

## THE LIBRARY COLUMN.

\*\*\* In future this will be a regular feature of *BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER* and will contain the latest information of value to librarians.

### MR. BAIN'S ADDRESS.

THE following was the address of the President, Mr. James Bain, Jr., delivered before The Library Association at its meeting in Toronto last month. It is an admirable summary of the work, purpose, and outlook of Canadian librarians. Mr. Bain said:

"This evening we are met, for the first time in the Dominion of Canada, as a body of librarians and of those interested in library affairs, to take stock of the past, to consider the present and to see how far we can develop the future. The time is propitious. With the beginning of a new century we venture to look forward to new lines of work, to vast increase in the number and size of our libraries and to extension in every direction which aims at the development to their true end—the mental advancement and culture of the people of this Province. It will be your duty, therefore, carefully to consider the present conditions of our libraries, whether rural or urban, their relation to the public and the public's relation to them. In doing so we will learn that much that has been done in the past is temporary, that many radical changes will require to be made and, above all, we will learn to sympathize with and aid one another in striving for closer relations between all classes of our people and the books committed to our charge. And if in doing so we rise to the knowledge that the duty imposed upon us is no ordinary one, that to us has been committed the post education and instruction of the adult population of the Province, we will have gained a stimulus which will result in elevating our profession in the estimation of all reading and of thinking people and of extending the influence of our libraries far beyond our brightest anticipations.

### ONTARIO AS A FIELD.

Our field in the Province of Ontario contains a population of about 2½ millions, almost all of which is included in that portion of the Province lying between Lakes Huron, Erie, Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, and south of a line drawn from Parry Sound to the Ottawa River. For the present, therefore, until New Ontario grows, the extent of country to be covered is not excessive, especially as so large a portion of the population is clustered in cities and towns. It would be going beyond the bounds of my address this evening to enumerate the successive efforts which have been made by the Government and private individuals since the first proposals of Governor Simcoe to supplement the educational work carried on in this Province by introducing and popularizing free libraries. From the days of Dr. Ryerson, the father of our educational system, to those of the present Minister of Education, the efforts of the Government have been unceasingly in this direction. Officers have been appointed to watch over and guide the efforts of those who established them. Every encouragement has been given to those which were weak and from \$10,000 to \$15,000 have been annually granted towards housing them. We think now, however, that the time has come for more liberal and sympathetic municipal and individual action, confident that the Government of the Province will continue to

furnish the same generous assistance which they have always given in the past. By the last report of the Minister of Education, we learn that there are in this Province 118 free public libraries supported by the municipality; 233 public libraries supported mainly by fees; 24 new libraries have been recently organized, and 23 libraries have not reported. In addition to these we have university and college libraries, society and scientific libraries, 25 law libraries, and one legislative library. We have thus a total of 441 in the Province. The public libraries numbering 371, with which we have more closely to deal with this evening, make an excellent exhibit, but, which, however, does not stand close analysis. Of books they have on their shelves 918,022 volumes. In 1900 the period for which returns were required to be made was altered, so that, for the future, they should correspond to the calendar year and not run from April to March. The change necessitated issuing the returns for eight months only of 1900. I have, therefore, increased the figures by about one-third to give an approximate total for the year. The issue of books on this basis was 2,376,237, rather more than one per head of the population of the Province. The expenditure, which was virtually the entire income, was \$178,612. If from these figures we deduct the amounts paid by the large libraries, as Brantford, Brockville, Chatham, Guelph, Hamilton, Lindsay, London and Toronto, \$66,192, we find that the amount spent by the smaller libraries, numbering 362 is \$110,187, or an average of \$307 per library. And, if from this we deduct \$100 as the average Government grant, we gather that the average amount contributed to each library, by individuals or municipality, is \$287 per annum. I need hardly say in this meeting that a number of these far exceed this amount, so that a very large proportion of the libraries of this Province are struggling for an existence on an income of less than \$250 per annum. Let us now look for a moment at the size of these libraries. 103 are entered as under 1,000 volumes; 128 contain from 1,000 to 2,000, and 115 from 2,000 to 5,000, so that 346 or all but 25 are under 5,000 volumes. The condition upon which the Government grant is made is that the library must expend on books a sum corresponding to the grant, with the result that the funds as far as possible are expended in this way.

### TWO SUGGESTIONS.

It is evident from these figures that the amount spent on the 346 smaller libraries is so small that the necessary attendance for curating and distribution cannot be provided after making the due allowance for rent, light and heat. To investigate thoroughly the condition of affairs and make suggestions as to the best method of overcoming the difficulty is one of the subjects which should occupy your attention. As a contribution to the discussion let me suggest two plans which may be considered. The wants are trained assistants, uniformity in buying, cataloging and more regular supplies of new books. To suppose that the smaller libraries can afford to engage trained assistants is folly; but, if all the libraries within a county could be transferred to the county, and the Government grants paid to it, it would be an easy matter for it to engage a librarian who would work up the new material within its limits. The task could readily be committed to a young lady, many of whom are already qualifying themselves for library work. The librarian would correspond to the school inspector combined with the duties of a Normal School teacher. She

would arrange with those of each school section, or with such other divisions as the county council might direct, for placing libraries; would interest the people in the work; would train the assistant in the elementary work necessary for keeping and distributing the books, and at some central point would arrange for purchase and binding. Money would be saved by printing one catalogue for three or five libraries, and these libraries could be exchanged with other parts of the county. The expense to a county would be comparatively small and the gain enormous especially, if with this were combined the school libraries, which our leading educationalists are demanding as a scholastic necessity, furnishing a ready and inexpensive means of distribution in the sparser settled districts.

The other plan is for the Government to take upon itself the responsibility of declining to aid small libraries directly and devoting the money heretofore spent in the maintenance of a number of travelling libraries, of 100 or 200 volumes, one of which would be supplied to each of them, say, three times a year—in this way insuring that the proper character of books reach the readers and that the supply of new books is continuous. One of the difficulties we have to encounter is training our masters. As an almost universal rule library boards are ignorant of the requirements of modern libraries. Nor can we wonder at this, because the gentlemen who give their time and patience in the effort to make these libraries prosperous are engaged in other vocations which occupy the greater part of their time. If they are scholarly they are almost certain to be unsystematic, and if systematic to know nothing of books. I think, however, that it will be uniformly found that they are perfectly willing to leave the details of work to the librarian, if he or she proves to be competent for the position. Let even the most troublesome trustees have but the opportunity of putting on the list the books he wants to read and of striking out those which he does not want his neighbor to read and he is satisfied, if the details of work go on smoothly. Unfortunately, with so many of our small libraries, only occasional untrained assistants can be employed, whose work, supplemented by equally untrained trustees, is equally disastrous. Confusion on the shelves, want of promptness in looking after books overdue, allowing books to become ragged and unreadable, and failure to supply new books regularly are rocks upon which so many small libraries in Ontario have been wrecked. And the after consequences are still more disagreeable, for it is the very self-sacrificing, who appreciate the advantages of reading, and are instrumental in forming the libraries, who are disgusted and decline to come forward again. The only remedy for this is the supply of a class of regularly trained librarians who would command confidence. Not that I think the training should be of that advanced character which is required for a university or college library, but a training which would give them a knowledge of the orderly care of books, keeping them clean and repairing systematically. In the best methods of distribution suited to the character of their readers, in being exact in the changing and return system and, above all, familiarizing themselves with English literature, the authors and books they have written, and with such subject indices as will enable them to name at least one authority on every common subject.

### QUESTIONS TO BE TAKEN UP.

The modern public librarian must know many details which were unknown or des-