

ing the educational system of Greece on the basis of physical culture. A new era had dawned for Hellas.

In the same compartment of the train that took me to Corinth sat one of the German judges, who discoursed most learnedly on the performance of the American contestants, and went back to antique monuments for parallels to the admirable pose of the American "agonyists" in the vaulting contest. Not long afterwards I was a guest in the monastery of Megaspélæon, and the monk to whom I was assigned welcomed me afresh with both hands when he heard that I was a countryman of the men who had done so well at the Olympic games. I

opened a newspaper on my return to Athens. The first article on which my eye fell was an account of the Olympic games at Patras, with a jubilant paragraph about the Greek who had beaten by a few millimetres the "rekor" of "Garrett, the terrible Olympic victor." Like Jonah I took ship, but the Olympic games gave me no peace. My sin of omission found me out, and I bought of an importunate peddler who boarded the Euterpe the popular photograph of the group of victors, among them my young townsman, whom I had seen daily exercising his men on the deck of the Fulda, — ὁ Γκάρεττ ὁ φοβερός Ἀμερικανὸς Ὀλυμπιονίκης.

*Basil L. Gildersleeve.*

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## VILLAGE IMPROVEMENT SOCIETIES.

"WHAT do you think is my employment out of doors, and what it has been for this week past? My garden? No such elegant thing, but making a gutter, a sewer, and a pathway in the streets of Edgeworthstown, and I do declare I am as much interested about it as I ever was in writing anything in my life." Thus wrote Maria Edgeworth to her aunt Ruxton in 1831; and in this, as in many educational reforms, she was the forerunner of that admirable body of executive women who have been doing valuable work in their own communities ever since.

Everywhere that village improvement takes active form we find women connected with it, for there is something about it congenial to the feminine temperament, even as the intimate connection between a woman and a broom-handle is an obvious and natural fact. My lady's quick eye, her relentless spirit, her uncompromising activity, hitherto largely manifested in house-cleaning, here find a broader field to preëempt,

and the full utilization of that energy which now goes to waste in many futile pursuits may in the end create force enough to sweep this globe from pole to pole, and neatly dust every continent. However that may be, she begins, in village improvement, as Miss Edgeworth did, literally at the bottom, with drains and paths and hidden health precautions, on which foundations alone a beautiful superstructure can safely be raised, and proceeds from them upward to the higher graces of the art.

Of the various branches of public improvement, that which concerns the villages may be called the most vital, in that it closely appeals to all the inhabitants, no matter what their age or sex or station, and gives something to do with purse or hand to every man, woman, and child who takes an interest in producing organized beauty. Even those who disdain everything but what is practical may gratify their taste by dealing with sewers and electric wires; the orderly may be utilized in seeing

after cleanliness of streets and in organizing bands for the collection of rubbish; those who have a passion for trees may plant and water along the well-mended highways, and they who love flowers may tend their gardens, and make the street borders gay with color; lastly, those who rise to the heights of landscape gardening may design greens and squares, well shaded and beshrubbed, and the largely benevolent man may spend time and money in acquiring woods and open spaces for the recreation of his neighbors. Thus the care and ornamentation of the village may become a joyous occupation for all.

This latent civic enthusiasm we look to see active in our coming millennium, and meantime we can chronicle its beginnings. The early settlers of America, like those of other countries, made a town by merely agglomerating dwellings. They huddled together for safety, cut down every tree behind which might lurk a savage foe, and planted houses haphazard. Their wealth consisted chiefly in cattle, and the goings and the comings of these between the village and the pasture made the footpaths along which the people traveled. Since all through the Middle Ages even great foreign cities like Paris possessed only one or two military roads passable for carriages, with merely narrow footways for other purposes, it is not strange that many American towns should have grown up shapeless and full of crooked alleys, under the pressure of hurried settlement. The colonists brought with them from Europe the habit of treating a town as if it were a garrison, and left to their descendants the problem of properly draining the houses and straightening the highways. To the credit of certain New England towns it must be said that they grouped their more important buildings in an effective way about an open space, and in some cases showed a fitting sense of the value of fine trees by enacting laws for their protection.

In our own day, in new and peaceful communities, the idea begins to gain ground that a village ought to be tastefully planned from the beginning with a view to its own beauty and the comfort of its inhabitants. Notable instances of this are to be found in the towns of Faribault, Minnesota, Garden City, Long Island, Tuxedo Park, New York, and in the original design for Berkeley neighborhood, California. The modern village, when built with a proper regard for dignity and beauty, provides also a common recreation-ground and broad tree-besprinkled spaces upon which many dwellings may face. Parks or terraces of this kind are a feature of some new towns which adds greatly to their attractiveness.

One of the special problems that meet us, however, is that of dealing with such villages as were built with no system, and are now inhabited by a conservative folk, limited in experience, homely in their ways, wedded to old customs, reluctant to change anything, indifferent to progress, niggardly with their money for sanitary and æsthetic purposes; and many such villages are extravagant with franchises to all sorts of companies, to which they give permission to hack trees, to tear up roads, and to disfigure streets with unsightly poles and wires, regardless of the added expense they bring upon the town in the yearly care of the highways, which are injured seriously by these irresponsible corporations. That some effort is necessary to stir the townsfolk from their time-worn content is evident, and we have cause for rejoicing that in many of our rural New England communities the awakening has come through the presence of summer visitors and residents, who bring with them from the city habits of comfort and convenience which are shocked by old-time country makeshifts, along with a spirit of intolerance of them which results in improvements everywhere.

The city, whatever may be said against it, represents the higher civilization; it

absorbs into itself the wealth, the energy, the progressive elements of the population. All advance in comfort and luxury begins in it. For its benefit inventions are made and new appliances for sanitation or convenience are introduced. To its inhabitants these luxuries soon become necessities. Wherever they go they demand the same, and as they go continually in all directions, ever seeking some new world to conquer, they carry with them their necessities and demands, to the real benefit of the country towns. The wish of the summer boarder for a piazza, to accommodate his lounging-chair and hammock, has caused a general sprouting of verandas and balconies from many an ancient roof-tree throughout the country; while his desire for more light and sunshine in the carefully shut up old parlors has occasioned such a sudden budding of bay windows as the world had never seen before. Everywhere one witnesses the same influences at work in the improved character of popular summer resorts, in the enlargement and growing convenience of old farmhouses, in the more modern ideas of the country children, who in their turn bring educational influences to bear on the community. Village improvement is thus the offspring of the cities, and in most cases it is paid for and engineered by those who have enjoyed city advantages.

At first these enlightened promoters of the general weal are met by the obstinate indifference of the residents, and by the refusal of village authorities to make any appropriations to help along the cause; but in the end, when the guidance is vigorous enough, the community responds, and thus very creditable and even beautiful results have been achieved here and there. What is needed is that the movement should become general, and if the village as well as the city would understand the fact that it ought to sell, and not to give away its franchises, possibly much might be accomplished. By this means it could

acquire funds enough to enable it to keep its streets in perfect order without extra tax upon the inhabitants, so that they would need only to hire a suitable agent to carry out necessary reforms. European towns profit by the sale of franchises to lighting and transportation companies. Some of our own cities tax street railways for the benefit of parks.

In the work of village improvement, the drainage, literally as well as figuratively, underlies everything. Early reports by Mr. Olmsted show that much of the unhealthiness of New York's suburbs arose from the neglect of proper precautions about drainage. Staten Island, when it first became an overflow for the growing population of New York, was a beautiful and healthy region, with broad roads leading from one old farmhouse to another, and it possessed fine trees and groves and sparkling streams. In short, it was such a neighborhood as many a remote part of New England sees to-day, beginning to grow from the influx of summer residents. The towns on Staten Island advanced with the same marvelous rapidity that marked the growth of New York. Dram-shops and factories defiled them; the watercourses, interfered with by roads carelessly opened, overflowed and made disgusting and dangerous swamps; malaria broke out everywhere, and brought the whole region into disrepute. A similar state of things was found north of the city, where the Harlem flats still further complicated the problem. Here, however, the danger was more promptly met. An extensive and costly drainage of the Harlem flats resulted in improved sanitary conditions, so that the region was duly prepared for the rapid inroad made by the city upon its country wastes; but Staten Island has had to spend enormous sums to repair its reputation, damaged by the lack of thrift of its early settlers.

An interesting instance of the true value to a suburb of systematic preparation is reported by Mr. Olmsted. About

the year 1870 two suburban speculations were undertaken in the neighborhood of Chicago. One district was situated nine miles from the town; the other, six; but both were on the same railway, and land in each was worth from one hundred to two hundred dollars an acre. The managers of one district laid out their plan in what was then the usual way: they made streets of prairie soil bordered by neat open ditches, and they left proper spaces for sidewalks, along which trees were planted. They hit upon a good name, issued lithographs, and advertised, with no great results. The managers of the other district borrowed a large sum of money at a high rate of interest, mortgaging the land and other property. Employing this, they underlaid the land with several miles of drainage pipe, then built macadamized roads with paved gutters, iron gratings, concrete sidewalks, and broad borders frequently spreading into little greens and commons planted picturesquely. All the natural wood, and the banks of the stream which passed the place, were made public property, and shelters, seats, bath and boat houses were provided. An artesian well was sunk, and with a steam-pump water was sent to all parts of the property. Before these improvements were complete the owners began selling land upon the roads at twenty dollars a front foot, and soon afterwards advanced the price to thirty dollars. Then gas was introduced. The price of land rose, in the outskirts, in two years, from eighty to one thousand dollars an acre. In the twenty years of its existence, the first community has had to expend many times the amount wisely spent in the beginning by the other. These instances suffice to show, in a way that ought to appeal to the most conservative selectman, the pecuniary importance of thorough preparation.

The sanitary value of the trees which the Village Improvement Societies are eager to plant ought to be appreciated. Authorities on the causes of malaria in-

sist upon the danger arising from the too sudden drying of surfaces which have been previously soaked with water; for the quicker the drying, the more virulent the poison that is evolved. Now the presence of shade-trees prevents too rapid evaporation from the soil, and thus hinders the growth and propagation of malarial germs. The close planting of eucalyptus-trees upon the Roman Campagna, in the neighborhood of the once very unhealthy convent of St. Paul without the Walls, had, I was told by the monks in 1875, greatly modified the frequency of malarial fever. As the eucalyptus grows in the climate of Rome with great rapidity, reaching a height of thirty feet in five years, it is probable that the sanitary influence results from the absorption of a large amount of water from the soil, since it is known that a common spreading oak discharges from its leaves eight and a half times as much water during the summer as commonly falls in rain upon the surface of the ground covered by its branches, while more succulent trees, like the elm, maple, hickory, and eucalyptus, give forth more. The thirsty roots act as underdrains when the tree is covered with foliage, the process of evaporation being most rapid during the first three months of summer.

If forests are cut away and brushwood is allowed to remain along country roads, there will be an increase of stagnant ground water, which can be prevented by the presence of large and flourishing trees to absorb the superfluous moisture. There have been many instances in England and Ireland of the arrest of fever and ague by a system of thorough drainage for the benefit of crops, and similar instances are noted in the State of New York. It is known that many of the illnesses of horses result from malarial causes, which can be obviated by proper tree-planting and underdraining: hence the importance of starting in the right way must be realized. On this account, proper sewerage accompanying the in-

creased water supplies should be demanded by public opinion, no matter how scattered the houses; and when they are closely set along a village street, it is criminal to neglect so obvious a precaution. Sanitation is further aided by trees; for in addition to the other advantages they afford, they are of great importance, in thickly settled towns, in absorbing the pernicious gas which results from the respiration of living beings of all kinds.

In many cases rural beauty is destroyed and health threatened by the presence beside the streets of unsightly heaps of refuse by which people have to pass. Some energetic Village Improvement Societies take this matter in hand, and thoughtfully provide special places for garbage, where it can be deposited without giving offense to the inhabitants. This has been done in Beverly, Massachusetts, where the efficient society has secured a suitable spot in a retired place to which all offscouring can be transported, to be either buried or burned at the society's expense, the objectionable heap being screened by trees planted about the dumping-ground. This is a point to be urged everywhere, since each community ought to have a place to put such nuisances as cannot be disposed of about the premises of the householder, so that they will not be a constant annoyance to the public.

For the further advantage of appearance, it is desirable to keep sidewalks of a uniform width along the much traveled streets of a village, with the turf between footpath and highway neatly cut by the lawn-mower; for neatness adds to the finished and attractive aspect of a settlement, and at once strikes the eye of a stranger favorably. Yet while closely settled and frequented streets should bear the marks of formal precision, the pleasant country roadsides should not be robbed of their graceful borders of natural shrubs and vines, but be allowed to retain their picturesque wildness, with merely judicious pruning where the vegetation grows too luxuriantly. Narrow

instead of broad roads are preferable where the exigencies of travel do not demand much space. These save a town expense, and at the same time preserve much natural charm which is often recklessly destroyed, — a false idea leading road commissioners to make havoc and to produce ugliness where they ignorantly think they are "improving" a locality. Instead of cutting down the inoffensive shrubbery, the authorities should rather apply their destructive instinct to a systematic removal of the nests of web-worms, and to felling wild cherry trees which harbor the black-knot, wherein takes shelter the curculio, which is an active menace to the farmer's fruit.

Many inquiries are made as to the best way of forming Village Improvement Societies, so that some information on the subject may not be out of place here. It is, above all, important that everybody in a town should be persuaded to take an interest in the subject; and probably the easiest way to get at the whole public is to take advantage of the meeting of an agricultural society, or other such organization, and make Village Improvement the topic of a free lecture by an interesting speaker. A society can then be organized by those who have zeal and energy to carry it on, assisted possibly by the sympathy of the whole community. A small annual fee, perhaps of one dollar, is usually charged for membership, and the fees, together with voluntary contributions, yield a fund to begin work with. When the society shows itself efficient and earnest, it can occasionally persuade the town authorities to make appropriations for some definite improvement which its committees will undertake to manage and supervise.

The different kinds of work attempted by the society may be divided among committees; and it is wise to have a board of managers, one half of whom may be women. The board of managers should have authority to transact busi-

ness and to appoint the members of standing committees. With such an organization as this to raise funds and carry on work, a great deal can be done in any community. The value of such work as an educator of artistic taste is very great, and its appeal to civic pride rouses a sentiment which cannot be too widely encouraged.

It is a grateful task to record what is being done, and to show in how many directions the art of public improvement is being applied to surroundings. Personal visits to various New England towns, and the kind help of founders and secretaries of societies there and in distant parts of the Union, have enabled me to judge of the wide interest taken in the work; and I am further indebted to one of the apostles of the movement, Mr. B. G. Northrop, whose suggestions and writings have been very valuable. From these sources I learn that village improvement really raises the value of land in neighborhoods where it is practiced, and that consequently it is for the true interest of householders to do all that they can to forward it, whatever obstacles they may encounter in the beginning. The history of the rise and progress of the movement is of meaning to all who take an interest in the betterment of home surroundings, and this I will now try to chronicle briefly.

Village improvement first began in this country in 1853, some twenty years after Miss Edgeworth's efforts in her native village. In that year, Miss Mary Hopkins, afterwards Mrs. Goodrich, founded the Laurel Hill Association in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, and, aided by generous citizens, raised more than a thousand dollars the first year, and planted more than four hundred trees. This society transformed Stockbridge from a rough, shabby village, with a muddy main road full of ruts, a bare common, and a dreary cemetery all brambles and weeds, into the handsome orderly town

now admired by visitors for its well-shaded streets, its smooth well-kept walks, and the important public buildings which adorn it. The society has paid half the expense to add an acre and a half to the grounds about the railway offices, rendered them attractive and beautiful by skillful planting, and helped to erect a tasteful station. Much of the work done by the citizens was stimulated by prizes offered by the society for planting trees, making sidewalks, and improving grounds about the dwellings. Rewards were offered for evidence leading to the conviction of any one injuring the trees and foot-bridge under the care of the association. Mr. Cyrus W. Field gave ten thousand dollars for a park; Mr. David Dudley Field gave the same sum to build a memorial tower with a chime of bells, and in the last year of his life he presented to Stockbridge fifty-eight acres of land, including a romantic glen, for public use. The fine stone library, which contains a reading-room and lecture-hall, was given by the late Mr. J. Z. Goodrich, at a cost of twenty-five thousand dollars. The charm of this lovely town has been so enhanced by the care taken of it that the treasurer of the Laurel Hill Association, at its twenty-fifth anniversary, declared that "every acre of land and every homestead in Stockbridge has appreciated" in consequence of its existence.

Many other towns in Massachusetts have followed the example here set, and, by the aid of generous citizens who have made munificent gifts for public purposes, have done much to improve their respective surroundings. More than sixty towns in the State have established Village Improvement Societies, though some of them have not been maintained: for much individual energy and generosity are demanded to carry them along, and the difficulty everywhere is to rouse the townspeople to a proper interest in the subject without outside stimulus. Massachusetts communities are

very conservative, and in many cases the most that can be said of selectmen is that they refrain from interfering with the societies, but do not materially help them in the work. Since it is hard to create any general interest in the subject, the burden of effort falls always upon a few energetic persons, who sometimes weary of well-doing in the face of much indifference and even of active opposition. Others, however, are nobly persistent.

At North Andover, Massachusetts, an active society exists, which has obtained appropriations from the town for planting trees by the roadside and in public commons. Shrubbery has been set out in a small vacant space near the railway station, an ancient training field is being cultivated as a park, and a common has been improved and planted, so that a large open space in the centre of the town is now available for recreation. Vigorous effort is made to enforce the laws of the commonwealth with regard to advertisements upon rocks and fences, by which the highway is disfigured. Prizes are awarded to children for collecting belts of the eggs of the tent caterpillar, and on Arbor Day the young people are impressed with the importance of protecting and caring for street trees. Prizes are offered by the Improvement Society, also, for the best specimens of plants and flowers. The selectmen have been authorized by the town to establish building lines, roadside trees of value are marked, and the society is ready to undertake to prosecute violators of the law of the road with regard to trees. A similar society exists in Andover.

In Newburyport a society was founded about 1892, which cares for the grounds adjacent to churches and school-houses, and has raised money for improving the Atkinson Common of ten acres, which was a bequest to the town. It has also put up a boulder with an inscription commemorating Arnold's expedition to Louisburg, which set forth from this city. There existed previously

a Mall Association, which took its name from Bartlett Mall, a gift to the city in 1800, now forming a part of Washington Park, which has an extent of six acres. This association took charge of the whole park and did other valuable work.

Beverly has a very efficient society, which is divided into sections, the different parts of the town being under the supervision of special committees, which supervise the planting of trees, attempt to protect the roadsides from disfigurement, and endeavor to excite interest among the residents in preserving the beauty of that pleasant town. The provision of the dumping-ground, before alluded to, is a part of the good service rendered by the workers. The meetings are animated and well attended, and lectures are given at intervals on subjects which may tend to inspire people to new efforts.

The Village Improvement Society of Lenox was founded in 1881 for the purpose of planting trees and shrubs where they would improve the town, of keeping the streets in good order and the grass mown on either side. This society, most of whose officers were women, continued until the autumn of 1892, when it dissolved, and its work was taken up by the more comprehensive Lenox Association. The Village Improvement Society had previously raised forty thousand dollars for aqueducts and sewers. Sedgwick Hall, at a cost of ten thousand dollars, was given to the town by Mrs. Schermerhorn, and there is a public library which received many private subscriptions. The grounds of the numerous country-seats in and about Lenox are kept in beautiful order by their owners, and help to make it an excellent example of a well-kept country town.

Williamstown, unrivaled for situation, and with ornamental grounds surrounding the college buildings, was persuaded to remove its front fences by an offer from Mr. Cyrus W. Field of ten thou-

sand dollars to the Village Improvement Association when the last one should be taken down.

Nearer Boston, Brookline leads the way in all manner of public improvements of great value. North Easton owes much of its beauty to the generosity of the Ames family. Mr. Oakes Ames made eleven large gifts and bequests for a library, schools, roads, and other improvements, and his sons have erected a memorial hall in his honor since his death. The town was induced to raise adequate sums for roads, bridges, and tree-planting by ex-Governor Oliver Ames, who contributed two thousand dollars a year to the tree-planting, and a fund for roads and bridges on condition that the town should raise certain amounts annually for the same purposes. A similar proviso was attached to the fund of fifty thousand dollars for schools, which requires that an amount equal to the average sum paid for a scholar throughout the State shall be annually added to it by the town. Fairhaven has been greatly benefited by Mr. Henry H. Rogers, who has provided it with a very handsome memorial town hall and a beautiful public library, and has furnished it also with a water supply. This town has an Improvement Society, which plants trees along the streets and wide roads.

Still another improving agent is the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture, which celebrated its one hundredth anniversary fifteen years ago, having been founded in Boston in March, 1782, by some of the foremost and most prosperous citizens of the commonwealth. This organization has been very beneficial in arousing an interest in better methods of cultivation, and its functions have been extended by means of a board of agriculture, at present made up largely from agricultural societies throughout Massachusetts; these societies receive from the State a bounty aggregating about twenty thousand dollars a year. It is intended that what they do shall

cover horticultural and village improvement work, and it has been suggested that if the people interested in those subjects would join the agricultural societies, and exert their influence through them, and gain a representation on the State Board of Agriculture, more would be accomplished than can be done by disjointed effort, as certain legislative action could then be brought about in the way of public improvement of real value to the State.

One of the most perfectly organized societies is the Bar Harbor, Maine, Village Improvement Association, an incorporated body which was founded in 1889, and now consists of fifty-six life members and one hundred and forty annual members. With the coöperation of landowners, who have borne the greater part of the expense, this society has opened through the woods a road for light driving by pleasure carriages which connects various points of interest, and it has also completed a bicycle path leading from this, and skirting the base of Newport Mountain, while a man is employed by the association to keep these roads in repair and guard them from fire. Footpaths have been made, giving access to picturesque localities, and much has been contributed to help the town to improve the roadways. Brush and dead wood have been cleaned up and burned, to prevent the danger of forest fires, and this is of advantage to the natural roadside trees, which the society takes under its protection. Its tree committee plants nursery trees where they are most needed along the streets. Rubbish has been removed, the village burial-ground has been cared for, and unsightly places have been improved, all with the active aid of the inhabitants, who willingly bear the expense for reforms upon their own land. By the aid of the committee on roadsides, almost the whole ocean drive has been cleared of dead wood and brush in the last five years; and the committee in charge of the tidiness of the village

sees that papers and street refuse are picked up ; it has also put in three drinking-fountains for men, cattle, and dogs, and it sees that the edges of the streets are often mown or weeded. At first it was very difficult to interest the townspeople, but they care more about the improvements since the trees have begun to grow, and last year gladly accepted the offer of one of the committees to give them plants and shrubs to set out in their dooryards. Prizes are to be given for the best kept place, and for the best collections of window and hardy plants and hardy shrubs. There is also a sanitary branch of the association, which assists the Board of Health by paying the salary of an inspector and doing other important service. I have detailed the methods of this society at some length, as it may be considered typical of the best kind of work of which such an organization is capable, and may serve to give suggestions to other associations.

In all the New England States a lively interest has been shown in beautifying towns and villages, and I would gladly describe more fully many of the lovely places, from Maine to Rhode Island, which are indebted to the civic pride of their inhabitants, were the interest shown less widely extended over a great country. In Connecticut, Redding and Bethel have distinguished themselves by obtaining the Putnam Memorial Camp, and Pomfret is to be put in possession of the famous Wolf Den, connected with the memory of her old hero ; showing how warm is the enthusiasm for the preservation of interesting and beautiful historic sites.

The State of New York very early showed interest in landscape gardening, and the Hudson River is lined on both sides for forty miles with noble private estates of great extent and beauty. The Rural Improvement Society of Clinton, which was founded in 1855, was the first organized in the State, and it greatly increased the attractiveness of the village

by improving its park and places of residence. Geneseo, founded by James Wadsworth, one of the wealthiest landholders in the State, was influenced from the beginning by his philanthropic spirit. In his sales of land, he stipulated that in every township one hundred and twenty-five acres should be granted for a church, and an equal amount for a school. He founded and endowed a library in Geneseo, which has subsequently received large benefactions from different members of his family. An interest has been kept up among the children by the giving of prizes for the best kept district school grounds. By the influence of a Village Improvement Society the streets were parked, front fences were removed, the park and sidewalks were improved, and the homes were more tastefully adorned. Rochester, famed for its nurseries, has also been forward in developing its resources, in planting trees and ornamenting grounds, while many of the interior towns show equal interest in the subject.

The other Middle States, notably New Jersey and Pennsylvania, are taking active part in the movement, and the results in many places are very interesting and beautiful. The Civic Club of Philadelphia, of which many women are members, is an important agent of public improvement.

The West, which is always ready for development of all kinds, takes hold of Village Improvement with its usual vigor. Faribault, Minnesota, before mentioned, under the stimulus of Bishop Whipple, is an ideal town, with its fine college buildings built in a park two miles in length ; and the suburbs of Chicago rival one another in progressiveness and prosperity. It was from Nebraska City that the admirable idea of Arbor Day came, and the present Secretary of Agriculture, the Hon. J. Sterling Morton, who conceived it, may be said to have found this State a desert, and to have left it a forest. In scores of towns in

the heart of the country we find the same spirit of progress ; for the West is very open-minded, as well as ready for experiments in all civilizing directions, and pushes on with celerity and energy any improvement it undertakes.

It is interesting to note that the South is beginning to share in the good work. A letter from Aiken, South Carolina, reports the existence of a Village Improvement Society of a hundred members, which has done much good in developing a proper civic pride, while adding directly to the beauty of streets and parks. It was founded in 1895, and first concerned itself with the care of a long-neglected park, obtaining authority and financial assistance from the city government to do what seemed best. Under one of its committees the parks have been kept in perfect order, while another committee has induced the planting of a thousand pine-trees in the streets of Aiken, and means to continue the work from year to year, until every street has four rows of trees throughout its entire length. Still another committee is working with the local bicycle club to secure better roads, and tries to develop public opinion in that direction by means of petitions to county officers and articles in the local papers, with promise of excellent results.

Pursuing the subject in more remote sections of the Union, we find Colorado Springs taking care of its roads and sidewalks, struggling with self-assertive weeds, while its Improvement Society, besides doing active work in the town itself, is establishing a fine park system, planting trees and shrubs by the hundreds in its parks and squares, and providing shade for its great avenues, a hundred and forty feet wide.

California, which showed itself forward in the park movement, evinced a desire for village improvement as early as 1879. At that time a plan was drawn up for laying out Berkeley neighborhood around the University of California,

and for a time a society flourished there. A floral society has now taken its place, and includes tree-planting and care of roads in its duties. Menlo Park and the grounds about Stanford University had much expended upon them by the late Senator Stanford. In Santa Barbara, San José, Los Angeles, and Redlands there are organized societies, and many improvements have been carried out. The same is true of Pasadena, Pomona, and Riverside, where land and water companies laid out the towns carefully, and planted avenues of fine trees in the beginning.

These few instances, selected from the numbers which might be described, show the lines upon which the work is carried on in different parts of the United States, and what are the services rendered by the Village Improvement Societies to the communities in which they exist. This meagre catalogue of what is taking place in different sections of the country, though necessarily dry and incomplete, is of importance, for it shows that the interest taken in beautifying towns is so widely extended as to form an essential part of the great movement towards better things which we seek to analyze. As manifestations of an impulse of our people to attain better æsthetic surroundings, and to fight against the crudeness and ugliness and slovenliness which disgrace a community, the particulars are of value, but they also mean something more.

The study of any great national growth includes much detail which may seem of small account, yet every little improvement stands for something in our civilization, since the sum of them has great significance. Most important of all is the fact that great cities are beginning to concern themselves seriously with the well-being of their poorest population, and are pulling down wretched tenements, widening alleys, and providing open spaces for those suffering multitudes who inevitably grow into a star-

ting menace to the health and morals of a community, when unprovided with the necessary breathing-places for themselves, and above all with playgrounds for the children.

It is well to remember that this instinct for improvement, which has its roots in a sense of personal annoyance at disagreeable things, grows and branches logically into those great philanthropic undertakings which tend to elevate the whole population, to whom these reforms seek to extend the enjoyment of the greatest of our unheeded blessings, air, sunshine, and access to open fields. Both village and municipal improvement work for the betterment of our moral as well as our sanitary and æsthetic conditions. It is the essence of great principles to be all-embracing, and, as we study the art of public improvement, we find that the impulse towards the beautiful is closely interwoven with purposes of large benevolence.

As an evidence of the growth of æsthetic feeling, village improvement is significant; in the end its good moral effect must be seen upon many of those people who are most in need of sweetness and light to brighten their hard daily existence. Proceeding as it does from the most highly civilized members of a community, it is a reform which can be shared in by all, and which must tend towards cheerfulness and content wherever it is accepted with enthusiasm. Honor is due to the steady workers who, in the teeth of much discouragement, go on arousing and ministering to higher needs in our rural neighborhoods, and still more to those who labor in the gloom of crowded sections of cities for the same good end. Their share in the art of public improvement is perhaps the most important of all, since, while it tends to the uplifting of intelligence and taste, it also ministers to the elemental needs of man.

*Mary Caroline Robbins.*

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## EMERSON, SIXTY YEARS AFTER.

### II.

THE attitude of Emerson's mind toward reformers results so logically from his philosophy that it is easily understood. He saw in them people who sought something as a panacea or as an end in itself. To speak strictly and not irreverently, he had his own panacea, — the development of each individual; and he was impatient of any other. He did not believe in association. The very idea of it involved a surrender by the individual of some portion of his identity, and of course all the reformers worked through their associations. With their general aims he sympathized. "These reforms," he wrote, "are our contemporaries; they are ourselves, our own light

and sight and conscience; they only name the relation which subsists between us and the vicious institutions which they go to rectify." But with the methods of the reformers he had no sympathy: "He who aims at progress should aim at an infinite, not at a special benefit. The reforms whose fame now fills the land with temperance, anti-slavery, non-resistance, no-government, equal labor, fair and generous as each appears, are poor bitter things when prosecuted for themselves as an end." Again: "The young men who have been vexing society for these last years with regenerative methods seem to have made this mistake: they all exaggerated some special means, and all failed