TRAVELING LIBRARIES AND WOMEN'S CLUBS.

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The interest which women's clubs must naturally have in any system of library extension is so apparent as scarcely to need re-stating, and, all over the land, signs of this interest are being rapidly multiplied as is shown by reports of the work of such associations. In some states these clubs have been instrumental in obtaining legislation favorable to the establishment of libraries.

The movement for traveling libraries appeals particularly to the clubs and literary associations as an educational measure associated with their own organizations and also from a more generally altruistic point of view. The Women's Educational Association of Boston has directed its attention to libraries already in existence but which have not been able to keep up a fresh supply of books, and to these it sends for six months' use traveling libraries of about twenty-five books, making special collections if desired, and being glad to assist study classes. The New York system will fill any list of books sending exactly what is needed for work and furnishes constant aid to reading and study clubs of the state. There were, some months since, one hundred and sixty-six registered clubs drawing books from the university extension shelves of the state library which is under the control of the Regent of the university and a number of clubs not registered had taken one traveling library each. Nebraska has a traveling library managed by its State Federation of Women's Clubs, each member having been taxed ten cents for a nucleus for the collection of books. The State Federations of Kentucky, Tennessee and New Jersey are inaugurating similar systems and, in Michigan, the State Library sends out special libraries to study clubs. In Colorado, work extending over the entire state is undertaken by one club — the Woman's Club of Denver — which has made arrangements with the public library of that city whereby it can secure and send out to clubs books adapted to their courses of study, the Woman's Club being pledged to pay the library a sum sufficient to buy as many books as ordinarily are in circulation among the clubs under its supervision. These examples from other states go to show the value of
establishing intimate relations between women's clubs and the movement for traveling libraries.

A number of Wisconsin clubs have already made a record in library work, but their influence, collectively, has hitherto been most marked in the sort of appetites created not for aimless, promiscuous reading, but for true mental food. This progress in taste is really remarkable in every locality which has, for a term of years, possessed a woman's club, for assuredly these clubs have been learning and teaching to "see with the mind." And now they find themselves confronted by the question of how they may best aid in extending this enlargement of vision. The answer follows—by making it possible for their sister women throughout the state to organize study clubs wherein may be lighted this intellectual torch which shall illuminate every hearth-stone within its radius, for, whenever anything precious comes into the life of the mother it is sure to be shared by the family circle. And there are many neighborhoods in Wisconsin where farmers' wives and daughters have wished to form study clubs but have been deterred from doing so by the difficulty of securing suitable books. The complex life of to-day demands much more thorough training for the duties of citizenship than would have sufficed even a generation ago. This training of the future citizen should begin in the home; as a child he should be taught to develop his best powers. Hence the mothers must be better educated, their views of life enlarged, their knowledge of the needs of the hour increased, for the future welfare of this country depends upon the education of its people. Here, then, is an opportunity for women's clubs to use the traveling library effectively and, in accordance with these ideas, the Wisconsin State Federation of Women's Clubs is attempting to place in operation a system of traveling reference libraries for the use of clubs in small towns and in rural districts. The collections will be classified on specialized lines of thought and it is designed to have them accompanied by pictures which will illustrate historical events and schools of art, and it is believed, by means of such effort, it may promote the formation of study clubs in every hamlet of the state. Sir John Herschel declared: "Were I to pray for a taste which should stand me in stead under every variety of circumstances, and be a source of happiness and cheerfulness to me through life, and a shield against its ills, it would be a taste for reading."

"Give a man this taste, and the means of gratifying it, and you place him in contact with the best society in every period of history. You make him a denizen of all nations and a contemporary of all ages."

The hope of the State Federation is to stimulate this taste and assist in its gratification through the medium of its federated clubs.

The adoption of this plan as a feature of the policy of the federation should not, however, prevent women's clubs from freely aiding in a broader
"AFTER THE SAW MILL HAS GONE."

This collection of houses stands about a mile from a traveling library station. The houses grew up about a saw mill. When the pine was cut the mill went and with it most of the people who had health and energy, and other families have drifted in to take their places. The soil is poor and work is hard to get. Children reared in such conditions need to be touched with the best spirit of modern life. The point of contact may be the traveling library, with its books and periodicals bringing inspiring messages from the brightest and best of the world's great workers. Under wholesome educational influences these boys and girls who rear poultry, live much out-of-doors and help in the gardens would have infinitely better opportunities than their comrades of the cities, but they need a little external stimulus to start their thought and ambition in better lines.
system for the circulation of more miscellaneous collections of books generally throughout the state, as these clubs, because of their net-work of organization, may become most helpful agencies for procuring books and periodicals and transmitting them from one point to another. Sentiment in this direction only needs a little stimulus. The great heart of humanity is easily moved by appeals in behalf of physical distress or hunger but it is more difficult to realize the need of loosening the purse strings for the sake of supplying mental food. In the rush and hurry of every day life, people with the power to aid the weaker ones do not pause often enough to reflect what a boon a collection of suitable books must be to families in the country during the long winter evenings when they are often almost completely isolated from their associates. Those whom life on the farm has familiarized with this mental hunger and thirst may well bear testimony to the fact that nothing but a traveling library circulating with rapidity can satisfy the appetite for books possessed by many farmers’ sons and daughters. Think of the inestimable privilege of being allowed to assist in the choice of the right sort of food for these insatiable appetites, of being able to aid in the awakening of the moral and spiritual nature of the young reader. For not alone as an intellectual stimulus are good books to be viewed. They must impart activity to the higher powers as well. Emerson said “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 demi-gods standing round who will not let us sleep.” How this expansive influence may transform the hum-drums of the farm!

When these thoughts are sufficiently brought home to the inner consciousness of the club-women of Wisconsin, they will take hold of the movement for traveling libraries with a right good will, for the fundamental idea of club organization is service, and all desire the blessing that comes from “what we share.”