

AS A UNIVERSITY

THE ULTIMATE MISSION OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY.

Good Work Done in This Department by the Y. M. C. A. in Many Communities—Usefulness the Test of a Library's Success.

BY MRS. W. M. STROTHER.

The library statistics of Virginia show that the Y. M. C. A. libraries are doing good work in many communities. Only a few of them are properly catalogued, and, owing to this lack of system, their usefulness has been somewhat less than it might have been.

They are rated in the following order in the Library Report for 1904:

Staunton . . . . .	3,500
Richmond . . . . .	3,000
Petersburg . . . . .	2,500
Lynchburg . . . . .	1,000

Staunton leads, too, in the number and size of public school libraries.

Every well-equipped and well-governed Y. M. C. A. emphasizes the educational features of its system and because of this well-defined policy it has been the means of doing a noble work, notably in the South, where public libraries are few and far between.

The education of an individual is coincident with the life of that individual, not merely with his childhood and youth. It is carried on by the appliances and influences of the family, the vocation, the government, the church, the press, the Y. M. C. A. and the Library.

These last two educators are unsectarian, and hence occupy a field independent of the church. They furnish a foundation for the intelligent reading of paper and magazine, which gives the young citizen a desire to be of the world as well as in the world. Were it not for the Y. M. C. A. and the public libraries, the education of the masses would, in most cases, cease when the doors of the grammar school swing in after them for the last time. But these two institutions keep wide

open the doors of opportunity for the ambitious man and woman.

The Public Library is, after all, the true university. With its class rooms and study rooms, its valuable reference works, the library provides university extension, on its part, furnishes the library with that which it most covets, an added constituency. The public library of today claims that its true function is to serve the people, and that the only test of its success is usefulness. "Books for everybody" is its motto. Morley says, "The purpose of literature is to bring sunshine into our hearts and drive moonshine out of our heads."

Literature is not handicapped by the divisions of men into employer and employe. She makes her appeal to all alike. It cannot be too often said that literature is human because it reflects human life. New opportunities, new discoveries, and new occupations open new vistas, and literary energy goes hand in hand with material prosperity. Literature means life in all its variety and vastness, in all its complexity and grades.

Queen Victoria told Tennyson how much comfort "In Memoriam" had afforded her, when she was called upon to mourn the death of her husband, Prince Albert. And in this she gave no better illustration of the scope and function of literature than did the poor young laundress who pasted Longfellow's lines on "Maidenhood" above her wash-tub and who, as she bent over her work, lifted her soul back to the level of faith and hope and purity, as sung by the poet.

When Tennyson died clasping "Cymbeline" in his hands, he furnished no better illustration of the scope and function of literature than did those grimy English miners who came up from the mines of Newcastle to stop Longfellow's carriage, to grasp his hand and say, "God bless you for writing the 'Psalm of Life.'"

In all the heart of common things  
 Still lives the song of Robert Burns,  
 A glad, free voice, it dwells and sings  
 In all the heart of common things,  
 To guide with simple reasonings  
 Whoe'er life's wiser way discerns.  
 In all the heart of common things  
 Still lives the song of Robert Burns.

cont'd