

MRS. ADA NORTH, LIBRARIAN.

In the early part of February, 1870, during that session of the General Assembly which passed the act providing for the erection of a Capitol for Iowa, the legislature adjourned out of respect to the memory of Major George J. North, a promising young attorney of Des Moines, whose untimely death had just occurred.

Mr. North had come west in 1861 shortly after graduating at Hamilton, and while visiting his uncle, the Hon. Levi North, of Kewanee, Illinois, met the wife of Col. William M. Stone who was also a relative. Mrs. Stone wrote to her husband of his young cousin, recommending him to his consideration. Two years later upon the election of Colonel Stone as Governor of Iowa, he offered the military secretaryship to Mr. North, who accepted and started for Iowa. Reaching Des Moines early in January, 1864, he attended the inauguration and immediately entered upon his duties as secretary. Soon after the adjournment of the legislature in response to the call for more men, Mr. North enlisted as a private and at once actively engaged in recruiting a company in and about Des Moines. These men were mustered in as company F, of the 47th Iowa Volunteers, and Mr. North was chosen Captain. A little later, he was commissioned Major of the regiment. This regiment was, to the chagrin of most of its members, assigned to duty at Helena, Arkansas, at which sickly and dismal post they suffered fearfully from malaria and fever during the hot summer months, losing many brave men. On the mustering out of the regiment, Major North returned to his desk in the Governor's office, and at the same time commenced the practice



Ada Lovelace

of law. Upon the close of the war, the Governor made him his private secretary and commissioned him as his aide-de-camp, with the title of Lieutenant-Colonel. The earlier and more familiar title, however, always clung to him. Resigning his position as secretary, as the increasing demands of his profession required all his attention, he established himself in the old Exchange Block, then the favorite resort of professional men in Des Moines, and formed a partnership with Captain Jasper Woodford, one of the members of the brilliant first Des Moines Law Class. Uniting with the Presbyterian church of which Father Bird was the revered pastor, he became a useful and beloved member and officer.

In the fall of 1865, Major North married Miss Ada E. Miles, daughter of Rev. M. N. Miles, then of Geneseo, Illinois, and brought her to his Iowa home. Five years of busy life flew by, two children were born, when death invaded the happy home and claimed the husband and father. By the death of her husband, Mrs. North was thrown upon her own exertions for self-support. Fortunately employment soon came to her. During the final days of the legislature, extra clerical assistance was required at the state house. Mrs. North's name was suggested and she was sent for. Thus she was introduced to a means of livelihood, for, from this time with brief intervals, occupation as copyist, clerk and librarian, engaged her for a period longer than is usual to women in public office.

For something over a year, Mrs. North was employed in the various state offices; at the end of this time a vacancy occurred in the State Library, occasioned by the death of Mr. John C. Merrill, librarian. To this vacancy Mrs. North was appointed by Governor Merrill. The following reference to this appointment appeared in the *Iowa State Register* of that date:

COMMISSIONED.—The Governor has commissioned Mrs. Ada North, Librarian of the Library of the State, and approved her official bond.

This appointment has been received with universal satisfaction by our entire community, among whom Mrs. North resides, and by public men elsewhere. Mrs. North, then a resident of Illinois, was married in 1865 to the late Major George J. North, then military secretary and subsequently private secretary of Governor Stone. Left a widow by his mournful death, early in 1870, Mrs. North has supported herself and family by her own exertions since that event. She now steps into a position she is admirably qualified to fill, and will prove a worthy successor to the late efficient librarian. It is not the least praiseworthy feature of this appointment, honorable alike to Executive and appointee, that it was made entirely without solicitation by her, or in her behalf.

Entering thus unexpectedly upon the duties of the profession which was to prove, though she knew it not, the loved occupation of her life, she applied herself earnestly to the work before her. At this time very little literature relating to librarianship existed. The government Report on Libraries, compiled by the Commissioner of Education, did not appear until 1876. *The Library Journal* made its first bow to the public the same year, and the leading librarians then first met in Philadelphia and organized the National Library Association. For direction in her new field of labor, the young librarian turned to her fellow workers in the great eastern libraries and a lively correspondence ensued. Librarians are full of the spirit of helpfulness, and are always ready to give counsel to the novice in the profession. The replies to her letters formed the new librarian's school of library economy. In later years, the Report of 1876 and *The Library Journal* proved valuable aids in library study.

Mr. Merrill had found the library in a state of confusion and neglect, resulting from the failure of the legislature to make provision for its proper care. He had greatly improved the appearance of the library and introduced the card catalogue. Taking up the work thus fairly begun, Mrs. North proceeded to carry on the plan of re-organization. At this time, the library did not possess a set of our Iowa laws, journals and documents. To remedy this serious defect, was one of Mrs. North's

early endeavors. By correspondence and advertisement the missing volumes were picked up, and the sets rendered nearly complete. Sets also of the reports of the State officers, the Governors' Messages and Inaugurals were carefully collected and bound for future reference. The dusty and ragged files of the public documents of other states were also filled out as far as practicable.

The necessity of such legislation as would give the library the dignity of a state office and place it on an equal footing with those of sister states was very generally felt. The Governor recommended favorable action in his message, and Judge Cole and the Secretary of State, Hon. Ed Wright, exerted themselves especially in behalf of the library. Judges Cole, Beck and Adams, were all thoroughly alive to the interests of the State Library and ambitious to make the collection creditable to the State. They urged that the law should be revised, and more liberal measures adopted. Accordingly an act in relation to the library and the duties of the librarian was passed and approved April 25, 1872. A Board of Trustees was created consisting of the Governor, Secretary of State, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and members of the Supreme Court. The librarian was made a state officer with a salary of \$1,200, and was directed to prepare a catalogue of the State Library for publication. An annual appropriation of \$1,000 was made for the purchase of books. In addition to the cash appropriation, all of the Supreme Court Reports which should be left after the annual distribution made by the Secretary of State, in exchange for the reports of other states, were turned over to the library to be disposed of under the direction of the trustees for the benefit of the law department. The sale of these volumes brought in considerable revenue and the trustees planned large things. The English, Irish and Scotch Reports were completed. The American sets were filled, law texts were added and the department of law began to take rank among the first in the Union.

The far-seeing wisdom of the Trustees in thus building up the law library, is more and more apparent as the years go by, and its usefulness and value to the profession is daily tested.

The frequency of inquiries at the library for all kinds of information led to the beginning of a department of reference, an indispensable part of any library.

In May 1872, Mrs. North was reappointed by Governor Carpenter. A catalogue roughly classified was prepared during the year, and was the only one existing up to 1889. Again reappointed in 1874 by Governor Carpenter, and in 1876 by Governor Kirkwood, Mrs. North sought in all ways to fit herself for the growing requirements of her responsible position. In 1876 she attended the World's Fair and visited the Congressional libraries and the libraries of New York City. A new life was awakening among librarians, librarianship was exalted to the dignity of a learned profession, systems of classification were adopted, new and improved ideas regarding catalogues were put forth and broader views as to the purposes of a library were disseminated.

Thus the years of Mrs. North's term of office were marked by an extension of the State Library, which gave it a national reputation, and by the awakening of the profession to enlarged views and activities.

In the spring of 1878, through the custom of rotation in State offices, Mrs. North was superseded in the library. When it was known that a change was contemplated, many letters were written urging Mrs. North's retention in the office, petitions were sent from attorneys in different parts of the state, the Board of Trustees and State officers voluntarily exerted themselves in her behalf, and most flattering testimonials to her ability in the administration of the library came to her from those outside of the State who had become acquainted with her work. The new appointment, however, had been determined upon, and

Mrs. North retired to private life. After a brief interval she was offered the position of city librarian of Des Moines. This place promising her a continuation of work for which she had fitted herself, Mrs. North accepted it and for a year devoted herself with her accustomed energy to the interests of this then small library. She rearranged the books and catalogued them. An effort was made to increase the interest of the public in the library, the children of the public schools were attracted thither and every aid given them which the slender resources of the library would permit. This pleasant labor was suddenly brought to a close by the appointment of Mrs. North as librarian of the State University, in the fall of 1879. A new phase of library duties now awaited her, for the library of a college or university differs very much from a state or city library, both in the character of its books and its patronage. The State Library is largely a collection of law books and public documents, the use of which is confined to a comparatively limited class. The public library supplies reading to all who desire it, young and old, but, as its statistics show, a large proportion of its purchases and distribution is fiction. The selection of books for a university library is necessarily upon a broader and more systematic plan, since it is to provide for the wants of the student and professional class in all departments of science, literature and art. Fifty years ago, the library figured very little in the life of the great schools. The lecture room and text-book furnished the instruction and the student rarely, if ever, entered the lonely and forbidding region of the library. The late Mr. William F. Poole, of the Newberry Library, said in an article in *The Library Journal* of November, 1893: "For us who graduated thirty or forty years ago, books other than text-books had no part in the education, they were never quoted, recommended, or mentioned by the instructor in the class room. Yale College Library might as

well have been in Wethersfield or Bridgeport as New Haven, so far as the student was concerned."

Since then the library has come to fill a large and indispensable place in the work of the University, and the oft-quoted saying of Carlyle is yearly becoming more apparent, "the true University of these days is a collection of books." The graduate of to-day, if he is to become a scholar, must have access to many books, and become acquainted with the leaders of thought in the past and present. In proportion to this movement in the growth and use of libraries, has arisen the need of constant and able library administration. The doors have been thrown wide open, the rooms rendered attractive, the books catalogued so as to render available every resource of the library, while every aid possible is supplied the student in his investigation.

The newly appointed librarian of the University found much to be done in her fresh field of labor. The 10,000 volumes which then constituted the library, were but roughly classified, and the book room was crowded and poorly lighted. The need of some improved system of classification and cataloguing, and of better accommodations was apparent. Accordingly a card catalogue was commenced during the fall of 1880 and reported as completed by the close of the school year. The pressure for more room led to the fitting up in 1882, with modern appliances, of a large and well lighted lecture room, with reading-room attached, and the library was removed thither and re-arranged before the opening of the fall term.

Believing that such of the fruit of the "Tree of Knowledge" as is found in books should not be forbidden, but made as free as possible, Mrs. North from the first favored freedom of access to the shelves, a privilege highly prized by the student. The various evils apprehended as likely to result from such unrestricted access never manifested themselves.

About this time the seminary method in class room and library was introduced, accompanied by an increased demand for books in the preparation of special topics. The investigations set on foot by these new methods left no part of the library unvisited or unused. In these researches, Mrs. North lent a ready and efficient aid. Her long familiarity with the library, her early acquired habit of rapidly reviewing new books as they passed through her hands, rendered her well fitted to give such direction as was required.

In 1886 the Decimal System of classification was adopted, occupying the leisure of two summer vacations. This completed the reorganization of the library which then numbered 19,000 volumes. The department entered upon a new and improved life, and became a truly popular resort for all connected with the University.

In its modern equipment, its thorough classification and cataloguing and general management, the Iowa University Library compared favorably with those of her sister states of the west.

Recognizing the value of association, Mrs. North found time during those busy years to attend several meetings of the National Library Association. She also corresponded with other Iowa librarians, seeking to arouse their interest in each other's work. She made numerous contributions to the Iowa press on the subject. A meeting was, at her suggestion, called in Des Moines in the fall of 1890, and for the first time, the Iowa librarians shook hands and compared experiences. The "Iowa Library Society" was formed with the state librarian for president, and Mrs. North as secretary. This organization has continued to meet annually, and the proceedings are full of practical suggestions and plans for the growth and improvement of libraries.

The twelfth year of Mrs. North's work for the University and its patrons was the last. It was the twenty-first

of continuous occupation as a librarian. The library now numbered over 28,000 volumes. The long strain of years, with little rest or change began to tell upon her health and strength. During the spring of 1892, a severe attack of rheumatism left her far from strong. Her work was ended and an ex-member of the Board succeeded her as librarian.

Lubbock says, in his essay on "A Song of Books," "A library is a true fairy-land, a very palace of delight, a haven of repose from the storms and troubles of the world." The librarian is sensible of this charm and loves his profession, but does not find it a "haven of repose," since the details of the care of selecting, buying, classifying, cataloguing and loaning books, or of overseeing these details, and the responsibility attending the care of building worthily a large collection, absorb the energies and leave little leisure. Yet the stimulating companionship of books, new and old, the daily association with those who love books is of itself a source of enjoyment, while the opportunity afforded of directing and counseling the many who seek such help is a continued happiness to a generous mind, and the labor is worthy of one's best energies.

To conclude this brief review of the professional life of one of the Iowa librarians, it will not be thought amiss to add a few words as to the need of the application of civil service ideas to these great and growing libraries of the State. The progress of this profession has been rapid. A circular of the World's Fair Literary Congresses declares that in no other department of organized literary activity during the last twenty-five years has there been such marked development as in that of libraries. Library schools offer a thorough course in library economy requiring of their students a high standard of general scholarship. There is, in the opinion of those best acquainted with the history and conduct of libraries

today, no profession whose interests are better subserved by thorough preparation, long experience and natural aptitude than that of the librarian. A frequent change, therefore, together with the appointment of persons untrained and unacquainted with the requirements of the office is a policy greatly to be deplored. The libraries established by the state should be, unquestionably, bureaus of information, model libraries in the modern acceptance of the term.

THE OLD BLOCKHOUSE IN COUNCIL BLUFFS.

BY HON. D. C. BLOOMER.

This was the first building erected in Pottawattamie county. In 1838 the Pottawattamie Indians were removed by the United States, from the "Platte Purchase," so called, in Missouri, to a location on the Missouri river, which subsequently was organized into a county, and took the name of the tribe. Davis Hardin was their agent and came with them to their new home, the whole party, Indians and whites, numbered something less than three thousand. Mr. Hardin settled and cultivated a farm at Council Point, situated five or six miles south of the present city of Council Bluffs. The Indians scattered over the broad valley and adjacent prairies and bluffs, and Mr. Hardin caused a mill to be built on Mosquito Creek, for grinding grain raised by them and himse'f.

In 1839 the general government stationed two companies of regular troops among these Indians for the purpose of keeping peace and quiet among them, although,

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