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HOME READING OF SCHOOL CHILDREN.

By ARTHUR P. IRVING, West Boylston, Mass.

In order to ascertain what my pupils were reading outside of school I made, not long ago, inquiries in each grade from the fourth to the first year in the high school. This inquiry was made during the fall term, so the children had been in the schools from three to nine years. Each pupil was asked to write a list of the books he could remember having read, to give also the name of the author, and to indicate the book he liked best. About 600 children made such a list. Only 6 failed to do so. Of two boys in the 6th grade one said he had so much to do that he didn't get time to read, the other said, "I reads the murders in the papers." Two boys in the 8th grade had read several books but could n't remember the names. A boy and a girl in the 9th grade said they did n't like to read books.

The following is a summary of the 7th grade lists: No. of pupils 121; boys 61, girls 60, ages 11 or 12 years. No. of different titles given 676; by boys 401, by girls 341. The author was mentioned 72 times.

Largest number of books mentioned by a boy, 31, by a girl 27
Lowest " " " " 1, " 4
Average " " " " 11.4, " 11.6

The girls seem to have read more, but a less variety.

Of the 676 titles 504 were given by only one child each or, in other words, only 122 were read by two or more children.

Some of the more commonly read books (included regular readings of *Youth's Companion*, *St. Nicholas* and a few others),—

<i>Youth's Companion</i> , read by	40 boys, 33 girls, total	73
<i>Robinson Crusoe</i> , " "	32 " 26 " "	58
<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> , " "	15 " 20 " "	35
<i>Black Beauty</i> , " "	4 " 26 " "	30
<i>Five Little Peppers</i> , " "	4 " 13 " "	17
<i>Longfellow's Poems</i> , " "	5 " 9 " "	14
<i>Little Women</i> , " "	— " 15 " "	15
<i>Rip Van Winkle</i> , " "	6 " 6 " "	12

Twenty-three books, among which are *Old-Fashioned Girl*, *Peck's Bad Boy*, *Swiss Family Robinson*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Arabian*

Nights, Little Lord Fauntleroy, Pilgrim's Progress, and various fairy stories, had from five to nine readers each. The remaining 141 books had from 2 to 4 readers each.

In reply to what books they liked best, 53 titles were given. Of these—

Youth's Companion was given by	9
Uncle Tom's Cabin " "	5
Five Little Peppers " "	4
Preferred by one each,	43

Among the last were Around the World in 80 Days, Boys of '76, Optic's stories, Alger's stories, Wild West, Life of Washington, Misunderstood, Little Nugget, Ragged Dick, and Syble's influence.

The girls had read many of Alcott's, Pansy's and other well known books for girls, a large amount of fairy stories and many odds and ends. The boys seem to have run to adventure stories. Many had read girls' books and anything else they could find.

In the 5th and 6th grade lists are mostly children's books, but Uncle Tom's Cabin had been read by 30 in grade V. In the 8th grade the lighter vein of literature begins to creep in, but, as a rule, only one or two books in a list. In the 9th grade and first year of the High School lists the titles of the juvenile books are, for the most part, forgotten, but the authors of these books are given. In these lists we find the more common books read by adults.

A great many in all the grades testified that they had read many more than they could remember. The boys were very careful to cover up their Jesse James literature. (I happen to know that business in this sort of reading matter is good in this town.) A typical list by a boy of the 7th grade—Huy Harris, Julian Mounator, Dan the News Boy, Three Scouts, Cudjoe's Cave, Travels in the Mountains Series, Travels in the Gunboat Series, Travels in the Prairies Series, Wild West, The Mountain Cave, Gold Magnet, Robinson Crusoe, Cruises of the Snow Bird, Oscar Peterson, Pocket Rifle, Tom Sawyer, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Adventures by Land and Sea, Raft Mates, Canoe Mates, Camp Mates, The Deerfoot, Log Cabin, and Afloat series, All Aboard for Lakes and Mountains and for Sun Rise Land, A Trip to Africa, Silver Medal, Soldier Boy.

A list by a girl in the 7th grade—Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Capt. January, Marie, Melody, Narcissa, Frank Fowler the Cash Boy, Victor Vane, Tony the Hero, Tom Temple's Career, Tan Pile Jim, My New Home, Uncle Tom's Cabin, Jolly Good Times Series, Charlie Bell, Faith Gartney's Girlhood,

The Purdy Series, by Sophie May, When I Was Your Age, Five Little Peppers Series, Polly, Palace Beautiful, Nan, Rolfe House, Dear Daughter Dorothy, Robin's Recruit, Six Little Rebels, Doctor Dick, Beautiful Joe, Queen Hildegard Series, Little Women, Little Men, Joe's Luck.

This girl is a bright pupil. She says she picked these books out herself mostly from the public library. She owns very few of them.

Here is an unusual list by a boy of 14 years in the 8th grade—Blue Ribbon, History of Scotland, History of France, Bible and Modern Discoveries, Fred Markham in Russia, Zig-Zag Journeys in Classic Lands, Zig-Zag Journeys in Northern Lands, Zig-Zag Journeys in Antipodes, 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, Ants Bees and Wasps, Rob Roy Canoe on the Baltic, American Wonderlands, History of the English Language, At War with Pontiac, History of Greece, Origin of Species, Natural History of Selborne, Environs of London, Environs of Paris, Ten Great Religions, Story of the New World, Geography of the Heavens, The Solar System, Geological Excursions, Heroes of the Dark Continent.

At the other end of the scale is this list by a girl in the 9th grade—Witch Hazel, Lena Rivers, Thrice Wedded, Esther the Fright, The Gypsy's Daughter, Broken Wedding Ring, and others she could n't remember. This girl owns none of these books. She "just ran across them."

After studying these figures and lists it seems plain that there is far too much aimless, wasted reading among our young people at the very age when right example is so important. Something can and must be done to direct this work. The home, the school and the libraries, both Sunday School and public, ought to give this matter serious and scholarly consideration. Less reading matter, but of the right sort, is needed. Children need to own their books for reading and re-reading. Discriminate and tactful direction of the reading of children by those in charge is of the greatest importance.