

When I was a Kid

Lets see--that was eighty or so years ago.. What do I remember? Well, sa;y; when I was nine. We had just moved to a new neighborhood and a new school. My mother had started to work., so I came home to an empty house. Where wa my younger brother? I don't remember. I do remember the house was never locked. I was supposed to peel potatoes for dinner. Sometimes I did. Mostly though, I read. I hAd a book stashed in several rooms, but not in the kitchen, because the book I had there fell into the dishwasher while I ws supposedly wash;ng dishes. One of the few times my mother lost patience with me. Where was my brother--not in the kitchen. Out next door neighbors were single catholic brothers and sisters--old to me. I had no one my age around. My companion was the upstairs closet where my dad's books were. They were a very eclectic collection. I had no idea how luck I was to have access to them. The library had me reading fairy tales . From Sherlock holmes to Lew Wallace (o f Ben Hur fame), Balzac to Victor Hugo, they framed. ~~My~~ adult orientation to politics and my lifetime social consciousness. In addition, I couldn't wait to explore the world outside of Des Moines, Iowa that was just waiting for me . I wanted to find the people that belonged to the stories--or their counterparts. Poor Iowa didn't fare very well in comparison Jean Val Jean Ball of Fat or Three Years Before The Mast, by Richard Henry Dana. Ben Hur was plowed through. Lew Wallace was probably a better general than a novelist, but he sold immense numbers of books. My ~~folks~~ did not ever limit my reading. The reseut of all this introvetion was that I was really further isolated and did;t really have a conversational group for years. Social, yes, but intellectual, no. Now, however, I cherish each book and character. They make my life infinitely richer and gave me stability, directi and companionship during the most difficult times of my life.

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