EDUCATIONAL COMMENT

"CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT TO READ?"

It was the dogmatic Dr. Johnson who made the pronouncement: "Sir, a man ought to read just as inclination leads him, for what he reads as a task will do him little good." In his presence, Men were Mice, no doubt, and agreed; but the good doctor's authority has shriveled with the years, and today we can speak back: "Very good, Dr. Johnson!" we may say. "But, Sir, if the task be self-imposed!" Though dead and gone, Dr. Johnson would have the last word: "Self-imposition, Sir, is but a corollary of inclination." So be it, let a man follow his inclination in reading.

Then we must know, not what his inclination should be, but what his inclination is. This practice we follow when we entertain guests for dinner, planning not what our friends should eat, but what our friends do eat and enjoy.

For reading is like a great feast spread on the banquet table. And there is always the possibility that the literary food which you find wholesome may give me the "hives." One man's meat is another man's poison, in literature as well as in food.

It was a certain Jack Spratt who had an allergy to fat; and it was Mrs. Spratt who, on the other hand, could eat no lean. Family harmony was insured by their varied tastes; it would have been disastrous if Jack had insisted that his wife's appetite and tastes should accord with his own.

Let reading, then, proceed as the reader's inclination would direct. It is a very fact that one will do better to look about him in a library and make his own selection rather than have his reading chosen for him by the World's Greatest Authority—whoever that may be!

A STILL SMALL VOICE

An eloquent appeal for federal assistance in the enrichment of library facilities appears in the current issue of The Kansas Teacher. Not the building but the books, points out the editorial, contributes most "to the development and growth of the human spirit."

Fortunately, in Virginia the State Board of Education has already adopted a policy of improving school libraries; and a start has now been made.

Here is the still small voice from Kansas: "With all our pride over new school buildings, new school auditoriums, new school gymnasiums, and new athletic fields that have come to us in recent years largely through the beneficence of a federal Santa Claus, we need to do a little invoicing in certain other matters. Among these may be pointed out the school library. For in most of the city school systems, the school library is the Cinderella of the family. This is not as it should be. When thousands and hundreds of thousands are spent on school architecture and only a few paltry pennies per pupil are spent on books, something is greatly wrong. Costly and imposing school buildings contribute but little to the development and
growth of the human spirit. A wealth of books contributes much. It is a wise superintendent who would rather have a shabby school building with rich library facilities than an ornate and boastful school building which is poverty stricken in the matter of books. It is high time for school administrators to diminish their zeal for WPA building grants and consider the need of the children in the matter of books. Let's have a renaissance in regard to books and school libraries.

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DR. PETERS SPEAKS IN KANSAS

Dr. D. W. Peters, president of the Radford State Teachers College, will make an address on "The Unit as a Basis of Pupil Experience in Curriculum Development," before two sections of the Kansas State Teachers Association. Dr. Peters before his appointment as president of the Radford college was Director of Instruction for the Virginia State Board of Education and had general supervision over the Virginia Curriculum program. He will speak at Wichita on November 4 and at Hutchinson on November 5.

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BOOK WEEK

Book Week will be observed this year from November 13 to 19. "Accent on Youth," a 16-page booklet for booksellers, librarians, scout-leaders, and teachers, listing all the suggestions, hints, and ideas that may be useful in the observance of Book Week, is available for free distribution. The manual also contains a good list of plays suitable for presentation. Requests should be sent to Book Week Headquarters, 62 West 45 Street, New York.

Book Week has helped to promote reading for fun and enlightenment in schools, libraries, and homes the country over, say those who endorse it.

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THE READING TABLE

**Reading For Fun.** (A reading list for boys and girls in elementary schools). By Eloise Ramsey, Chairman and Editor. 211 West 68th Street, Chicago: National Council of Teachers of English, 20 cents; 15 cents in lots of ten or more.

What shall we read to the children? What shall they read to themselves? Parents and teachers who have been asking this question for years now have a most colorful answer in *Reading for Fun*, an attractively illustrated and annotated reading list.

It is not merely a book list. The annotations are addressed to the children, and one glance at its pages will send them straight to the library to find "the very book" they want. The books are grouped around the things children like to read about. If it is elephants they need to find out about, a whole page is devoted to them, opening with the remark,

"Babar is the gayest elephant in books. There are three beautiful books about his funny adventures, and those of Celeste, his sister: *The Story of Babar, The Travels of Babar*, and *Babar, the King* by Jean de Brunoff.

These are for little folk. Another whole page tells the wonders of elephants for older boys and girls.

So it goes, for ninety-five fascinating pages, from *Our Friend the Horse, Ships and Trains, Automobiles and Airplanes, Puppets and Marionettes*, to *Gay Handkerchiefs and Wooden Toys in Czechoslovakia and Christmas Everywhere*. No subject of interest to boys and girls is forgotten, and in each case the list is carefully chosen by recognized teachers of children's literature who have actually tried them out with children.

Each section such as *Old Tales and Brave Deeds, Magic and Poetry, Animals Everywhere, and City, Country, and Travel* is introduced by an enticing page of pictures done in blue and black by a clever artist who includes everything from the Potatoes' Dance to the Monkey's Tail.

This is a reading list to make readers of...