Books as a Factor in Women's Club Work

IN ORDER to properly weigh the use of books as a factor in Woman's club work, let us consider for a moment what is Woman's club work? What are we endeavoring to accomplish? What has already been accomplished?

It comes to us as club women, to consider in some time or place almost every subject likely to bring about the betterment of humanity on patriotic, municipal, philanthropic, educational, musical and artistic lines. Our strong desire is to assist in developing the best that is in the humanity about us and to understand the physical resources that may be made helpful in the economy and growth of our common country. To do this, even in the smallest way, we must make fitting preparation.

Pretty nearly everything we know of history, science, poetry and music has come to us from the past. Fancy how much more limited would be our knowledge of the story of Egypt and the Holy Land, or even of Columbus and his voyage, if we had only tradition to tell us. Indeed, suppose we make an honest effort to place ourselves, for the time being, in a world without books and see just what proportion of information would be left to us, and as books have been termed "the commerce of the mind," picture the blow that would be struck to mental commerce by the wiping out of these treasures.

Webster defines a book as "A journal name of every literary composition which is printed; but, appropriately, a printed composition bound. The name is also given to any number of written sheets, when bound or sewed together; and to a volume of blank paper intended for any species of writing as for memorandums."

We personally prefer Milton's definition as found in his Areopagitica. When the question is raised with regard to the value of books and study in our work, we can scarcely find words strong enough to voice the opposition that is felt against the sentiment expressed by some few club women, namely: "We have grown beyond the period of self-culture." Would it not seem rather that self-culture should cease only when heart and brain refuse to perform their normal functions?

The use to which this culture may be applied in being helpful to the race or individual but emphasizes the need for continued growth. Some one has defined culture as "such an appropriation of knowledge that it becomes a part of ourselves." Education and culture being by no means co-ordinate terms.

It is only a small region of actual things that we can include within our own horizons; a few people and places and only a limited knowledge of events or the growth of but few communities that we can know by our own experience. These limitations being more or less understood by our club women, we endeavor to make the use of books one means of broadening our horizons by gaining a knowledge of what has been; what is, and by induction, what may be. The custom of referring to books for verification of facts, for pronunciation and derivation of words, and for all sorts of knowledge upon any given subject, has become so habitual that few, if any, realize just how great a factor books have become in carrying on our club work. Possibly time was, in the infancy of many clubs, when the encyclopedia played a too prominent part in the production of club papers. However, even this had its fair proportion of value, since, as a result, the women who years ago referred to the encyclopedia only, and who from a distrust of her own knowledge and judgment gave to club members an all too close reproduction of encyclopedic information, has grown today to refer to varied sources of authority and to dare form her own estimate, drawing therefrom, in some instances, original conclusions. To demonstrate that books are used freely by the club members and form probably the most important factor in keeping up both interest and growth, we have but to step into the various departments and listen to lesson, program and discussion.

Let us go, for instance, into the class studying mental philosophy. We hear quotations from John Fisk, Hegel and Huxley, Herbert Spencer. Parliamentary practice, too, is something beyond the confines of practice, for we hear various textbooks quoted. Mrs. Fox's, Reed's, Roberts', Shattuck's and others. One high authority has stated that we have no more excuse to offer for attending a club meeting without understanding the parliamentary rules that govern it than we have to attend a card party without understanding the rules of the game.

Straying into the department studying Shakespeare we find the members by no means confining themselves to reading and discussing the text before them. We hear opinions quoted from the Variorum, Dowden, Moulton, Brandes, Rolfe—from all who have discussed the art of Shakespeare. Going from this department to one of general literature, we hear some of the same authorities and additional ones, such as Taine, Gosse and Lang. Going on to history we find the source method used, and where the period studied embraces religious controversy, we find the authorities again in evidence, and then will embrace the thought of men writing from the viewpoint of Protestant and Catholic, the Gentile and the Jew, for we have learned in the club, if not elsewhere, that historians may be biased by religious as by national prejudices.

Passing from general history to the history of art—in this field of architecture, sculpture, painting, we have not alone the books of reference, but the books of illustration as well. Ferguson, Radcliffe, Ruskin, Lubke, Perkins, Simmons and so on ad infinitum.

Straying further into household economics we hear constantly of the "ten applied sciences," certain fixed principles of which the majority of members are expected to study and understand. In the outlines of the musical department and their meetings we are almost universally introduced first to the composer, and are told of his birth, heredity, environment and development. This is followed by an analysis of the special numbers on the program, for be it known scholarly musicians insist that no student can properly execute the music of a master whom she has not studied. Nay, she further insists that we cannot thoroughly appreciate the playing if we are not to an extent in possession of knowledge sufficient to comprehend the "atmosphere" of the composer.

Let us make final pause at the department of political and social science. We are told it requires of its successful exponents especially varied lines of research and if real work be undertaken, it is in time clearly demonstrated that nothing comes amiss in the great work of preparation, provided it has been thoroughly learned. In this work perhaps the most frequent authorities quoted are, Ely, Sherwood, Walker, Giddings, Riis. While we are demonstrating the practical side, Jane Addams, the broadly educated, traveled woman of culture is perhaps the best known, best loved authority among club women.

Hamilton Mabie has aptly said of books, "The great service they render us—the greatest service that can be rendered us—is the enlargement, enrichment and unfolding of ourselves." While Emerson says "We owe to them the perception of immortality. They impart sympathetic activity to the moral power. Go with mean people and you think life is mean. Then read Plutarch and the world is a proud place, peopled with men of positive quality, with heroes and demigods standing around us, who will not let us sleep."

To prove that books are a recognized need of club life, we have but to refer to the state reports made at the Los Angeles Biennial. Many state federations—fifteen we believe—reported having formed traveling libraries. Tennessee, for example, reported fifty traveling libraries, many of which were sent into the mountain districts. Ohio reported 900 traveling libraries which are circulated from the state library. Besides the many states reporting the formation of libraries by club contributions, Wisconsin, South Dakota, Texas, Oregon, Washington, Nebraska, Kentucky, Kansas, and Delaware each reported successful legislation toward the appropriations for providing these libraries at state expense. In these libraries we have the great books which put in motion the intellect of others. The successful club must be one that uses these to arouse and keep in motion the hearts and intellects of its members. Knowledge gleaned from books gives us a frank and familiar use of experience in a pursuit which makes it possible for the individual life to learn the lessons which universal life has learned and to piece out its limited personal experience with the experiences of humanity.

Second only to that religion which will ever teach us "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" would we place books as a factor in our work.

EMMA PIERCE COLE,
President Omaha Women's Club.

Notable Contributions to the General List

A LITTLE BROTHER TO THE BEAR," by William J. Long, is a new book of entirely new material. It is destined with the author's earlier books to become classic. This latest book includes a number of sketches reproduced from the author's own note books. It contains observations covering a period of some thirty years. Some of the chapters represent the characteristics of scores of animals and birds of the same species, while others show the acute intelligence of certain individual animals that nature seems to have lifted beyond the level of their fellows. The volume includes some of the wood folk not mentioned in the earlier books. It is printed on heavy paper with wide margins. The decorative cover design is stamped in gold. Published by Ginn & Co.

"The Book of Months," by E. F. Benson. This book relates the adventures and experiences for a year, given month by month, of a London man. Each month's happenings are more or less appropriate to the month designated. The observations are full of wisdom, humorous, sad or pathetic, as, of course, during the period of a year one has time to experience those different sensations. Then there is a love story, or better still, a love tragedy and a love story, sweet and touching. The book is written in a simple, charming style. The pages are beautifully decorated in color, the paper heavy, the type clear, and with its exquisite binding of green and gold, makes a very attractive book indeed. Published by Harpers.

"Drawing Room Plays," by Grace Irwin, with rubricated designs, by A. F. Willmarth. "Drawing Room Plays" is the self-explanatory title of a new book of practical amateur plays by Grace Luce Irwin. The author, who is an experienced writer of amateur dramatics, has seen the crying need of a class of entertainment which will not, necessarily, require an extensive stage and settings, in order to make them successful. She has worked on the idea of filling this need, and how well she has succeeded may be easily seen by those who read "Drawing Room Plays," with a view to light, humorous, society farces, although one or two of them touch on pathos and more serious drama. The effort has been, however, to avoid such scenes as frequently baffle amateurs by their over ambition. Paul Elder & Co., Publishers.

"Ballads of the Busy Days," that might well be said to be especially arranged for busy people, by Samuel Ellsworth Kiser. A volume of verse, or, in fact, a volume of anything, from the pen of S. E. Kiser would always be welcome. The author gives the quotation that "These are the world's busy days," and the "Ballads of the Busy Days" seem to be just the ones to fit into the odd moments. They are upon divers themes and of varied sentiment, but they leave with you a cheerful thought, and away down in your heart the feeling that the world is jogging along all right. While they are "Ballads of the Busy Days," they can be well recommended for any and for all days. Published by Forbes & Co.

"The Literary Guillotine," which is "An Authorized Report of the Proceedings Before the Literary Emergency Court, Holden in and for the District of North America. Reporter: The Bench: Mark Twain, C. J. Oliver Herford, J. 'Myself,' J. For the Prosecution: Charles Battell Loomis." The cover and title page are decorated with some kind of an apparatus, probably the guillotine, and waving from its dizziest heights are the names of Hall Caine and Marie Corelli, while as "lower lights" we have Richard Harding Davis, Winston Churchill, Mrs. Humphrey Ward and others. The emergency court proceedings are in perfect form and conducted with great dignity. As a work of literary sarcasm "The Literary Guillotine" stands ace high. The unguillotined will certainly enjoy every word, and the guillotined will probably find more pleasure in it than the unguillotined. Published by John Lane.

"New First Music Reader" is the product of James M. Laughlin, George A. Veazie and W. W. Gilchrist, and is intended as the first music reader to be placed in the hands of the pupils. It contains ninety simple and pleasing songs for the children and sixty poems. Ginn & Co. are the publishers.

"The Musician" is a legend of the Hartz mountains in poetry by Frank Waters. The author has transformed a wild German legend into a narrative poem. According to his preface, he has "illustrated the worse than uselessness of all art which is not derived from God, and has taught the omnipotence of prayer to raise even the most desperately fallen." It is published by Richard G. Badger.

"The Song at Midnight" is a collection of poems by the late Mary M. Adams, wife of the late president of the University of Wisconsin. The book contains more than a hundred poems, some of which are reprinted from earlier volumes and some which are published for the first time. They are very tastefully bound in cover of blue, white and gold. Richard G. Badger is the publisher.

"The Age of Ivory," by Henry Harmon Chamberlin, is a series of humorous poems, which tend to show how much better the world would have been if man had descended from the elephant rather than the ape. They satirize human society as it exists today and contrast human ideals with human performance. The poems are mainly satirical. The publisher is Richard G. Badger of Boston.

The December Magazines

THE BOOKLOVER'S MAGAZINE, Philadelphia, signalizes the close of the first year with a number that is an exposition of the marvels of the art of printing in our day. Color printing is not a new departure, though far from being an old one. Some of the newspapers of today produce remarkably good pictures in colors on inferior paper. The colored reproductions of famous paintings in the Booklovers' Magazine are truly marvelous specimens of the art. Almost equally admirable are the half tones in colored borders. The literary features are exceptionally attractive and seasonable.

The December Delineator (Christmas number) represents the high water mark of beauty and utility, and possibly of circulation also, in a woman's magazine, having a first edition of more than 1,000,000 copies. In addition to exquisite color work, clever fiction and strikingly illustrated articles, the number includes a display of charming winter fashions covering forty-two pages, letters from the foreign fashion centers and illustrated articles on the fashionable fabrics and trimmings, millinery, etc. Among the notable contributors are Richard Le Gallienne, with a delicate romance, "A Wedding Ring in the Garden," containing lyrics in the author's best vein; W. A. Frasier, with an Indian tale, the "Net of Leo;" Albert Bigelow Paine, with a delightful sketch founded on the foibles of the collector; Harriet Prescott Spofford, with a love story of unusual interest; Andrew Lang, with a clever travesty on the usual fairy tale, and Gustav Kobbe, with an interesting paper describing the life of Mme. Emma Eames, in her Italian home, with her portrait in colors.

Everybody's Magazine, New York, presents a Christmas spread of intellectual provender well befitting its name. The leading article is a sketch of Eugene Burnand, noted printer of Bible scenes, with numerous illustrations from his paintings. A host of clever writers of prose and fiction contribute to the menu, which is so varied as to suit the tastes of old and young.

The opening chapters of the second part of Ida M. Tarbell's "History of Standard Oil" is the leading feature of McClure's for December. A notable portrait of John D. Rockefeller, recently sketched from life, accompanies the article. John La Farge continues his review of the greatest pictures. Nine short stories and numerous illustrations make up an attractive number.

Twenty-three contributors, in addition to the viewpoints of Editor Casper Whitney, make the December Outing exceptionally attractive. The table of contents affords a great variety of articles on hunting, fishing, game and animal life, sports of all kinds, and outdoor life in general. Numerous illustrations accompany the descriptive matter.

A full-page portrait of Hon. Joseph G. Cannon, speaker of the house of representatives, with a character sketch by Otto Carmichael, Washington correspondent, serves as leader in the December World's Work. "The New Farmer and the New Earth," a paper by B. T. Galloway, chief of the bureau of plant industry, Department of Agriculture, is an important discussion of new crops and new methods of farming. Another notable paper is that of Hon. Sereno S. Pratt on the question, "Who Owns the United States?"

The Christmas number of the Book-Lover presents a wide range of topics suited to the field it so ably fills. Book lore, book making, and the makers of books, the characteristics, whims and foibles of literary people are sketched in prose and verse. Art in book binding in the earlier years of book making is discussed by Cyril Davenport, accompanied by several striking illustrations. The typograhpy, paper and press work are admirable specimens of the "art preservative," well befitting a magazine of book lore.

The Burr McIntosh Monthly continues steadfast to the policy of dealing exclusively in pictures. The December number has a rich array of portraits of beautiful American women, principally stage celebrities, a few portraits of men for variety and a wealth of rural, city and seacoast scenes reproduced in the highest style of the printing art. The cover picture is a striking reproduction in colors of a sweet-faced Madonna and child posed by Perdita West. Several portraits in colors grace the teeming pages of this handsome picture book.