

livery wagon. A great saving could be made, particularly in county systems, if the rural carrier could deliver and return the boxes. The work of the state system could be vastly enlarged if the rural mail carrier were allowed to call at depots for boxes sent to outlying stations. The abolishment of stage routes with no substitute for them has worked a hardship in this connection which should be speedily remedied.

## X

### THE FUTURE OF TRAVELING LIBRARIES.

Before the establishment of rural free delivery, there were over 1400 postoffices in Wisconsin. A community that is large enough to have a postoffice should also be provided with a traveling library. The state and the county systems now reach a little over one-half of the former postoffices. There are many places in the state, too small for postoffices, which should be provided with traveling collections. All of the libraries owned by the Commission were in the field during the winter of 1910, save a few that were kept on hand from day to day for exchange purposes. The books in the state system were read a total of 103,665 times during the past 11 months. The number of library stations could be vastly increased were adequate funds provided. Large forest areas which covered Northern Wisconsin a few years ago have been cut down by lumbermen or destroyed by fire. On to these clearings are coming settlers from Germany, Scandinavia, Bohemia, Italy, and Poland intent on building homes. They are industrious and thrifty but most of them are starting with scant means. Their

farms are usually mortgaged and to pay off this debt they must deny themselves all but the barest necessities of life. These are the people who appreciate the traveling libraries and the illustrated periodicals sent with them. One earnest woman who had charge of a traveling library in an isolated northern community wrote: "The books of the traveling library are out constantly and are doing a great deal of good. One family which had never had any books in the house except school books have taken eight books in the past two months. The Youth's Companions are taken by the teacher and read till they are all worn out. I can never tell you how much they like them and how much good they do." Although the Wisconsin Commission reaches more farming communities than any other state in the Union, there are thousands of settlements still untouched for lack of means to supply them. In no other activity in which the state is engaged are the people reached and benefited as through the state traveling libraries. As Mr. Hutchins has said, "Every sound instinct of national preservation and patriotism demands for the masses of our people a fuller education to train them to meet political, social, and industrial conditions that are annually becoming more complex. To the man upon the farm even more than to the man in the city, the news of the great movements of the world must come by reading. The state trains these people to read and then leaves the quantity and quality of their reading to chance. It gives them an expensive schooling for six or seven years and then when a few cents per capita annually would enable them to educate themselves throughout their lives, it neglects them.

Is it possible to devise any addition to our system of popular education which will give so much information, so carefully chosen, at so small cost, as will be gained by adding free traveling libraries to it? Not one citizen in one thousand could select as good books, not one in ten-thousand could buy as cheaply and none could make exchanges of readings as wisely, cheaply, and satisfactorily as all, working unitedly, may do for all."