

The Little Librarian.

There had been a great stir for weeks in a quiet village near Utica, in the State of New York, preceding the arrival of a physician and his family, who had decided to leave their old home in Providence, R.I., and migrate to this 'far western wilderness,' as western New York was termed in that year of our Lord, 1830.

The village was a small one in the midst of a rich and prosperous farming community. Its inhabitants were all from New England, most of them having settled there within two decades. There were a few lawyers, a judge, several merchants, two pastors, two school teachers, a number of mill owners and their employees; but, until the coming of Dr. Stevens, no physician had as yet taken up his residence among them. Naturally enough there had been great rejoicing among the neighbors, for a year since Dr. Stevens's visit, and his purchase of a large farm near the town, of three acres in the town itself, and the building of a substantial home, which at this time, in the autumn of 1830, was about finished.

In those days neighbors were neighbors in most thorough fashion. Indeed the entire community seemed interested during the month of September in doing all possible toward the coming of the new doctor who had, even during his short visit, quite won his way into their hearts. When the lumbering stage-coach from Utica arrived on a certain mild afternoon in September, it did not stop first at the door of the village tavern, but at the homes of the judge, and one of the mill owners, who with their wives and daughters received the doctor, Mrs. Stevens and the three children, as if they were old friends, and brought them into their comfortable homes. A few days thereafter when the loads of furniture and household goods, which had been slowly transported from their distant eastern home, appeared, a company of cheerful, ready helpers, set to work to unpack the goods, to tack down the carpets, put up the curtains, get the china into the closets, and make the house ready for the newly-welcomed family.

The handsome mahogany, the Chippendale sideboard and chairs, the beautiful silver candlesticks, the delicate china, did not interest or surprise them as much as the numerous boxes of books. Some of the neighbors declared they did not believe there were so many in a circuit of five miles as among the doctor's effects.

The doctor himself, kept busy for many hours sorting out the books, setting off those on medical subjects for the shelves in his office, which was in a wing of the house, and classifying the scientific, literary and classical works as they had been arranged in his old home.

Few doctors who had not yet reached the age of fifty had so large or so well selected a library as Dr. Stevens. While his practice soon extended in all directions, and he was frequently summoned by physicians at a distance for consultation, yet in a healthy community where simple habits prevailed, he had considerable leisure time. This he used for the furtherance of education among his neighbors. Himself a graduate from Brown University, and having as his friends a circle of well-educated people, he appreciated the advantages which he had enjoyed, and determined to do all possible to inspire a love of study and reading in the new community which was now his home. What one man or one family can do to accomplish this is surprising.

Dr. Stevens's oldest daughter, Catherine, had just passed her fourteenth birthday. She was a bright scholar, a great reader, a good

talker. It had been her habit for several years to drive with her father quite often as he made his visits to his patients, and occasionally on a Saturday to go some distance with him. On these drives her father had taken pains to talk over with her Scott's stories, Shakespeare's plays and to recite poems to her, telling her the story in them previous to the recital. Now, Dr. Stevens proposed that Katy should become a little librarian. 'I will put up another large set of shelves in my office,' he said, 'we will cover neatly two or three hundred volumes which are now in the parlor, then number them, and lend them to the people here. If you will spare two hours on Saturday to keep the names of those who take the books, and help me in this, I think we will undertake it.'

Katy was delighted to comply with her father's request, and set to work at once. In a little time the larger part of the doctor's books had been transformed into a circulating library. It was greatly appreciated by all, both old and young, as there were books which interested both classes. Young boys who cared little for reading, and who could not gratify their taste for it, had they cared, who were in the habit of lounging away their time at various gathering-places in the village, eagerly embraced this new opportunity.

The boys and girls during that first winter began to love books as they had never loved them before.

In some homes the young folks from two or three families would gather once or twice a week while one of the number would read aloud as the boys whittled and ate apples, and the girls ran in the wicking for the candles to be made on the morrow, or embroidered, their pretty collars, or stitched the bosoms of their fathers' shirts, or pieced blocks for new comforters or bed-quilts.

Katy was quite in her element as she discoursed to one and another on Sunday mornings the merits of this and that book, advised different ones as to what she thought they would enjoy, and rehearsed to them much she had learned during her pleasant drives with her father.

What Katy Stevens said on various subjects was often quoted by one and other among the boys and girls, and her literary opinion was unquestioned. Many a young mother would leave her varied work at home, the trying out of lard, the putting down of pork and beef, the carding of wool, the making of candles, the churning or the sewing, and, slipping on her warm hood, and hand-knitted moccasins—for this was before the days of rubbers and arctics—would run over to the doctor's office for some good book which the little librarian would recommend.

The monotony of the long winter evenings was broken also by frequent talks or informal lectures, readings in the school-house by one of the pastors, the doctor, the judge, or the principal of the village school. Before the days of photography or illustrated magazines, an evening passed in listening to the life of Scott, his boyhood, the fame which came to him from his first novels, his purchase of a farm on the Tweed, the successive additions to it until it became a great domain, his delight in the baronetcy conferred on him in 1820, the joy he had in building that beautiful gothic, castellated mansion, which he named Abbotsford, the stately life he lived there for many years, the beautiful gifts he received from Napoleon and other noted persons, the armory and library which he fitted up so well; all this was of great interest, and enhanced the pleasure in reading his matchless historical novels, his romances and poems. The audiences listened sympathetically as the doctor related Sir Walter's reverses, which came to him when he was

past fifty years old, in consequence of the failures of his publishers and printers, Scott having made advances from and endorsements for the former, and having had a secret partnership with the latter, so that he became burdened with a debt of £150,000.

The stories which were appearing from the pen of J. Fenimore Cooper, particularly those relating to the Indians, were also of great interest, for in the near vicinity were remnants of the Oneidas, the Onondagas, the Mohawks and other tribes, and the villagers were familiar with them. These talks were varied by those on noted scientists, inventors, and artists, thus making the people intelligent on all these subjects. The skilful and beloved doctor and his family thus became a remarkable intellectual power in the community, exerting an influence which is felt to this day.

Fifty years after the time of which we write, in 1880, a daughter of Katy, the little librarian, made a visit to the old home of her parents and grandparents. It was in the summer time. She stopped at the village inn and dined, then went out to call on two or three of those still living there who were friends of her mother's in her younger days. It needed only an introduction, and the mention of the fact that she who then presented herself was a granddaughter of the dear old doctor, whose name was a household word in that part of the country, and a daughter of Katy Stevens, the little librarian, to open the hearts and homes of the people to her. In ten minutes her belongings were brought from the inn to one of the most hospitable of homes, and she found herself the centre of a cordial, interested company of old friends of her father's and mother's. Before the sun had set over the beautiful wooded hills the arrival of Katy Stevens's daughter had been quietly heralded through the village, a fact which soon brought elderly men and women to see her. Several of these gentlemen were merchants or lawyers in western or southern cities and had returned to spend a few weeks in the home of their childhood. One and another told the visitor how the help from the doctor's library, and his and other talks in the school-house, and advice about books which her mother had given them as boys had first inspired them to bestir themselves and get an education to fit them for good work in the world.

One of these gentlemen, who had made a large fortune, had presented to several towns beautiful library buildings and filled them with large and fine libraries, remembering as he did, and as he often quoted, his own experience of what a moderate but well-selected library and an intelligent little librarian had done for him.—'The Standard.'

True Giving.

That is no true alms which the hand can hold;

He gives nothing but worthless gold

Who gives from a sense of duty!

But he who gives a slender mite,

And gives to that which is out of sight,

That thread of the all-sustaining beauty

Which runs through all and doth all unite,—

The hand cannot clasp the whole of his alms,

The heart outstretches its eager palms.

Not what we give but what we share,

For the gift without the giver is bare;

Who gives himself with his alms feeds three—

Himself, his hungry neighbour, and me.

—James Russell Lowell.