

The Library School



HERE the ancient scholar depended upon his memory, the modern scholar depends upon his books. It is difficult to realize that books were once too few and too precious to be easily or readily consulted. In those days it was not enough merely to remember the book in which a fact was stated, for the bit of wisdom might never again be accessible. Now it is impossible to keep in mind the books upon even one subject, and catalogues and indexes are indispensable. This change in circumstances has naturally brought to libraries power, influence and responsibilities of which the ancients never dreamed. There were many steps, differing, of course, in the various countries, between the former and the present condition; between the keeping of books as the brightest jewels of some secluded monastery, closely guarded and sometimes even

chained, and the housing of them to-day.

At an early day in our own country, libraries made their influence felt. While we are proud of the number of copies of Blackstone which came to the colonies, and of the wisdom of the "Fathers of the Constitution," we are apt to underestimate the influence of those early subscription libraries in making the colonists as well versed in their rights and privileges as were few even among the cultured classes in England.

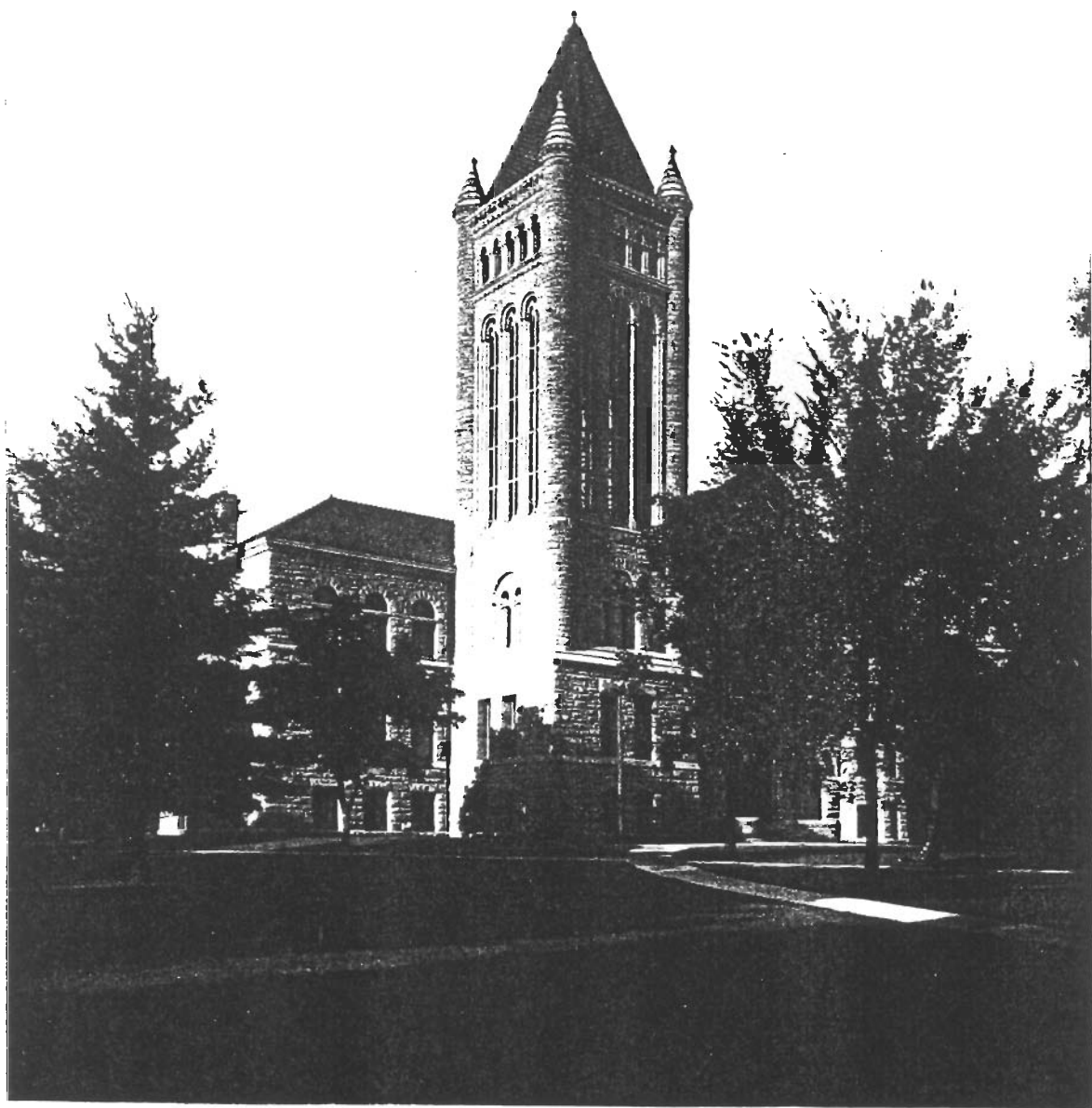
To-day, as our democracy grows older and its strength and weakness become more apparent, the need of equal educational advantages for all is more keenly felt. Here it is that the library comes forward to supplement the public schools and becomes, in the best sense of the phrase, "the poor man's university." Though the poor man may not be able to receive all the advantages of the schools, yet the library can bring the wisest teachers of all ages to await his leisure moments. Not only may the library be the teacher of the people, but in our modern university system it has been most happily called "the teacher of teachers," emphasizing all branches of knowledge.

Ever since the days of Benjamin Franklin there have been in various parts of the country men who realized the vast influence of libraries, but the era of organization had to be awaited before the old idea of the library as a storehouse would yield to the idea of the library as a workshop. The first well-defined step in this direction was taken in the centennial year, when the American Library Association was organized, with its speaking motto: "The best reading to the greatest number at the least cost." In 1887 Mr. Melvil Dewey, recognizing the need of specialists for this new field of work, organized, in connection with Columbia College, the first library school.

After two years the school, no longer an experiment, was moved to Albany. Graduates from Albany during the next few years organized schools in Brooklyn and Philadelphia. In 1893, under the directorship of a prominent Albany graduate, Mis-



"Here's a starched piece of austerity."—MISS STREIGHT.



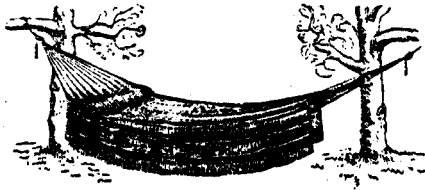
Katharine E. Sharp, a successful library school was established at Armour Institute of Technology, Chicago.

In the fall of 1897 the Armour Library School was incorporated with the University of Illinois. During the past year one of the finest library buildings in the country has been completed, and the legislature has made most generous appropriations for books. Thus, Illinois is the foremost of the western states in recognizing the profession of the librarian, and in a building strongly suggestive of mediæval magnificence is found a school for this most modern vocation.

The course extends over a period of four years, and leads up to the degree of Bachelor of Library Science. The technical work is described in what are for the most part familiar terms with unknown meanings: Selection of books, checking invoices, collation, accessioning, cataloguing, classify marking, shelf listing, loan systems and book binding. In addition, regular instruction and problems in bibliography and reference work are given and the broader side of the work is emphasized.

The organization which the library schools have effected has revolutionized library methods and has increased the usefulness of the modern library. It has been roughly estimated that a carefully chosen, well-arranged library is worth more than one ten times as large which has been hurriedly collected and poorly assorted. In America various mechanical devices have aided in making the library an ideal study where a book can be summoned in three or four minutes, even though the collection number a million volumes. Someone has ingeniously suggested that, though the librarian with his catalogue may not furnish the long-sought royal road to learning, at least he shows a short cut to the needed information.

In these days of mental unrest and upheaval the influence of the librarian is second to none. His mission is not only to make known the lessons of the past, but also to inspire and guide those who are striving to solve the questions of the present. In recognition of this, one, at least, of our states requires every town to establish and maintain a free public library. President Gilman aptly embodies our modern idea when he says: "A noble library is a noble organ. Its value depends upon the player. * * * When a master sits at the keyboard celestial harmonies are heard—history, philosophy, science, poetry; all the muses hover near."



"Something to blame and something to commend."—K A Θ.