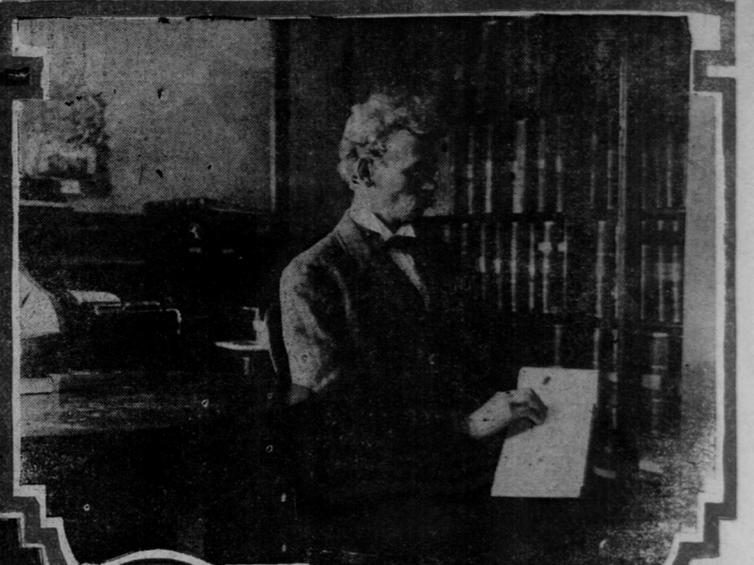
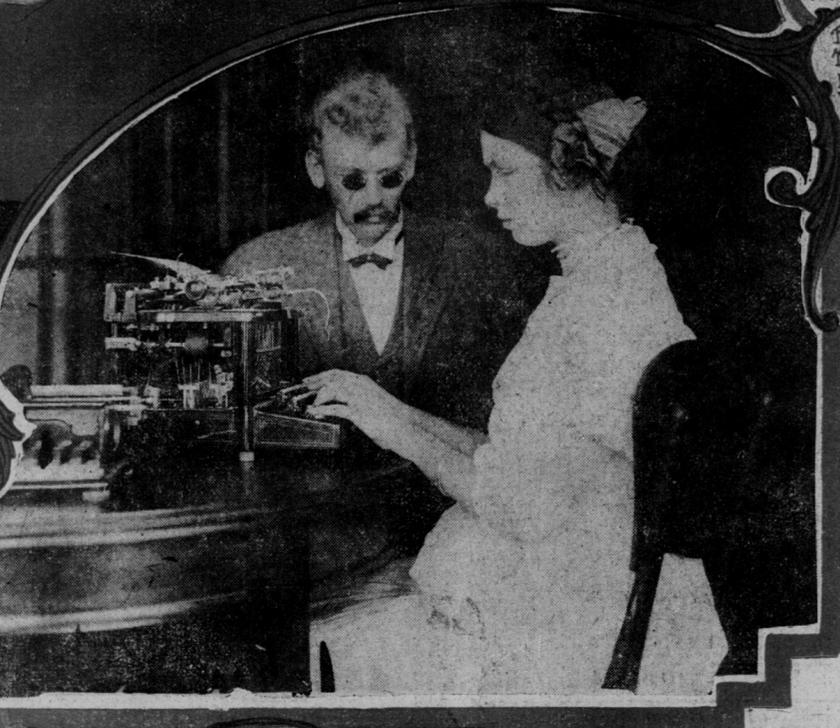


# WHERE San Francisco BLIND FOLK READ and Are READ TO



DRIVING THROUGH THE NEW BOOKS WITH HIS FINGERS



BLIND GIRL WRITING A BLIND MAN'S LETTERS ON AN ORDINARY TYPEWRITER

By Marion Brewer

MARNY, the house keeper for my Uncle Eugene and his son for 20 long years; Marny, the good, the faithful, the competent, is going blind. Uncle had a long talk with the specialist who has been treating her eyes for the last six months, and he said: "There is absolutely no hope now of saving them." At first he had hoped that her poor eyes might be cured if he tried a new kind of treatment now used abroad and if she were patient and obedient to his directions. And now the treatment has been tried, every command and caution carefully observed, but Marny will soon be numbered with those who cannot tell the day from the night. The doctor said that her general health is excellent and that she will probably live for years; and he recommended that she be taught the embossed reading at once, so that she will have the comfort of books and magazines in her darkness.

In a few days it was decided that she was to continue her duties as house keeper, for the family love her and she loves them; and the routine of long years of service means that she can still manage the household efficiently, though her eyes are sightless. She will be happier in the old home and with her old regular life. This settled, uncle wished me to discover what I could about ways and means of teaching Marny's fingers to read the raised literature printed for the blind, and to find out in general what is being done in San Francisco that the adult blind may read.

I, of course, knew that the place for the blind children of the state is in the institution at Berkeley, and that there is a home for adult blind in Oakland; but it was not until I inquired if there were any movement in the city to provide ways and means to teach the blind in their homes that I heard about the San Francisco reading room for the blind and the books for the blind division of the California state library. The reading room was out on Sixteenth street, near Market, in charge of Miss Harriet Young. I was told, and the state library sent books to the blind anywhere in the state, postage free. With these two facts in mind I started out to find what could be done for Marny, and I discovered an interesting work right here in our own city.

**The Blind Reading Room**

Rumor had it that the reading room I wanted to locate is in the McCreery public library; so I set out for this library. I found, however, that it is not a part of the McCreery library, but is in a separate building next door. In a few minutes I saw a sign in a window which read: "Reading Room and Library for the Blind. Open Sundays, Tuesdays and Fridays From 2 to 4 P. M." And this was Saturday morning. But fortunately for me, though I felt rather provoked that this Saturday morning was not a Sunday, Tuesday or Friday afternoon between 2 and 4 o'clock, I went up the steps and rang the bell.

Such good luck! The young woman who answered was Miss Harriet Young, the superintendent of the reading room. In response to a kindly "Won't you come in?" I entered a small room, a "first floor front," furnished with two large bookcases, a desk with typewriter, a table and some chairs, and in a very few moments I was seated and had told Miss Young my errand. Miss Young smiled—it was a very enthusiastic smile—and then began to speak earnestly of the founding of the library, the books, some of the problems in the work with the blind and her efforts with those in San Francisco.

The idea of a reading room and library for the sightless in the city

was conceived by Mrs. Josephine de Greayer (now Mrs. Andrew Rowan of Fort Douglas, Salt Lake City), and it was through her efforts that it materialized in August, 1902. Subscriptions were obtained, she and her friends subscribing generously, a board of trustees was organized, a room in the Phelan branch library at Fourth and Clara streets was furnished and a library started with Miss Young as superintendent and a number of volunteer readers to the blind. The library grew, maintained entirely by annual dues from the women supporting the movement and gifts from friends; and by April 17, 1906, there were 334 books on the shelves and a new case of books (\$80 worth) had just been received. Plans and arrangements were also nearly completed for a fine entertainment to be given on May 4, the proceeds of which were to buy a printing press that there should be more books for the blind readers, and employment for the blind workers in the city. Then came the terrible earthquake and fire and all the books, furniture, reports and private papers were destroyed.

**A New Beginning**

In the dark months that followed the efforts of the superintendent and the board of directors were largely confined to visiting the blind to read to them and to render any assistance. As many of them lost their all, the board of directors generously helped them in getting food, clothing and a new start in life. After these needs were attended to the trustees and superintendent turned their attention to the problem of opening the library anew. It was rather a discouraging task with furniture, books, papers, all gone, rooms very scarce and rents high. Finally a room was secured in the parish house of St. Stephen's church at 864 Fulton street through the courtesy of the Rev. Cecil Marrack, and the new reading room was established and formally opened October 23. There were few equipments for the work, but a start was made and headquarters for the blind was established. That meant a great deal and in the following year nearly two dozen blind people were read to in their homes and some of them were taught to read. Some were taught at the reading room and still others learned to use the typewriter there. Gifts of books, magazines and papers came in slowly and the board itself was able to purchase \$200 worth of books, besides a typewriter and Braille machine. There was also the gift of \$50 from Mrs. Frances Fearn, the agent of the queen, "Carmen Sylva," who has done such a great work for the blind in Roumania. This sum was to go toward a piano for the reading room. A legacy of \$2,500 from the estate of John R. Spring came at an opportune moment, for the income of the library materially depreciated after the fire. The books, of course, were limited in number, but the state library at Sacramento and the libraries of Pennsylvania very kindly sent books to distribute to the blind readers in the city. Very soon the need of a room larger and better equipped was felt, and on August 13 last it was possible to open the library

in its present quarters at 3535 Sixteenth street near Market.

We who can see are so accustomed to large libraries with shelves and shelves filled with good books—libraries that grow in the twinkling of an eye in these days—that we can hardly appreciate what it is to accumulate and direct a library for the blind. When I asked Miss Young how many books there were in this library, I was amazed to hear there were only 250. And then Miss Young explained: "Books for the blind are very expensive, 'Middemarch,' a recent publication in raised print, costs \$21, and the price of 'David Copperfield' is \$10.50." The cost of making these embossed books is very great, as each page means the setting up of a brass plate, from which the impression is transferred. Then there is no competition in the production of books for the blind. There is only one printing house in the United States, the one at Louisville, Ky. However, there is a Howe

memorial press at the richly endowed Perkins school for the blind in Boston, and the students there are beginning to print books. Miss Young showed me "The Story of Eli" from that press, an inexpensive and well printed book, bound in brown pasteboard covers. Then she grew enthusiastic, as she told of her great dream, the fulfillment of which the earthquake and fire had spoiled, that there shall be a printing press in connection with the library in San Francisco, so that books

may be printed at the least possible cost, the number of them increased and employment given to the sightless who need it.

I found the books themselves full of interest, and I wondered which of the four kinds of print Marny would learn to read. Poor Marny, having to finger the letters across the page! But what a blessing, if one's eyes are gone, to read by the sense of touch! Miss Young showed me books printed in the American Braille point, with its characteristic three dots long and two dots wide; in the Boston line letter, which is very beautiful but very difficult to read; in the New York point, with its characteristic two dots long and three dots wide, much resembling the American Braille; and finally in the famous Moon print, invented by the benevolent Dr. Moon for the use of those who have been stricken with blindness in later life. I exclaimed over the beauty of the Boston line letter type, but thought as I closed my eyes and let my fingers outline some of the letters how hard it would be for me to learn to read it. The greater number of

books in this San Francisco library are in the American Braille; then come the New York point, then the Boston line letter, and lastly the Moon print. It is Miss Young's opinion that the question which of the raised prints is the best will never be decided, and it will always be necessary to use the four kinds.

Among the 250 volumes on the shelves are Shakespeare's works. These are extremely popular with the blind readers, and their fingers wander over them again and again, though the first reading of any book by the blind is most thorough. Their fingers do not skip carelessly as our eyes often do. Miss Young also said proudly that in proportion to the numbers of readers and the books there is a greater demand for the best literature in this reading room for the blind than in the public libraries. The works of Washington Irving and Robert Louis Stevenson are great favorites, and almost all the readers return to Dickens again and again. "Our Mutual Friend," "The Tale of Two Cities" and "Little Nell" being popular favorites. It is too bad that many of the books in embossed type are condensed. "Oliver Twist" is a mere outline. And think of the disappointment and loss to juvenile readers with that well beloved "Little Men and Women" in only two chapters, and "An Old Fashioned Girl" the only one of Louisa Alcott's works complete for

are many lessons given to those who come in reading, and the pupils are eager to learn and very appreciative of the teachers' efforts. The social life is not neglected in connection with this reading room. The directors give an annual reception to the blind, with an entertaining program, generally musical, and there are frequent musical Sunday afternoons and entertainments on the second Friday of each month.

And yet this work in the reading room is only part of the work. Visiting the blind in their homes, reading to them and teaching those who cannot go to the library to read, occupy the other days of the week when the room is not open. As Miss Young remarked, blindness most frequently comes to the adult blind with another affliction in its train, and so many are thus cut off from the comfort and pleasure of getting out and around. Then, too, the state schools provide for the education of blind youth, but all those over 21 years of age are not eligible for admission to those institutions. Philanthropists today who are interested in the blind have become impressed with this condition and also with the fact that the adult blind are vastly in the majority, as they constitute 80 per cent of the total blind population. Not very long ago a librarian of a public library in a large western city stated that he had a quantity of books for the sightless on his shelves, but they were rarely taken out or used. This was due to the fact that the adult blind of his city, numerous though they were, had not been taught to read, and consequently there could be no demand for books. Since so many of the adult blind cannot leave their homes, home teaching has become a most vital factor in all work for their benefit. It is being revived by the Women's club in Chicago, and a recent issue of the Outlook for the Blind commends the good home teaching work going on in New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Cincinnati and San Francisco.

**Moon Type Is Easy**

Some of the adult blind find it very difficult to learn to read the New York point or the American Braille, but any one who could read before losing his eyesight can learn to read the moon type. Many acquire the ability to read it in one or two lessons. This would be cheering news to Marny, I thought. The home teaching carries the reading to the blind person, and with a few words of encouragement helps him to make a successful beginning, and then the work is half accomplished. Then practice, and when the pupil has become proficient he is ready for his books in embossed type, which he can get at the San Francisco reading room or from the state library. Through the beneficent Rucker law books can be sent through the United States mail to the blind reader postage free.

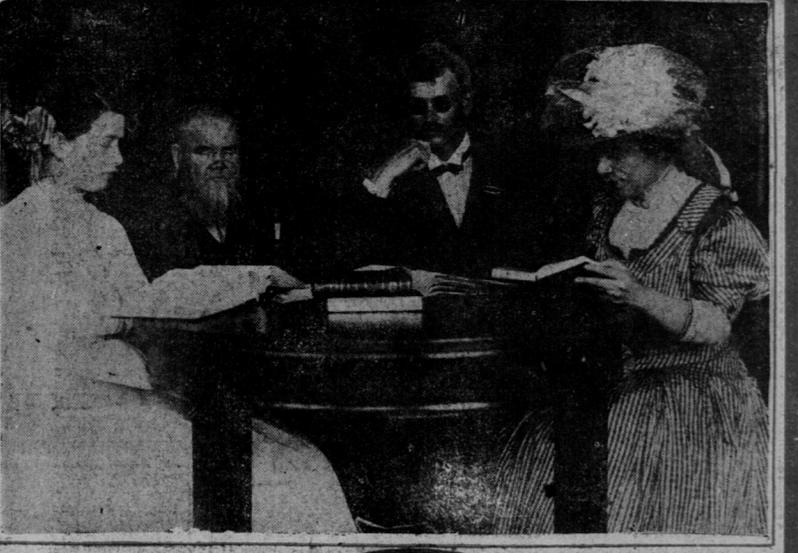
The "Books for the Blind Division of the California State Library" was founded by the trustees of the state library December, 1901, with the intention of supplying books for the home use of all blind persons in California. Circular letters were sent out to all the blind to see what kind of print they preferred. It was found that the type most requested was the New York point, the second preference being given to the Moon type. This guided the librarian in the choice of print, and soon the library was in working order. The first book was loaned June 13, 1905. Today there are 122 in the hands of scattered all the way from Siskiyou county to San Diego. Most of the readers are very ambitious and are learning several different systems in order to have a greater variety of books to read. To those who wish to learn a new print the library sends, upon application, an alphabet and a primer, and these may be kept as long as needed. Each borrower may take out two books and one piece of book and one primer at a time, and each of them, the primer excepted, may be kept a month with the privilege of renewal, unless it is wanted by some other reader. The borrowing of books has been thoughtfully made the simplest and easiest of matters for the blind reader. An application blank, a list of books for the blind and a call slip are mailed on request. After the borrower is mailed the book or piece of music he wishes is mailed to him, and at the expiration of a month a postal and return postal notice are sent him so that if he wishes the book or music renewed he may notify the librarian. The library asks only that the reader take great care to keep the books clean; that he rest his fingers lightly on the raised letters while reading, and that upon the return of the book he use the same wrappings if it came in and upon which is a label addressed to the state library at Sacramento.

Collections of from 10 to 25 books are loaned to any free reading room or library in the state, provided they be open to the public, and the express charges are paid by the state library. The San Francisco reading room for the blind has been a grateful borrower from this "Books for the Blind Division."

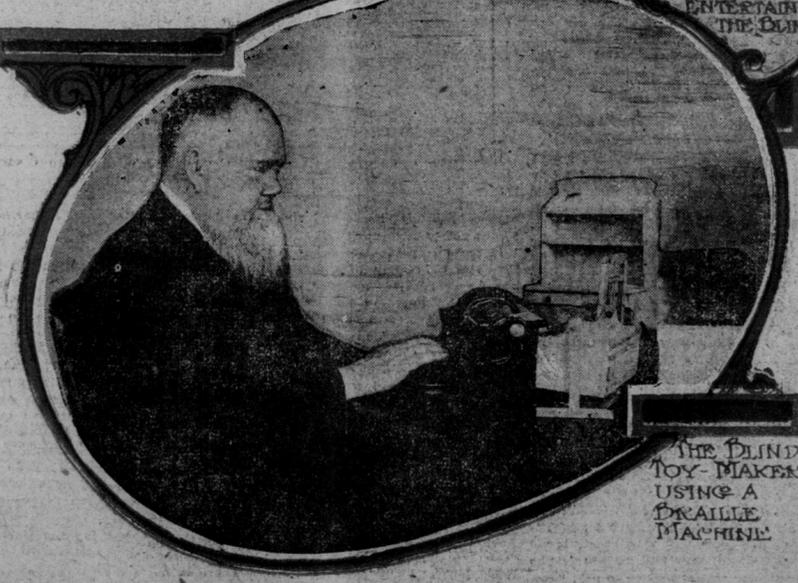
Thus in looking for a little help for our poor blind Marny, I found a splendid movement, carried on by a number of our philanthropic women in San Francisco, for the help of the afflicted blind in their midst. This is a movement bound to grow and one bound to bring forth more good fruit in abundance. And the state library is helping some of the blind readers in San Francisco, too, as well as those all over the state.

When I thanked Miss Young that Saturday morning for her generous gift of time and interesting information about her work she said modestly, "Oh, I don't talk about the work very well. I like to do it better."

As for Marny, she has already mastered the Moon system, and I shall take her her first book from the reading room for the blind next week.



A VOLUNTEER READER ENTERTAINING THE BLIND



THE BLIND TOY-MAKER USING A BRAILLE MACHINE

blind boys and girls: "Silas Marner," "The Vicar of Wakefield," Mrs. Ewing's works, those of Aldrich, Richard Harding Davis and Thomas Nelson Page are printed more generously, however, and are great favorites with the fiction readers.

Magazines are there, too, for the blind, foremost among them being the Zigler magazine (in either the American Braille or New York point), that famous magazine maintained and published by the noble Mrs. William Zigler out of her private fortune and sent to any blind person in America, Australia, India and Canada for 10 cents a year, that price being set up on it so as to obtain postage rates. There are also the Christian Record and the Daily Mail in raised print.

Miss Young or some of the women connected with the organization supporting the library, who volunteer their time and services, read three afternoons a week in the reading room from 2 o'clock until 4. Just now the average attendance is about four, for many of the blind cannot go to the library. Distance, car fare and the fact that blindness so often is accompanied by another affliction, such as paralysis or deafness, mean that many of the blind must remain at home. Generally the listeners who come in the afternoon are men, and they are particularly interested in hearing articles read from the Technical World, the Scientific American and the Popular Mechanic. Many of the blind are eager for substantial reading, but the number of such books is limited and the majority of the sightless are poor—the high priced, embossed books are far beyond their means.

Besides reading to those who come to hear Miss Young spends many hours at the reading room teaching those of the 50 blind patrons who wish to use the Braille machine, by which they can take down a letter in shorthand or any abbreviated form and then transfer it to the typewriter. This has been taught to many, as has the use of the typewriter also. In connection with the latter the touch system is used, there being no raised letters on the keys and no need of any. Then there