

130 Elgin Avenue
London W.9
England.
19th April 1971

Dear Mrs. Hart.

In answer to your letter of the 5th I am rather at a loss how to reply. But I will write down some random thoughts as to my own reading as a child, which might be of interest to the children, many I hope, who will visit your library.

From the age of 5 I lived in a village in Suffolk, one of the Eastern counties of England. This was long ago in 1905.

The village was far from the nearest town. It was surrounded by fields of wheat in which we often put up a covey of partridges, pasture land in which cows grazed and oakwoods the haunt of pheasants. The lanes round the village were steep & rutted. High hedges grew on either side and branches of oak, ash & beech trees crossed overhead to make each lane look like a green tunnel.

In the grass at the base of the hedges grew violets both mauve & white, Lords & Ladies, Ragged Robin & wild geranium. There were also many

little birds & a host of butterflies.
How lovely it was! Not a car to be
seen, only the occasional horse drawn
carrier's cart clapping along.

Lovely as the setting was, the village
had one great disadvantage. There was
no library & the village store sold no
books.

I and my two sisters were lucky in
this respect. My mother bought books.
She also read to us. We in our turn
learnt to read early & were enjoying
long rather grown up books by the
time we were 6 & 7. In fact we loved
reading & read so much that, at times,
mother was worried. She feared we
might strain our eyes by doing so.
But young eyes are wonderful. It
did them no harm.

Of the books we read, the ones I
remember best are; first, all the
Beatrice Potter's. We adored Mrs. Tiggly
Winkle & the Tailor of Gloucester.

And then to sterner stuff. Charlotte
Yonge, the Dove in the Eagle's Nest;
Fenimore Cooper the last of the
Mohicans; Ralph Bolderwood,
Robbery under Arms; Captain Marryat,
Children of the New Forest & Peter
Simple; Reade, The Cloister & the Hearth;

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and most loved. ~~The~~ ~~76~~ Harrison
Ainsworth's Tower of London,

Add to this, the Waverley novels;
all of Dickens; Kingsley's Heroes;
Dumas, Count of Monte Christo;
Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare and
many others.

In fact we almost had a
library of our own.

On looking back I feel that I and
my sisters owe a great debt of gratitude
to my mother for giving us this taste
for reading.

Though, when we were young, there was
no T.V., no radio & only the occasional
bad flickering black & white film shown
at the village hall, we were never
bored. Books took the place of these.

Also we gained, through reading,
not only great pleasure, but some
knowledge, if only a sketchy one, of
Greece & Rome in classical times,
the Crusaders, Mediaeval England,
the Napoleonic wars, early days in
Australia, Victorian times and much
else. A knowledge which was to
help us a great deal with our
more advanced ^{lessons} ~~classes~~ in later
years

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But what, I think, is more important still is, that this sort of knowledge is one that will help us to realise that we too are part of history.

What men & women did before makes us what we are now, & what we are now affects the future.

To read of men & women of days gone by is to learn something of ourselves. For, after all, they are part of us.

Yours sincerely

Edward Ardeygone