

CHILDREN'S LIBRARIAN

A CANADIAN children's librarian who has tried other jobs but says without hesitation that she has found work with children's books the most interesting, is Elizabeth English, from Boys' and Girls' House, Toronto Public Library. Miss English has come to New Zealand to see something of library work here, and is working in Wellington at the schools' branch of the National Library Service.

Boys' and Girls' House is the oldest established independent children's division of a public library in North America, and is recognised as being one of the finest libraries of this kind in existence. There 17 branches of the library in Toronto—they take the form of boys' and girls' rooms in the main libraries—and there are also 30 branches at schools. A development which has not yet been tried in New Zealand, and which has proved most successful in Canada, is that of having trained librarians visit schools once a week to talk to the children about books and help them to select their reading matter. Most children have a firm idea

about what they want to read, thinks Miss English—she instanced a New Zealand lad recently who wanted a book about the All Black winger Ron Jarden—but they need help to find what they want.

One of the problems met by children's librarians, which it is part of their job to overcome, is the tendency of many youngsters to stop reading at a certain age. Miss English pointed out that it often happened that children read avidly when they first learned the art, but by the time they reached high school age they had lost interest. This was when librarians in schools could help by bringing suitable books to their notice and talking about them with the children.

Questioned about the effect of television, she said that when sets first started appearing in homes librarians were worried about the effect they would have on reading. However, after the initial novelty had worn off TV seemed to help rather than hinder, as it suggested new fields of interest to the children.

In Canada, as much as in New Zealand, there was a shortage of young people training as librarians. This was due in her country to a number of things, said Miss English—rates of pay were relatively low, librarians always had to work on Saturdays, and contact with people outside the libraries was limited. An increasing number of young librarians were being attracted to business libraries, which were growing rapidly in such organisations as newspaper offices, oil companies and insurance businesses. A large number also migrated to the United States, where larger pay packets were offered.

In Canada, Miss English has worked mostly in the libraries at schools and on the "inside" of the main libraries. Here she is on the distribution side which, she said, she finds extremely interesting. However, she added, with a touch of homesickness, "I miss the children pouring into the library."



N.P.S. photograph.

ELIZABETH ENGLISH

A SHADE OF ECBATANA

[HUMBL]ED, lying out in a coma before the ring of Macedonians, Alexander mumbled that he hoped they saw to it that the strongest one amongst them should be king.

Yet malaria and wine and a mess of meat and means had stalled the stoutest heart in all that band who built and named fine towns throughout the world—and killed the Cossaeans.

Probably mosquitoes and erratic dieting had broken-off Hephaestion's time as well (and—later—he had spoken through a pandering oracle to a grieving Alexander who, elated, drank

and dined himself into the first delirium). And warriors, who displayed the callouses made by unlined helmet-rims and unkind vests, watched—afraid—while the Son of Zeus pined in a paralysis.

and they must have known it was just a little too much —of that one shade from Ecbatana that eclipsed his sun.

—Kevin Jowsey

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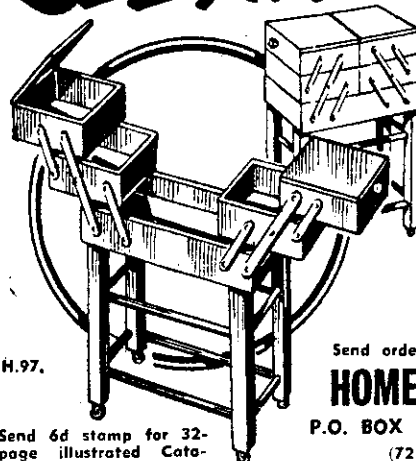


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