

HALF-HOURS WITH THE W.E.A.

WELLINGTON.

Egyptian Books Were 35ft. Long

Earliest Books Date Back to the Flood—A Library With a Staff of 800—
Libraries are Considered Part of the Educational System Abroad.

MR. A. D. MCINTOSH, M.A., of the staff of the Parliamentary Library, recently returned to New Zealand after a year spent abroad as the holder of a Carnegie Library Fellowship, and is at present giving from 2YA a series of talks on "Libraries, Ancient and Modern." Mr. McIntosh has written the following brief account of what he is doing in these talks.

BOOKS and libraries are as old as civilisation itself. It is not too much to say that without them there would have been no civilisation. The greatest service performed by libraries through the ages has lain in their preservation of learning. To-day their task is greater and it is with the spread of knowledge that they are principally concerned. In these talks I hope to give a brief survey of libraries in both the ancient and the modern world. I hope to notice not only books themselves and the main types of libraries that have existed from age to age, but also to indicate, however briefly, the part libraries have played in the survival and spread of knowledge. In the third lecture modern developments will occupy our attention—particularly American and English as I saw them abroad and finally I will give some account of the modern movement to establish national library systems and perhaps give an idea of a plan for the future of our own libraries in New Zealand.

OUR earliest books are in the form of baked clay tablets dating back almost to the Flood. They have been discovered in the ruins of ancient palaces and temples. Books have changed their form as new materials became available. The Egyptian book was a roll of papyrus—sometimes 35 feet long—a material made from the stems of a river plant growing in the Nile; parchment, made from the skins of animals, also in the form of a roll was used for books in Palestine. In the 4th century came the modern form of a book—in vellum—and throughout the middle ages illuminated manuscripts of the most beautiful workmanship were produced by the monks. Paper and printing date from the 15th century and thence the modern book. To-day we have gone a step further. To save space, great modern libraries reduce the print of unwieldy newspaper files to microscopic size on small rolls of film and when required for use these films are put through a projector and thrown in large size on to a screen or on to a student's desk. And that may be only a beginning of the application of modern science to books and library methods. A great American librarian recently stated that in a few years by television or some new invention a book in a central store may be shown instantly page by page in a library thousands of miles away.

SO much for books; libraries themselves have undergone equally startling changes. From the libraries of six

thousand years ago to the modern national libraries—such as the United States Library of Congress with its staff of 800 and its 4,000,000 books—the more valuable though less well equipped British Museum with its millions of books and 62 miles of shelving—the evolutionary process may be traced. In the first and second talks I had something to say of the most troublous period of all—the "Dark Ages" in Europe when the scholarship and culture of the Ancient World fell upon evil

offered one member of the House of Commons "supposed they would soon be thinking of supplying the working classes with quoits, peg tops and foot-balls."

BUT America soon outstripped Great Britain—it is the land of libraries. The buildings, methods and equipment are truly marvellous. Moreover they are free. And there is one function they perform that is unique—the education of an alien population in the language and civilisation of their adopted country. Americans too set great store by service and practical use. They insist that a library is a machine that requires skilful handling to get the best results. In the United States a book is regarded as a source of information—in England as a work of literature or art.

Changed Control of B Stations

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they are reluctant to lose them. "There will, of course, be the advantage that the records banned to the B stations will now be broadcast from 1ZR and 2ZW under the new direction," said one Auckland listener, "but a lot of people will prefer the 'programme' touch from these stations, to the more elaborate, but less appealing, programmes from the major stations."

In a statement the president of the New Zealand Listeners' Federation, Mr. H. D. Bennett, said that the purchase by the Post and Telegraph Department of the Auckland and Wellington B class stations, came as a surprise to radio listeners. Although the new policy had not been fully outlined, it seemed that, with the necessary legislation supporting the department and the Broadcasting Board, the intention was to bring the whole of the radio service under one control. An alternative service was most certainly required, but the value of such service would be very largely discounted if it were merely a second channel for the supply of the service from same stocks and given under the direction of the same control as the main New Zealand stations. No matter how good the YA stations might be, listeners wanted the right to be able to switch over to something else. Mr. Bennett said that if it is to be assumed that the ultimate aim of the department is to do away altogether with private enterprise, and it certainly looked as if that was intended, then the closing down of our present B class stations would not be welcomed.

IN Sweden gymnastics and drill take the place of games to a large extent; but there are also excellent aquatic sports, yachting, swimming, and rowing matches, which, if sufficiently important, are duly broadcast.

Wellington's Forthcoming Talks from W.E.A.

THE CONTROL OF LIFE

By Dr. A. B. Wildman.

Thursday, September 28: The Control of Life: (I) Man as an Animal; October 5: (II) Man's Use of Other Forms of Life; October 12: (III) Man's Animal Enemies; October 19: (IV) Science, Craftsmanship and Humanity.

THE MODERN NOVEL

By Professor P. W. Robertson.

Saturday, September 30: The Modern Novel: (I) Recent Tendencies; October 7: (II) "Remembrance of Things Past"; October 14: (III) "The Magic Mountain"; October 21: (IV) "The Maurizius Case."

times. Its survival during the destruction of the Roman civilisation by the barbarians is one of the most fascinating in history. It was due in large measure to the Arabs who for a brief period conquered the world from Spain to China, absorbed the ancient Greek culture and restored it to Europe together with the beginnings of our modern medicine, mathematics and physical science. They did even more towards making the modern age possible by giving us paper—the manufacture of which they had learnt from the Chinese. It was paper and printing that made the intellectual revival of Europe possible. It is calculated that 1,000,000 volumes had been printed by the end of the 15th. century.

PASSING on from the Middle Ages with their increased demand for books and the spread of popular learning we are struck by the changes of modern times. Besides the great national libraries and those attached universities and other learned institutions we have that phenomenon of modern civilisation—the Free Public Library. The movement began in England a hundred years ago—it has owed practically nothing to public demand but everything to individual initiative and enthusiasm. The public have always been reluctant and the utility of library service has had to be demonstrated. When public libraries were first