

for they must attract the largest possible number of subscribers because they need their fees. With few exceptions, this is achieved by offering the lightest and most exciting novels, often to the exclusion of books of greater merit.⁽²⁾ One disastrous result of this system is that the public libraries are not, as overseas, generally accepted as a natural and necessary extension of the education scheme. Fortunately, it would appear that a change of attitude is in the offing as, for a number of years, the libraries in the four main centres have been operating free juvenile libraries and this idea is gradually extending to smaller centres. Alongside this promising development is the rapid growth of school libraries throughout the country, aided largely by the Country Library Service. If the children of to-day grow up accustomed to free libraries and good literature they should, in the logical course of events, demand free libraries and good literature in adulthood. And when the public libraries of the future are free they will then be in a position to fulfil their correct function in the life of the community.

It has already been suggested that the Board of Governors of Canterbury College, although often in desperate financial straits, had the interests of the Canterbury Public Library at heart. This suggestion assumes even more substantial proportions when it is realised that, as early as 1908, a juvenile section, which, by 1911, had a membership of 253,⁽³⁾ was established.⁽⁴⁾ Although at first it consisted of some books transferred from the main library, it contained by 1914, 2175 volumes. In that year a new reading room and library for the children gave them a spacious and attractive room, the

2. Munn and Barr, *op. cit.* p.13.

3. B. of G. 1912, p.29.

4. *ibid* 1909, p.10.