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Virginia are willing to follow a good example, no matter where they find it, in methods and means of community betterment. It shows their capacity for successful organization and co-operation, for civic betterment.

The modest desire of these two ladies was to have a place where old magazines, containing valuable reading matter, could be kept on file for reference, and to obtain as gifts as many books as possible, for a nucleus of a town library. A gentleman from Detroit gave them \$10, and a lady from Philadelphia gave \$25, and with this unexpected encouragement, their plan grew bright. The next step was the announcement of a mass-meeting of all women interested in betterment, and a general invitation through the pulpit and the press, to every woman in the town who wanted to help. This meeting resulted in an organization, bearing the name of "The Women's Library Association of Bedford City." Their constitution is simple, and can be easily adopted and copied in any community in the State that wishes to establish a subscription library.

The annual fee is \$1, which entitles the subscriber to a book of fiction, one of non-fiction, one new magazine, and one old one every week. The library is open every Tuesday and Saturday afternoon, members of the board acting as librarians in turn. Even without the privileges of a reading room, every day, it is readily seen how great a benefaction this library has become in its few years of existence. It has a well-chosen list of 1,450 books and takes twenty magazines. In February, 1903, it was incorporated by an act of Legislature, and now owns its building and is called the "Bedford Library Association." It stands as a monument to the public spirit and unselfish devotion of a few patriotic women.

Since the Orange Library has become a free library, Virginia can boast two free public libraries. The Norfolk Free Library has an interesting history, and will be the subject of the next article.

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THE CARNEGIE IDEA

LIBRARIES AS AGENCIES FOR IMPROVING THE MASSES.

Actual Operations of a Carnegie Institution in a Virginia City—The Norfolk City Library, Its Cost and Its Benefits.

BY MRS. W. M. STROTHER.

"I choose free libraries as the best agencies for improving the masses of the people, because they give nothing for nothing. They only help those who help themselves. They never pauperize. They reach the aspiring, and open to these the chief treasures of the world—those stored up in books. A taste for books drives out lower tastes.

"Besides this, I believe good fiction is one of the most beneficial reliefs to the monotonous lives of the poor. For these and other reasons, I prefer the public library to most if not any other agencies for the happiness and improvement of a community."—Andrew Carnegie.

The handsome library building at the corner of Freemason and Thomas streets, in the city of Norfolk, is not called the Carnegie Library, but the gift of \$50,000 made by Andrew Carnegie to the city of Norfolk, for a library building, to be maintained by the city at a cost of not less than \$5,000 per year, gives to that city the proud distinction of having the only free public library in the State of Virginia.

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