

Arts and Manufactures.

PRESENT CONDITION OF THE MECHANICS' INSTITUTES OF ONTARIO.

In our last number we presented some views on the "Position, Objects and Duties of Mechanics' Institutes." The report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, which has subsequently been issued, contains an important tabulated statement of official returns from twenty-one of these Associations. The earliest of them, the Toronto Institution, as shown by these returns, was established in the year 1830; the most recent—Kincardine and Owen Sound—in the year 1865. The whole of the twenty-one are reported as being incorporated under the general Act for the "Incorporation of Mechanics' Institutes and Library Associations," chapter seventy-two of the Consolidated Statutes of Canada. Four Institutions own the freeholds of the properties they occupy, the estimated value of which is for the highest, \$50,000; the lowest, \$1,000. Total for the four \$55,400. Of the remaining seventeen Institutions, six occupy leaseholds free from their respective Municipalities, and eleven pay annual rents ranging from \$15 to \$400, or an average of about \$72 each. The net value of property held, other than real estate, is returned at from \$100 to \$8,000 respectively; or, in the aggregate, \$27,650, being an average of about \$1,317 for each Institute.

The smallest number of members returned for one Institution is 21; the highest 1,117—being an aggregate of 3,402, or an average of 162 members for each. The rate of annual membership subscription is from \$1 to \$2.50 for full members, and as low as 50 cents per annum for junior members.

In the returns of number of volumes of books in their respective Libraries, the highest is reported at 7,430, the lowest at 104; the aggregate for twenty Institutes being 25,057 volumes, the average for each about 1,252. Of the aggregate number of books, 2,586 are on Mechanics and Science, 5,334 on History and Travels, 5,442 Works of Fiction, 3,320 are termed Miscellaneous, and 3,375 are not in any way classified. The total number of books circulated by seventeen of these Institutions during the year, was 57,658, or an average of about 3,392 for each. Of the classified returns of books circulated by five Institutions, in all 44,117 volumes, 1,276 were Mechanical and Scientific, 4,718 History and Travels, 21,078 Works of Fiction, and 18,045 termed Miscellaneous.

Ten of these twenty-one Institutes have read-

ing rooms established—nine of which are opened daily and one weekly. The total annual value of works on their tables is returned as respectively from \$14 to \$548, the aggregate being \$1,217, the average nearly \$122.

Of the twenty-one Libraries, eleven are opened daily, four semi-weekly, and six weekly.

Three Institutions only had evening classes established during the year. One of these had three classes (number of pupils not given); another had two classes, with 26 pupils; and the third eight classes, with 202 pupils. The charge for tuition for the session, comprising about forty lessons, and extending over a term of five months, was from \$1.50 to \$3 per pupil, according to the subjects taught. The average remuneration to Teachers in one Institution \$40, in another \$75, while in the third the services of the Teachers were gratuitously rendered.

The number of lectures delivered in four institutions was fifteen, and in eight others twenty-eight musical and other entertainments were given. Notes of other details are also given by the respective Institutes, and are appended to the tabulated statement of the Commissioner.

Heretofore, much ignorance has existed in respect to these organizations; and although but twenty-one of the sixty Institutions in Ontario have seen fit to answer the questions submitted to them by the Commissioner for the past year, yet much valuable information has been given; and we may confidently hope that during the year upon which we have now entered, should the same or similar questions be repeated, full returns will be obtained. The knowledge thus afforded, being communicated to the several Institutes by the Commissioners' annual reports, will be the means of inciting to more zeal in the important work of instructing our youthful artisans, and the industrial classes generally, and in providing the means for acquiring useful knowledge by the respective communities in which they are severally located.

To accomplish this work, then, of educating the youthful and adult mind, let the Institutes buy a better class of works than heretofore—fewer novels, and a larger proportion of useful or instructive books. At present, about one-third of the volumes on the shelves are works of fiction, while nearly one-half of those circulated are of a similar character; "light and airy phantoms that, shaped as ideas, are unreal—that are pretended pictures of real life, but, in reality, mere transparent deceptions." The Legislative aid now afforded Institutes for the purchase of works on Mechanics, Manufactures, Agriculture and Horticulture, Science, the Fine and Decorative Arts, History and Travels, will, we trust, do much to improve the character of their Libraries. As a guarantee that such will be the effect of the law, we may mention that a number of Institutes have already availed themselves of such aid, and have purchased, through the agency of the Association of Mechanics' Institutes, large collections of the best technical and reference books published, and others are