

A list is given in the American Almanac for 1851 (pp. 190-199) of 121 colleges and universities, extending as to time of founding from 1630—when Harvard was instituted—to 1849; with four libraries containing 10,000 volumes each; two 11,000; five 12,000; one 14,000; one 15,000; three 16,000; one 17,000; one 19,000; one 23,000; one 25,000; one 31,000 (Brown University); one (Yale) 49,000; and one (Harvard) 84,200. With some of these we have nothing to compare, our institutions being as yet in their infancy; though we hope to have in time. The aggregate number of volumes in the 121 libraries is 789,967. Besides these there are libraries found in all their larger cities; many of them of considerable extent and value. As much as ten years ago I had the pleasure of looking at one in New Bedford, Massachusetts, which contained 10,000 volumes; and I spent a couple of hours on the evening of the 3rd of July last, in examining one in Saint Louis—the Mercantile Association Library—which, though including only about 5,000 volumes, is of the first class as to character. The books embrace almost every department of knowledge—history, civil and ecclesiastical, theology, law, medicine, science and art, poetry, biography, travels and general literature; are admirably chosen, and many of them the best editions to be had. To the young men especially of that city they constitute a treasure of the highest order. Nor could I help cherishing pleasing hopes in regard to these young men, when I saw some of them perusing these valuable works with apparently deep interest amid the report of fire-arms and the discharge of fire-works on the eve of their grand National Festival. The high gratification the above fine library afforded me, with the courtesy shown me by the intelligent and gentlemanly librarian and other parties present, must be my excuse if I have dwelt too long on this institution. Glad should I be to see such a collection of books open to the mercantile community of this city. And why should there not be? With a fair measure of effort it might, in a moderate time, be secured.

In a sketch, however brief, of the intellectual progress of our country, it would be unpardonable, here especially, to omit notice of the increase in number and advance in character of our Mechanics' Institutes, which, with their libraries, and apparatus and lectures, promise soon to cover the land. If what has taken place in the case of the Institute whose members I have now the honour of addressing, may be received as a specimen of what is going on elsewhere, the country is certainly to be congratulated. Not many years ago the attendants here were indeed "few and far between." Now this commodious hall is generally filled with an audience as intelligent, attentive, and respectful as a modest man need wish to have before him.