CHILDREN'S HOME LIBRARIES.

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Some one has said, "There is no social principle more hopeful on the one hand, more dismal of contemplation on the other, than that which assures to age the character formed in the first years of life; which makes man heir to childhood's influences as well as to natal proclivities; which makes the reformation of a life next to hopeless when its right formation might have been easy. This principle is the key to the city's problems of poverty and vice. The child problem is, in fact, the whole problem of charities and correction and in its solution will be solved for the next generation all those questions which are today the subject of study and discussion."

Among the many philanthropic movements of the day, toward the solution of the child problem, there is none more delightful in its operation, more uplifting in its influence than that known as the children's home library.

The children's home library is an attempt to reach the children of the poor in tenement districts with wholesome literature. "From dim attics and damp cellars in poverty-stricken sections of populous towns, from ruinous tenement districts in great cities and from cheerless homes, there comes a cry from the children—children who, subjected to want and neglect, are so environed as to command our deepest, tenderest sympathies."

The Children's Aid Society, of Boston, began, about ten years ago, to send little boxes of books and periodicals to the children of the poor in the city. The children were divided into groups of tens and fiftens and one of the larger children in each group was appointed librarian. Such books as Eggleston's "First Book in American History," Wood's Natural History Readers," "Toby Tyler," and Andersen's "Fairy Tales," were purchased and loaned to a little community of children for a time and then passed on, being replaced by a fresh supply. A "friendly visitor" was appointed, who visited the homes, chatted with the children, and conducted quiet indoor
A J. D. WITT'T TRAVELING LIBRARY STATION.

The library is placed on a shelf behind the front door and gives no trouble to the family who enjoy having the neighbors drop in for books and magazines.
games, at the same time having an oversight to the care of the little libraries as to their use and management. Over seventy of these libraries are now carrying on their kindly mission in the city of Boston.

This work was soon taken up in other cities of the country, notably at Albany and Chicago, under the auspices of the library training schools at those points.

Inspired by the accounts of the movement in Boston and Albany, the library class of the Armour Institute of Technology determined, late in 1894, to start children's libraries in Chicago. It was planned to inquire through the university settlements, such as the Chicago university settlement, Northwestern university settlement, and others, to learn of localities where the libraries were most needed, and of families with whom it would be wise to place them. With a few exceptions, the work was always carried on through the settlements, but under the auspices of the library class, the members of which became the "friendly visitors" for the libraries. In one case a library was started down town in a district through which the visitor passed daily on her way to the railroad station. The work was carried on in all quarters of the city and among all nationalities.

One little girl made a practice of translating the stories into the Bohemian language for her parents. In all cases it was found that the presence of the books in the house had a most beneficial effect. As a friendly visitor writes, "People lived up to the idea." "We found that the parents read the books about as much as the children did; and sometimes a child wished to renew a book several times, because it was being read aloud to the entire family." * * * "Each library made its own rules and elected its own officers. Each visitor planned her own entertainments. We had at our central library several games which were drawn by the visitor week by week. One day, lotto was played in four languages. Some times the children entertained the visitor and the turn about was a great success. We had talks about books, men, and events. Interesting talks were given on all sides of book-making; i.e., beauty in books, etc., which tended to make the children much more careful in handling them. Books were donated by the Children's Aid Society of Chicago, by individuals, a college fraternity, etc. Periodicals coming monthly and weekly were not a success with beginners as the interest could not be sustained. These children of the streets lead exciting lives and many things other children like seem tame. "Little Lord Fauntleroy" was "wanted" badly several times and would have lost some of his collars and curls in the fray. 'Toby Tyler' and 'Silent Pete' were most popular; while 'Adventures of a Brownie,' 'Tom Sawyer,' 'Kit Carson,' 'Daniel Boone,' etc., were in great demand. The girls liked Miss Alcott, Ruth Ogden and Mrs. M. M. Dodge. The boys read Coffin and all the histories they could get."
The success attending these efforts in Boston, Albany and Chicago should commend itself to Women's Clubs, Christian Endeavor societies, and Young Women's Christian Associations, as a fruitful field for philanthropic work; thereby demonstrating the truth of the statement that "it is always through the children that the best work is to be done for the uplifting of any community."