

VILLAGE LIBRARIES.

EFFICIENCY THEY EXERT ON MUNICIPAL PROGRESS.

Chicago Item of an Ohio Town to Pay Attention of Library-General Aim of Improvement Societies—Need of United Effort.

The advancement of the country villages and the work of village improvement societies may rightly be classed among the timely topics of this decade, says W. F. McClure in the St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Those who have visited the more progressive hamlets will not dispute the statement that in some important respects the country borough may excel many cities of 8,000 to 10,000 inhabitants. In the case of public libraries it is a remarkable fact that scores of cities the existence of which dates back a half century are yet without even a suitable room for public library purposes, while in villages of 600 and 800 inhabitants an adequate public library is housed in a suitable building devoted to its uses exclusively. The work of many village improvement societies, too, should put to shame the accomplishments of city councils and chambers of commerce in hundreds of American cities of the third and fourth class.

As an example with reference to village libraries Kingsville, in northeastern Ohio, is a township five miles square, one side of the square overlooking Lake Erie. Its population in the vicinity of its two little trade centers does not much exceed 700. One of the trade centers is known as South Kingsville and the one next to the lake as North Kingsville. Each has its school, its churches and its postoffice, besides a few small stores. At South Kingsville, in a shaded spot, is the little public library. It is a frame structure, built at a cost of some \$300 or \$400. It is tastefully arranged within and, best of all, is filled with sensible books. It is said that there are fully 4,000 volumes on the shelves, which number is twice the population of the township.

Although much of the progress of the country villages is due to village improvement societies, in this instance it is a separate object. Each year on the Fourth of July a celebration is held in front of the school building. The proceeds of all the lemonade, peanuts and meals on that day go to the library fund. Instead of spending their money with vendors in the larger cities not far distant the citizens pay it in this way into a fund for their social betterment. The receipts from one Fourth of July day often run into hundreds of dollars and go a long way toward paying the expenses of the year. A librarian is kept in attendance. The library is open both afternoon and evening. The current magazines are always kept on the table. The library is not a memorial. It is not a gift. It is by the people and for the people.

In some states the legislation of some forty years ago was the means of furnishing a nucleus for the village libraries of today. The state printed and furnished a circulating library to each township, the school directors having charge of the books. Today these volumes in the possession of the schools can be placed in the village libraries. In starting a library before sufficient funds are raised to erect a building the township school building can be made the headquarters. In some instances the volumes of a defunct literary society form a nucleus. The village public library in many places is beginning to show a decided effect for the better upon the rural populace.

Katonah, N. Y., offers a good example of the accomplishments of village improvement societies. Here first the interest started in a public library and then launched into a wider field, with the library plan as a department. When once the library building was completed, it became the meeting place for the committees not only of the society, but for all movements looking toward the prosperity of a wide section of surrounding country. A debating club and a chorus club were organized. The number of books in the library at this place exceeded 2,000.

But the work of village improvement societies consists in other than the educational pursuits. Its departments cover the planting of shade trees, the improvement of highways and building of sidewalks and the like. In Katonah many years ago—for Katonah is one of the pioneers in the matter of its village improvement society—the early morning hours would find the citizens engaged in laying sidewalks to the little churches. Royal oaks were planted many years ago, and today they are monuments to the industry and public spiritedness of the residents. Deer park, in the shape of a triangle, is much admired in Katonah today. It was one of the first accomplishments of the improvement society.

Trees were not only planted on the village streets, but were set out beside the country roads leading into the village. The rapid and successful growth of 200 trees set out by the village improvement society in 1879 furnish a substantial impetus to renewed effort along the same lines as they spread their shade farther and farther with each year.

The most influential and substantial citizens are usually found in these societies—men who are not afraid to work in their shirt sleeves and exercise their muscles at leisure moments. The good effect of such work cannot be overestimated on the citizens themselves and their posterity, even though it be a public spirited move. It enhances the value of property; it cultivates a taste for beauty.

The aim of village improvement societies is for the members to pull together to do everything first-class and usually as a society to keep out both political and religious.

CLEAN STREETS.

What Women Can Do in This Line When They Make Up Their Minds.

Last spring a woman who resides in Hyde Park, Chicago, actually talked an improvement society into existence. She is Mrs. Joseph Twyman, a prominent member of the Chicago Woman's club, and nobody can deny that she used her linguistic talents to good advantage.

Mrs. Twyman has learned the value of well directed speech as a preliminary to equally well directed action. So Mrs. Twyman energetically and consistently "talked up" the "South Park Improvement association" until she talked it into actual being—not to say energetic and purposeful action. Men, women and children, university professors and local business men, residents and visitors, householders and dwellers have been drawn into the work of furthering the objects and interests of the association. A membership list of over fifty rewarded the first two weeks of enthusiastic effort; a large number of other admirers and adherents have been added since that time.

The streets, alleys and vacant lots of South Park, as of much of the Hyde Park region, had been for many months in a condition best described as indescribable. Dust, papers, garbage, debris of all kinds, have rendered them perpetually dingy and disgusting.

The election of a man as permanent president of the association was one of the first particulars decided upon by the half dozen or so of energetic dirt disgusted South Park women who "put their heads together" in the beginning.

The establishment of permanent committees to see that the different departments of the work are properly carried on was also seen to be necessary at a very early stage of the proceedings. The crowning point of usefulness and businesslike wisdom was felt to be attained with the simultaneous decision to engage a professional solicitor to gather in the fees and dues of the rapidly increasing members and to appoint a feminine inspector for every block taken under consideration and care. "It needs a woman to look after this part of the work," these wise students of street, alley and vacant lot conditions unanimously decided; "only a woman can be depended upon to take pains to inspect and report to the proper authorities regularly and persistently."

In other words, the housekeeping and housecleaning instinct of the South Park women was called into public service for the sake of South Park cleanliness and improvement.

The result has been a vast improvement in the condition of the streets, and what the ladies of South Park have done is a hint to women folk in other localities where their services in a similar cause are sorely needed.

THE IDEAL CITY.

Where Americans Fall Short of the European Standard.

The Municipal Art Society of New York proposes to show at the St. Louis exposition what a model city ought to be, says the New York Journal. Its plan is to have an entire block, with full sized buildings, lampposts, street signs, parkways, park seats, statuary, streets and sewers, all of ideal construction.

Mr. Ruckstuhl, the representative of the society, remarks: "American cities seem to be satisfied if they keep sufficiently clean to stave off epidemics; to beauty they give little attention. New York is the first city to awaken to the tendency that operates in every continental city of Europe—municipal beautification."

Mr. Ruckstuhl is unduly flattering. Most American cities have not even reached the point of keeping themselves clean enough to stave off epidemics. As to beauty, outside of their park systems, the thing is not merely neglected, it is completely outside the range of their imagination.

People who go abroad and see what has been done in this direction in Paris, Berlin and other European towns come back with the idea that the benighted foreigners do some things better than we do. But as most Americans never go abroad they remain totally impervious to that notion.

The model city at the St. Louis exposition would practically give our people a foreign tour. It would show them possibilities of which they have never dreamed, and, as they are naturally quick of apprehension, this lesson would soon bear fruit. As the Centennial exhibition at Philadelphia marked the end of the era of rep and horsehair furniture and the World's fair at Chicago transformed our monumental architecture, so the St. Louis exposition, with its model city, may be expected to bring on a new epoch in general municipal designing.

We certainly need it. No single thing would add more to the comfort of life.

Advertising Notes.

The man who is ornamental is seldom particularly useful. It's funny, but a sentence perfectly rounded is always pointed.

Be ever discreet when a tale you have to tell. For "vaunting ambition oft o'erleaps its wife."

In setting the type for an advertisement it isn't always good typographic to "cap" the climax.—Profitable Advertising.

Education Free to All. In these days of free libraries and correspondence schools no young man who possesses average intelligence and considerable patience and energy need go without an education, says Profitable Advertising. As one writer put it: "If he cannot go to college, the college can come to him."

Work of an Improvement League.

There is a little town in New Jersey where an improvement league has done more to cleanse and beautify the place, at an expense of less than \$100, than the town council has accomplished by expending thousands of dollars in the ordinary way. The league began by offering prizes for clean back yards and alleys and then for the prettiest vine covered fence, the finest vegetable plot and the most beautiful flowering plant. It enlisted the active interest of the boys and girls and got them to pick up waste paper and such things from the streets to keep the schoolyard neat, and also the vacant lots. In six months' time the town became particularly attractive and clean, and the death rate has perceptibly decreased. The improvement league idea is open to any town.

Beautifying Residence Streets.

Every citizen should aim to encourage in the residence district the planting, cutting and proper care of lawns and the cultivation of shade trees and shrubbery in front of house lawns. Trees should be placed in all parts of the town where they will grow, for no one thing adds more to a town or city's beauty and comfort. The planting of perennial and spring flowering shrubs between these trees will add both variety and beauty to the street perspectives.

Painting of Buildings.

The painting of buildings when necessary should be done with the idea of harmony of the entire street, not in such a manner as to call immediate attention to itself. Terra cotta and tile faced buildings should not be painted, but washed.

Plank and Brick Sidewalks.

A plank sidewalk laid along the business street of a town will need repairs after two years and must be replaced after five. A brick sidewalk, well laid at the start, will last fifteen years without repair. The difference in cost is not over 30 per cent, while the difference in wear, to say nothing of looks, is ten years.

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