year ago.



heart, idealists. They have their dreams. They love to think that life is rosy. They can and do throw about it a halo of romance through the books they read.

In general works, "The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page" has proved one of the most fascinating books of recent years. This work leads in the non-fiction department.

Papini's "Life of Christ" is almost as widely read. The two books have headed the list for over two years. Robinson's "Mind in the Making" has been a great success, as has "Heirs Apparent," by Philip Gibbs.

"Chez Nous," by Adjutor Rivard, who makes his story a guide book into the ways and manners of eastern township folk, is now being taken up. It has been called an "introduction into the hearts of the French-Canadians."

"My Window in the Street of the World," by Prof. Mavor of Toronto, has been read by thousands lately and the attraction for the work shows no signs of waning.

A prominent bookseller finds these same books going rapidly. He adds to the list "The Old Lady," by Hugh Walpole, and "The Green Hat," by Michael Arlen.

Other books which are receiving lots of attention are "So Big," by the gifted Edna Ferber, and "The White Monkey," by Galsworthy. "The Gun Fanner," by Perkins, is going strong. "The Little French Girl," by Ann Douglas Sedgwick, has made a decided hit.

## Many Sabatini Fans.

Anything that Sabatini has written is welcome. Oppenheim, too, has a great following. Just now, his "Passionate Quest" bids fair to push Zane Grey into the background.

Frank Packard's stories are never idle. They come and go week in and week out. Stories by Ridgwell Cullum are rarely on the shelves for long. The Gene Stratton Porter stories never rest either.

The average life of the library book is from 10 to 30 circulations. It depends on the quality of the stock and the usage it receives. When it is no longer fit to go out, it is rebound and started on its travels once more.

The rebinding is done so well that the books are able to make anywhere from 30 to 130 more trips to and from London homes. During the time they make occasional visits to the "library doctors," who bandage their tears and scratches and start them out again. There is a continuous stream of ailing books going into the story hospital.

Dickens and Thackeray go regularly to the book surgeons. Those authors are so well known and have so won the hearts of all that their works get ragged from overwork. There are six complete sets of Dickens, Scott and Thackeray making the rounds of city homes.

The library abounds in humor. People are ever on the lookout for fun. Jokes have a way of travelling from one library to another clear across the continent.

Some of the jokes are told at the expense of library officials, who enjoy them greatly in most instances. Miss Lillian H. Grant, who is in charge of the record department, tells this story of the crusty librarian in a small city.

## Kentucky Cardinal.

An attractive girl entered and asked for "The



MISS RUTH LOVELESS  
Head of children's work in the London Public Library

Life of the Kentucky Cardinal."

"Theological department," the librarian snapped.

"This cardinal was a bird," said the surprised young thing.

"No doubt you'll get a full account of his past in the book," was the retort.

A freshman who entered Western last fall was the object of a practical joke that took him to the library. He was told that his class had to write an essay on Shakespeare's "Our Kind Butcher Moved Away." He had never heard of the sonnet. Neither had the jokesters. It was just a happy thought as he passed by them. However, he promised to let his friends get their "dope" on it before he returned the poem. He set off for the library.

The next day they met in the cafeteria. The bitten one was the first to speak.

"Say did you ever read Shakespeare's 'Small Town Jokes That Sapheads Play'? You should read it. I'll get it for you at the library."

A man who said he wanted something really deep had in mind Marie Corelli's "The Sorrows of Satan." The book was out, but he would accept no other in its stead. This leads to a peculiar circumstance noticed at the library.

For years, different firms advertising in the newspapers have carried the slogan, "Accept No Substitute." This has so been drummed into the public ear that it has had an effect far more reaching than was intended. Often when a person asks for a book and it is not on the shelves that person will murmur "Accept No Substitutes," and walk out.

On the other hand, some people take a sub-

## 393,993 VOLUMES MOVED IN 1925

The number of books circulated last year was 393,993.

This was an increase of 13,692 over 1923. Over 13,000 books of fiction are taken out each month.

Books taken out by children amounted to 123,678.

The east branch leads the southeast and south branches in circulation.

There are 65,331 volumes in the library. Five thousand books were added last year.



LONDON PUBLIC LIBRARY  
Which made nearly 400,000 loans of books last year and now contains 30,000 volumes over its intended capacity.



## YOU CAN TELL THE TIME OF THE YEAR BY THE BOOKS PEOPLE READ

First novel, had such a run not many weeks ago. The book, though not to be compared with the more recent works of that brilliant woman, actually was more sought after than her "My Antonia" or her latest, "A Lost Lady."

A young woman who "just dotes" on Miss Cather's unhappy ending stories noticed an old copy on the shelves. All her friends read it to compare it with the later works.

The death of an author at once stimulates the circulation of his writings. At the same time the reference department is besieged with inquiries concerning his life.

When Peter MacArthur died a short time ago those who had read his philosophies of the farm quickly took them up again. At the same time many who knew the great Canadian only by reputation hastened to get something, anything that he had produced.

So it is with the death of a king or a statesman or a famous sportsman. Their works as set down by themselves or their lives as chronicled by others are at a premium for days or weeks, according to the life they lived and the deeds they left to be recorded.

One Monday morning not long ago, ten people inquired for "Twelve Tests of Character," by Harry Emerson Fosdick. A minister had mentioned it in his sermon the night before.

The librarians can almost tell the weather by the books that go out. Miss Katherine McLaughlin says that they are the barometers of the seasons. Publications on interior decorating (closely allied with housecleaning) announce the approach of spring. Calls for "Hints on Gardening" show that the backyards are free of snow.

When women hurry in and ask for suggestions on "preserving," it is a sign that the fruit is piling up on the market square.

The holidays and feast days, too, warn of their coming. Mothers and teachers want to tell the children something of the meaning of Easter, of Christmas and of St. Valentine's Day.

## Native Books Attract.

The love for the works of Canadian authors as expressed through the records of the library evidences an increased measure of patriotism. Mr. Crouch says that the striking interest displayed in native writers and in Canadian stories manifests the springing up of a national consciousness; that a national viewpoint is strongly asserting itself. This is shown through readers as well as authors.

Day by day more calls come for tales with Canadian settings. Notable among recent books that demonstrated the regard for such works is "The Viking Heart," by Laura Salverson. It deals with the Scandinavian peoples of the west.

The children's department is a miniature library in itself. The boys and girls have their own reference departments, filling cabinets,

editions de luxe, in fact everything the adult enjoys.

Added to this, they have story hours when Miss Ruth Loveless, who is in charge of the department, reads to them from "The Water Babies" and other favorite fantasies.

The children's room is one of the happiest spots in town. It is on the second floor of the main library. Every day, especially after school, scores of boys and girls gather to read, to look at pictures, or spend a few minutes with the mud turtles and goldfish that play about in the aquarium.

Fairy tales, stories of adventure and love stories are the popular themes. The reference records, however, show that childish curiosity, blended with a strong desire to know the "why and the wherefore" of many things, leads to many questions that would bother the average adult.

Here are some sample questions from the records. They have been taken in the order in which they were asked by different children.

How are brooms made?

How do steam engines function?

How is cotton manufactured?

In each case the child is provided with a book that will explain what is desired.

Other children wanted books on the lives of Canadian painters, on wild animals, the British possessions, and on radio.

As with the adult library, there is humor. One little miss asked for a book, "Prudence of the Parsnips." She wanted "Prudence of the Parsonage."

## Mistakes of Youth.

"Sour Tales of Dough" is the name often given to "Tales of Sourdough." Some twistings of titles are quite quaint. For instance, "Little Miss Daisy" is often referred to as "Black-Eyed Susan."

The children are frank about their likes and dislikes. Thus Bobby J., aged 11, returned "Huckleberry Finn" with the remark that he found it "very draggy."

One little girl who was anxious to read "Alice in Wonderland" asked for it every day for nearly a week. It was always out. The last time the request was made the librarian gave the usual answer that it had not been returned. "Same old story," was the comment of the disgusted youngster, who promptly forgot about the incident.

The other day a boy returned a book saturated with oil. He said that he had let it fall in a mud puddle and cleaned it with gasoline.

Through the children's department, the adult library, the magazine and reference departments, a daily year-round service in literature is offered to the public.

The library is a municipal institution. The privileges are free to the citizens, though, according to Mr. Crouch, scarcely a week passes that he does not meet some one who thinks that there is a charge made for taking out books.

Londoners are not the only ones who use the library. Calls for information come from as far east as Montreal and as far west as Calgary, for the building is a storehouse for invaluable information.

Many now priceless books, dealing with Middlesex and Western Ontario, have been given to the institution. There are first editions, historical documents, letters and objects of art.

London has access to all these things. With them goes the hospitality of the library and the courteous treatment of the officials which is so well known by all.

And London has signified her appreciation for the good things the library has to offer. Every month sees a decided increase in the number of people who take out library cards. Every day marks a growth in the various departments.

## Run on First Novel.

"Alexander's Bridge," Willa Sibert Cather's