

THROUGH BRITISH EYES

From Miss Margaret E. Scofield, British Exchange Librarian, who spent a year in North Carolina, comes a copy of the annual report of the Airedale Public Libraries of which she is librarian. An accompanying note reads, in part, "On the wall of my office I have two vacationists maps of North Carolina and on dull, gray days I look at them, think of your bright blue skies and all the nice people I knew there and hope I may return on a visit some day."

Without asking permission we reprint herewith the "Foreword" of her 1950 Readers' News, the official name of the annual report:

"It had been hoped that the bulletin for this year would, like last year's, have contained a letter from America, but unhappily that was not to be. It is just another loss due to Miss Williamson's tragic death, so deeply regretted by all who knew her here.

Through the generosity of her friends we have been able to send 171 books to the Johnston County Library—books chosen to display every aspect of English life; and by their varied illustrations, we hope they will attract visitors to Britain, particularly during the Festival year. A list of books sent is included in this bulletin for the benefit of those who contributed, but were unable to get to the exhibition of the books.

I came back from America impressed by certain features of American libraries, though assured that our service has its own particular qualities.

First I found that even the smallest town of 2,000 or so population expects a full-time library service, and frequently the voluntary efforts of the Women's Club and Rotary Club help to provide a building.

The town residents expect their library to contain a worth-while collection of up-to-date reference books, together with magazines and pamphlets, which will supply last-minute facts on any subject they have in hand. Speakers would so often come to find material for their talks, though they had an unfortunate tendency to leave this until the last moment, making it difficult for the librarians to sort out references in time.

The children's library provides a larger supply of books for younger children than we normally do. There are more well-illustrated books for younger children than we can buy here, though English publishers are now improving this side of their business.

School libraries are usually larger and better equipped than is general here; in many cases they are in charge of trained, full-time librarians. Children are taught the fundamentals of work with reference books.

Collections of records, films and film strips are much more common than here. Numerous magazines are bought and filed in the effort to provide up-to-date reference material.

In most cases libraries are equipped with comfortable chairs to make book-browsing a pleasure.

The main complaint of American librarians was of inadequate and

over-crowded buildings. That, of course, is so often true here, but there, plans and blueprints of a new library were so often on hand, or new buildings were in progress. Here such things are a dream of a distant future.

As an English visitor I was shown much kindness and hospitality, and I was also expected to speak to every kind of group, whether men, women or children. It is a responsibility trying to interpret one's own country to so many different people, but I found them keen and eager listeners and I enjoyed their comments.

MARGARET E. SCOFFIELD."
