

PUBLIC LIBRARIES --- WORK OF LIBRARIANS

By Miss Mary Frances Isom

Address Delivered Before the Astoria Woman's Club, March 14, 1903

It has been a question in my mind in deliberating upon what I should speak to you about today, which phase of the broad subject assigned me to dwell upon more particularly, inasmuch as to talk of library training its beginnings, its development and the present status it has reached, or to spend this time in considering the work of public libraries, and incidentally that of the librarian of public libraries. On reflection I found that the library side of the question was so insistent that I could not get away from it. Library training is all very well, the time spent is profitable and delightful, but it is the preparation, the apprenticeship, and the library itself is the life.

The public library is in process of evolution, I might say that the library is in process of evolution, for very few of the early libraries, even in America were free and public. There were storehouses of books, to which the favored few might purchase admittance. The city was proud to own so many well-kept volumes and the librarian was a caretaker appointed by the board of directors to prevent the eager student from handling the books and as for him who was not an eager student why should he seek the library at all--there were other more agreeable resorts.

But that dark era of library existence has passed away never to return; there were forces abroad in the land that were irresistible: the wise builders of our nation when they legislated that all men should be free and equal decreed also that education should be universal; so public schools were established and children taught to read. This was the beginning; but why teach your children to read and then deprive them of books? This question constantly sounded in the ears of the city fathers; they took counsel together--they realized that with over 50 percent of the population, education is at an end with the closing of the grammar school door. They reflected that the generally intelligent, all-round educated man makes the best citizen; that the best education a man can get is that which he gives himself, but that he cannot give himself that education if the means are entirely out of reach. They thought of all these things, these wise city fathers, and the library doors were opened. The books came out of the storehouses and into the hands of the people, and the city became proud that those well-kept volumes were wearing out from constant use, because it realized that this use made for civic righteousness and moral strength.

The librarian also became transformed. He gave his time no longer to dusting next rows of books, carefully shelved according to the color of the binding or to the size of the volume--a method of classification warranted to please the artistic or orderly trustee--and no longer was he like the dragon guarding his hoard, but instead like the daughter of the Rhine he is guarding his treasure, luring men on to inquire of his treasure, rousing their curiosity, stimulating their indifference, encouraging their timidity, laying deep-laid schemes to persuade them all to seek and find his treasure, which is not gold such as the dragon hoarded, gold which cursed each possessor in

turn, bringing murder, lust and finally ruin upon both gods and mortals, but a nobler, rarer treasure, the knowledge and wisdom which the kindly and queenly ones of all generations have bequeathed us. This, too, cannot be without effort. A man must fight for it, not with his brother, but with himself. Andrew Carnegie well says: "I chose free libraries as the best agencies for improving the masses of the people, because they give nothing for nothing. They only help those who help themselves."

It was in this spirit that public libraries conquered the land. I cannot trace their development nor even suggest their beginnings. Some were established by agreement of the community, others by the benediction of some one individual, others by the insistent beating at the doors of subscription libraries by the people themselves. But in one way or another free libraries have become as much a part and parcel of American life as the public schools. They have grown and multiplied, planned on the same general lines, all owning the same distinct ideal of the mission of books to the people, and carrying it out in the way best fitted to the conditions of the locality. The impressive work of the public libraries in the large cities is familiar to us, the main building of administration from which radiate in all directions a network of various activities, branch libraries, delivery stations and home libraries, all with the sole aim of getting the books, the right books, into the hands of the people. There is no waiting in dusty seclusion for readers these days, but a searching of highways and hedges, compelling them to come in. Mahomet won't come to the mountain, the mountain cheerfully goes to Mahomet.

The small library of town or village, while cherishing the same ideals, is upon a different basis. It is or should be the civic center around which the local interests and industries should revolve, all classes of society, all creeds, all nationalities should find welcome and help within its doors. Its spirit should be thoroughly catholic, thoroughly progressive and thoroughly in sympathy with the people, for its only best test of success is its usefulness. It is fortunate if it has a room set apart for meetings of various kinds, where the woman's club, or the natural history club, or the Audubon society, or the local camera club can hold its stated session within quick reach of book shelves, or where a teacher from the grade school or high school can bring her class for an illustrated talk upon a particular subject. And be it ever so small, it must have a corner set apart for the children, with low shelves for their own particular books, and a few small chairs or a captivating photograph or two, or a careful bulletin made from pictures cut from old magazines, which will invite curiosity on birds or earthquakes or the manufacture of cotton--any interesting or timely topic.

In addition, give a well selected though small collection of books, comprising books of wholesome entertainment, a few necessary reference volumes, particular attention being paid to local trades and industries, and a few of the best current magazines, both literary and scientific, and the

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small library is well equipped both for present use and future growth. Much depends upon the presiding genius of this kingdom. Were all the virtues of all the saints of the calendar hers, she could still mourn her shortcomings. Every day tests her tact, her judgment, her sympathies, her sense. She must be a good housekeeper and a cordial hostess. She must have a watchful eye for cobwebs and finger marked windows, and no matter how pressed for time, how absorbed in technical detail, she must always be gracious and sympathetic, alert and helpful. No where so well as in a library may be applied Burke's aphorism: "To bring the dispositions that are lovely in private life into the life into the service and conduct of the state." Then she must know her books and know them well and speedily. Let it be spread abroad that the library is ready to help anybody--find out anything, so far as its resources will allow. Then by and by when young men come to her for an outline of their first after-dinner speech, young mothers beg her to decide whether bananas are wholesome before the age of six months, a prospective bride drops in to consult her on the most artistic arrangement for a home wedding, boys come to talk over the merits of different colleges, elderly maidens for advice on the care of pets, whether Angora kittens, for instance, should have bushy tails at the age of one week; farmers for the latest methods of poultry feeding, ministers for missionary statistics and so on without number, she may conclude that confidence has been established and the lines of library success firmly laid.

Now, why is a public library necessary to community life? It gives more clean, wholesome pleasure than any other institution for the amount of funds invested; it is a refreshing influence over many who are without other opportunities, particularly the young and the homeless, giving employment for those idle hours that wreck more lives than any other cause; it offers one of the best means of educating the children of foreign parents, that problem of American civilization; it is an essential part of the educational system, the complement of the public school, aiding the teachers, broadening the instruction, giving the boy and girl with hidden talent the chance to discover and develop it. As Doctor Harris says, "The school gives the preliminary preparation for education, and the library gives the means by which the individual completes and accomplishes his education." It gives the mechanic and artisan a chance to know what is doing in their particular lines of work; it furnishes material for study to clubs and societies; it arouses divine curiosity in real things, thereby substituting by natural methods the broad outlook and the interesting conversation for the warped mind and the petty gossip.

Its mission to the child, the man of the future, is perhaps the most important of all. Children must not grow up feeling that all books are text-books the printed page a lesson to be escaped, not a joy and a solace. The ideal library is of course in the home; the child who can browse at will among the well-filled shelves in his father's house is a fortunate child. I remember so well hearing a man of power and of great learning say that it was hard for him to tell which had been the stronger influence in his life, his college education or the habit of seeking his mother read. But we must face the fact that many homes both of high and low degree, are bookless, and it is to these homes that the library reaches out. As one librarian puts it, "The function of the library is the development and enrichment of human life through the medium of the printed page." To open the eyes and the ears and the understanding, to fill that which is now empty, to enrich the starving, to let them in, these unsuspecting ones, into the companionship of the great, this is the mission of the public library.

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No considerate woman will strike her husband for money when he's down.

"The race of life has become intense; the runners are treading upon each other's heels; woe to him who stops to tie his shoe."--Carlyle.

Herr Schlotke--Remarkable, but sometimes the greatest fools have the most beautiful wives.
Frau Schlotke--You flatterer!

She--Oh, you're all wrong about her. It takes a woman to size up another woman.
He--Yes, or to run her down.

Wedderly--I believe in a man telling his wife just what he thinks.
Singleton--Yes, of course--but they tell me that since your marriage you have been afraid to think.

"I am poor but honest, sir."
"You could not possibly be otherwise under the circumstances."
"Otherwise than honest?"
"No, otherwise than poor."

"Do you recognize the profesh?" queried the long-haired pedestrian, as he lined up in front of the box office.
"Sure," replied the genial ticket seller. "But don't worry. We won't betray you."

"So you had a successful hunting trip?"
"Emphatically successful. We didn't bring back any game, but nobody was shot by any of the other members of the party."

Little Willie--Pa, what's an altruist?
His Father--A man, my child, who carries his umbrella all day without using it, and then is glad it didn't rain, on account of the people who had no umbrella with them.

Customer--I think you should begin to charge me half price, Shears, there's so little to cut, now.
Barber--Other way on, sir, I fancy. We ought to charge double. Look at the trouble I have to find it!

Bacon--A dog that runs under a carriage is called a carriage dog, is it not?
Egbert--Certainly.
Bacon--Well, what would you call a dog that runs under an automobile?
Egbert--Why, a dead dog?

First Jailer--Did you ever see a man so behind the times?
Second Jailer--What did he do?
First Jailer--When the jury brought in a verdict of murder in the first degree he said, "Well, I'll be hanged."
"How dear to my heart is the steady subscriber, who pays in advance at the birth of the year; who lays down,

his money, and does it quite gladly, and casts round the office a halo of cheer. He never says 'stop it, I can not afford it,' nor 'I'm getting more papers now than I can read,' but always says, 'send it, the family likes it; in fact, we all think it a real household need.' How welcome he is when he steps in the sanctum, how he makes our hearts dance. We outwardly thank him, we inwardly bless him the steady subscriber who pays in advance."

Mrs. Schoppen--Aren't you asking too much for those almonds?
Grocer--O, no, those are the paper-shell almonds.
Mrs. Schoppen--Well?
Grocer--Well--er--you know the price of paper has gone up lately.

"Here's a dispatch that says a husband and wife were shot at for kissing on the doocote."
"The idea! I should like to know if a man hasn't the right to kiss his wife on his own doorstep if he wants to."
"But it wasn't his wife nor his doorstep."

Maid (about to leave)--Might I ask for a testimonial to help me get another place?
Mistress--But, Mary, what could I truthfully say in a testimonial that would help you get another place?
Maid--That I know many of your family secrets, if you please.

The little boy in his night dress was on his knees, saying his prayers, and his little sister couldn't resist the temptation to tickle the soles of his feet. He stood it as long as he could, and then said:
"Please, God, excuse me while I knock the stuff out of sister."

The new teacher asked the class the following question:
"John, had five oranges. James gave him eleven and he gave Peter seven. How many did he have left?"
Before this problem the class recoiled.
"Please, sir," said a young lad, "we always do our sums in apples."

WHAT BECOMES OF A BUSHEL OF CORN.
The distiller, from a bushel of corn, makes four gallons of whiskey (with the aid of various harmful products and adulterations). These four gallons of whiskey retail for \$16.40.
The farmer who raised the corn gets from 25 to 50 cents.
The United States government, through its tax on whiskey, gets \$4.40.
The railroad company gets \$1.
The manufacturer gets \$4.
The transfer man who hauls the booze gets 15 cents.
The retailer gets \$7.
The man who drinks the stuff gets drunk.
His wife gets hunger and sorrow.
His children get rage and insufficient food.

BE A GOOD BOY, GOOD BY.

How oft' in my dreams I go back to the day
When I stood at our old wooden gate,
And started to school in full battle array,
Well armed with a primer and slate,
And, as the latch fell, I thought myself free,
And gloried, I fear, on the sly,
'Till I heard a kind voice that whispered to me:
"Be a good boy; good-by."

"Be a good boy; good-by." It seems
They have followed me all these years;
They have given a form to my youthful dreams
And scattered my foolish fears.
They have stayed my feet on many a brink,
Unseen by a blinded eye;
For just in time I would pause and think:
"Be a good boy; good-by."

O, brother of mine, in the battle of life
Just starting, or nearing its close,
This banner aloft, in the midst of the strife,
Will conquer, wherever it goes.
Mistakes you will make, for each of us errs,
But, brother, just honestly try
To accomplish your best, And, whatever occurs,
Be a good boy; good-by.
--John L. Shroy, in Saturday Evening Post.

The above is furnished for publication by Rev. Wm. Seymour Short, who believes in passing a good thing on. It is highly appropriate to the meditations of the day.

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RHEUMATISM

ACUTE AND CHRONIC, MUSCULAR, MERCURIAL, ARTICULAR AND INFLAMMATORY.

Some people have been suffering from Rheumatism so long that they can scarcely remember the time when they were entirely free from an ache or pain, and have long since forgotten the joys of a painless existence. They are at the mercy of every ill wind, and their misery is aggravated by exposure to cold or sudden changes in the temperature. They become walking barometers and most accurate in weather predictions, the increasing pains in muscles and joints foretelling the approaching storm or the coming of bad weather. It is from these constant sufferers that the great army of rheumatic cripples is recruited. Their bodies are worn out by the incessant pains and that they are at last compelled to give up or hobble about on crutches.

Nobody ever outlived Rheumatism; the disease never loosens its grip or leaves of its own accord, but must be driven out by intelligent and persistent treatment through the blood, for Rheumatism of every variety and form is caused by an over acid condition of the blood, and the deposit in muscles, joints and nerves of corrosive poisons and gritty particles, and it is these irritating substances that produce the inflammation, swelling and pains, which last as long as the blood remains in this sour and acid state.

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