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MECHANICS' SOCIETIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE.



We have much pleasure in calling the attention of mechanics to the subjoined letter from a "Canadian Mechanic" urging the mechanics of the Dominion, to draw closer together, not only for the diffusion of useful knowledge among themselves, and the improvement of their own status, and proper respect for their position, as very influential members of society, but, also, for the great good that would result to the whole Dominion from the dissemination throughout their body of the practical results of the organization proposed.

We have pleasure in informing the writer that, already the subject has been brought by the editor of this magazine, before the highest in the land, and he has no doubt that, ere long, effectual steps will be taken to aid mechanics in carrying out the views expressed by our correspondent. We may state that we have gone much further than this, the details of which we cannot enter into in the present number, and that ere long, the subject will be brought by us before every manufacturer and mechanic in the Dominion. For the past three years we have done our utmost to improve the character of the magazine, (the editorship of which is almost of an *honorary* character,) and it is a source of gratification to find that these improvements are thankfully acknowledged by many of our subscribers, but we find that we have not been able to devote to the magazine, half the time necessary to raise it in excellence and usefulness to what it might be under different circumstances. We require, in fact, the united aid of every manufacturer and mechanic in the Dominion to support us in our effort to benefit them, and this we must, and, no doubt under a proper organization, shall have. From hence forward, Canadian mechanics must enrol themselves together, and demand from the country a different education to that which their

children are receiving in the common public schools; their education must be to a great extent technical, and particularly practical, and not superficial; and not only that, but the Government of the country must be called upon to afford substantial aid in this respect. And here let us call the attention of mechanics to the state of Mechanics' Institutes in Canada. Let us take, for instance, the Mechanics' Institute of Montreal, the first city in Canada. It is a delusion.—What right has it to be called a Mechanics' Institute when it declines the Government grant of \$400 per annum, for reasons best known to the committee? This year this Institute strikes from its list of magazines and journals the *Scientific Canadian*, *London Builder*, *The Times*, and several useful journals. Here is a pretty example of encouragement from a so called Mechanics' Institute for the promotion of Canadian literature of a technical nature. In fact, its members are made up of civilians, there being only a mere sprinkling of mechanics. It is a matter of astonishment to us that the mechanics of this city do not unite and form a *real Mechanics' Institute*, and draw the grant from the Government, and commence at once to form, at least, the nucleus of a library.

But Montreal does not stand alone in this matter. We state it as a broad fact, that nearly all the Mechanics' Institutes in the country are a failure. They are nearly all supported by merchants, lawyers and clerks, who derive the benefit of the Government grant of \$400 per annum for a purpose which was originally intended for the promotion of technical information to the industrial classes only. Several of these Institutes have been solicited to subscribe for the *SCIENTIFIC CANADIAN*, which is the only technical magazine published in the country, and have refused to do so. It is time that the Government looked into this matter, and before renewing the annual grant, demand returns of the actual number of mechanics who are supporters of these institutions, and how the money is expended.

It may be said, in argument, that the remedy to this complaint lies with the mechanics themselves, that if they came forward in a body and supported these institutions they could appoint their own officers, and act as they thought best for their own benefit. In answer to this it must be borne in mind that the education of the mass of mechanics, old and young, has not been of that character that creates a desire for knowledge. No taste