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Until 1876 all library institutions worked along individual lines, with no thought of co-operation. But in that year the American Library Association was formed at the Centennial, and the publication of their organ, "The Library Journal," was begun.

Since that date development in libraries and library science has been indeed wonderful. The whole civilized world, with hardly enough intelligent dissent to prove the rule, has accepted the fact that the library is a necessity.

There is no insurance of nations so cheap as the enlightenment of the people. "There is no other bulwark of our democracy so potent as the education of the adult."

The public school, no matter how excellent, cannot accomplish the task of educating citizens fit to mould and guide public opinion. They are not to blame that they cannot raise mankind to even the most modest ideals of a well-ordered Democratic society, when it is known that they reach the great majority only during six or eight years, and that only one and one-half per cent. of the children go through the High School; and that a large number never go to school at all.

The three great functions of the library, in round robin order, are: To afford rest and recreation for the tired and overworked, to fit them better to carry life's burdens; again to afford information is one of its best understood functions, for by reading one may stand upon the shoulders of all his predecessors and utilize their labors and experiences. The cumulative wisdom of the human race, passed on in books, makes possible the marvels of civilization. Another vital function is the giving of inspiration, for though less tangible, it is a strong lifter up and builder up of character. A monk of the 16th century wrote on the walls of the book vault, "All minds in the world's history find their focus in my library. This is the pinnacle from which one may see all that is, all that has been. My library shelves are the avenues of time. My library is the garden of immortal fruits, without the dog and dragon."

The public library has been found the only institution that furnishes the reading which, in its three-fold form, information, inspiration and recreation, is the greatest influence in modern life. Small wonder then, that about the library cluster naturally the affections and the interest of the community.

It is the crowning feature of democracy for its own higher culture. Free education and free books in a free democracy, that is the system of an enduring social structure. Free coin in old Rome bribed a mob and kept it passive. By free books and what goes with them in modern America we mean to erase the mob from existence. There lies the cardinal difference between the civilization which perished and a civilization that will endure.

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ONE MILLION BOOKS LIBRARY OF CONGRESS AND ITS DEVELOPMENT.

The Great National Collection and Its
Magnificent Repository—Unequaled
In the World as a Place for the
Scholar to Work.

BY MRS. W. M. STROTHER.

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A distinguished foreigner speaks of the reading madness of the American, "to whom, besides his country and the almighty dollar, nothing is so holy as printer's ink."

He says, "the dominant traits of our people are, their inventive and resourceful power, their desire for education, and their generous giving for public needs. The American is constantly increasing his knowledge because it is power, and the royal road to this end is the free public library." He goes on to say the States fairly teem with public libraries. But alas, he did not come further south than Washington.

In selecting three great American libraries to be studied in three consecutive articles, it is the desire of the writer to select different types, each interesting in its own life-history, and in its relation to the whole movement.

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