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THE FORUM

A Boy's Reading.

La Grande, Jan. 4.—(To the Editor) —Two or three weeks ago, the editor of The Observer, in response to a request, gave a list of books suitable for fourteen year old boys. This was drawn from his own experience. On reading it, I was much interested, as his experience largely coincided with mine. On mentioning this fact, to the editor, he asked me to write an article on similar lines. To this I agreed, and I now endeavor to fulfill my promise.

It was my good fortune as a child and boy, to live at a time when the custom of reading aloud in the family circle or at social gatherings was still in vogue. It is a regrettable feature

of our modern life that this has almost become obsolete. And the causes which render it so are more regrettable than the fact itself.

My first acquaintance with books, began by hearing them read aloud. In this way before my seventh year, I became familiar with Robinson Crusoe and some fairy tales. It was at this age also, that I had read to me, that classic, "Bunyan's Pilgrim Progress." I well remember the keen interest with which I followed his adventures, and looked forward to each Sunday evening, for it was reserved for that time to hear further of them. I may say here that I was brought up in a strong religious atmosphere and from a child I learned the Scriptures, which are able to make one wise unto salvation. Sunday, moreover, was a holy day with all secular reading, strictly forbidden.

When I was seven years old, I was

sent to a boarding school conducted by a lady and her two daughters. At meal times we were forbidden to talk, and at tea to keep us quiet and interested, some story book was read. At this school I remained four years, and during this time I thus heard quite an extensive list of books. On casting about in my memory, I find that it was a comprehensive and valuable one for cultivating a sound taste in literature.

Among these I recall the following which I heartily recommend to boys of that age and even older ones, if they are not already familiar with them:

"Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales," "Ivanhoe," "Guy Mannering," "Lady of the Lake," "Marmion," "Lay of the Last Minstrel," by Sir Walter Scott; "Greek Heroes," "At the Back of the North Wind," by George MacDonald; "The Boy in Grey," and "The Water Babies," by Charles Kingsley; "The Book of Golden Deeds," "Chaplet of Pearls," "The Caged Lion," by Charlotte M. Yonge; "Alice in Wonderland," "Alice Through the Looking Glass," by Lewis Carroll; "Parables from Nature," by Mrs. Gatty; "The Three Midshipmen" and "The Three Admirals," by W. H. Kingston; "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea," and "Round the World in Eighty Days," by Jules Verne; "The Conscript," "Waterloo," and "The Invasion of France," by Erckmann-Chatelain; "The Christmas Carol" by Dickens; "Little Women and Little Men," by Louisa May Alcott; "Undine" and "Sinttram and His Companions," by La Motte Fouquet.

In addition to these, I read a number by myself for the love of reading had been thus stimulated. It is probable that some of the above I read over to myself with other books by the same authors. I remember being intensely interested in Longfellow's "Hiawatha."

After leaving this school, most of my reading was done by myself and, like the editor of The Observer, I became an omnivorous reader, and at fourteen was reading any novel on which I could lay my hands. Between eleven and eighteen I had acquired a familiarity with the Waverley, Dickens and Bulwer Lytton's novels, Harrison Ainsworth's and Dumas'. I will try to enumerate some of these according to their classification.

"The Boy Tars and Boy Hunters," by Mayne Reid; "Tom Brown's School Days," by Hughes; "Eric and St. Winifred's," by Farrar; "Mr. Midshipman Easy," "Jacob Faithful," "Japhet in Search of a Father," and "The Phantom Ship," by Marryat; "The Tower of London," "Windor Castle," "Jack Sheppard," "Guy Fawkes," and "The Lancashire Witches," by Harrison Ainsworth. These are of the same character as Dumas' "The Three Musketeers," and "Twenty Years After," being historical. I have derived great benefit from the popular historical novel, though its history has to be taken with caution, but it has the merit of making a historical past vivid and lifelike.

Of Dickens' books, "The Pickwick Papers," "Little Dorrit," "Nicholas Nickleby," "Dombey and Son," "Oliver Twist," "Martin Chuzzlewit" and "The Christmas Carol" should by all means be read, if not any of the others. Of Scott, "Ivanhoe," "Guy Mannering," "The Pirate," "Kenilworth," and "The Talisman," besides his poems represent the minimum. Of Lytton "The Last Days of Pompeii" easily stands first, to which "Night and Morning" and "Pelham" may be added, and three books by Kingsley, "Westward Ho," "Hypatia," and "Hereward the Wake," to these I have previously mentioned.

Thackeray claims attention for "The Newcomes," "Pendennis," "Henry Esmond" and "The Virginians." His "Vanity Fair" which some regard as his strongest book, is more for adults than for boys. Victor Hugo's "Les Misérables" is important, though perhaps boys would find his "Notre Dame," and "Toilers of the Sea," more interesting. William Black's "Strange Adventures of a Phaeton," "Ultima Thule" and "A Princess of Thule," with Blackmore's charming "Lorna Doone" and Charles Reade's

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COCHRAN & FBERHARD—Geo. T. Cochran and Colon R. Eberhard Attorneys. La Grande National Bank Building.

E. W. EASTMAN—Lawyer—Office Rooms 1 and 3, La Grande National Bank Building.

R. J. GREEN—Attorney at Law. Rooms 14-15, Palmer-Roesch Bldg., La Grande, Ore. Practices in all State and Federal courts.

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"The Cloister and the Hearth," appeared strongly to boys of my generation, also Wilkie Collins' "The Woman in White," and "The Moonstone." Shakespeare plays, "Macbeth," "Hamlet," "The Tempest" and "The Merchant of Venice," ought to be read and studied, as also Goldsmith's "Vicar of Wakefield," though this last will not appeal to American as to English boys. "Daniel Deronda," by George Eliott is a strong book though not so well known as "Adam Bede" and "The Mill on the Floss."

I did not read many books by American authors until I came to this country. Besides Miss Olcott's and some of Longfellow's poems, I had only come across Mrs. Stowe's "Uncle Tom Cabin" and "Dred." It is possible that I read also some of Fennimore Cooper's, but Washington Irving and Hawthorne I read first over here.

Since then a number of more recent writers have appeared, Stevenson, Conan Doyle, Kipling, etc. I do not mention them, for they were not part of my boyhood environment. The boys of the present should, however, not neglect them.

"Of making of books there is no end," and especially in recent years a flood of story books has been let loose. Perhaps I am old fashioned and partial, but none of the newer sorts appeal to me like the old ones, and on reading them I cannot help thinking that the old are better.

UPTON H. GIBBS.

It's Hard To See The One You Love—Unhappy.

Says a character in a story printed in the January Woman's Home Companion:

"Why can't Walt be contented? What if we are poor! I'd work my hands off if it would help—but it don't. Why have I got to sit by day after day and see him fret and stew and eat his heart out because he can't live the way you did? It seems as if I couldn't bear it any longer." She turned toward the portrait of the man. "Sometimes I hate you!" she cried. "It's because you were no-account and worthless that Walt's poor now. If you'd have done what you ought to have done he'd have plenty and be happy. He'd never have had anything to do with me if he'd had all that money, but oh—I'd even him him up now if it'd get back what he used to have." She drew a long aching breath. "It's the hardest thing in the world to see somebody you love unhappy and not be able to do one thing to make it different."

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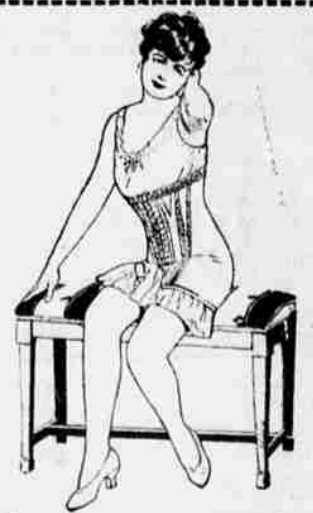
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