

The proceedings of the Institutions in Union with the Society of Arts at the Second Annual Conference, were distinguished by discussions on various subjects which tend to throw much light upon the numerous difficulties with which Literary and Scientific Institutions in England are fettered, many of which are happily unknown to the people of Western Canada. It will scarcely be accounted a digression if, in closing these remarks we extract the pith of the discussions, for the sake of information and encouragement.

The Chairman classed the subjects to be discussed under several heads. First, Parliamentary Papers; second, The Provision of Books and Maps; third, News-Rooms and Reading-Rooms; fourth, Lectures; fifth, Classes, &c.; sixth, Statistics and Trade Museums.

1st. Parliamentary Papers. No resolutions were adopted in relation to their distribution; the Report of the Committee not having been received. The opinion was unanimous that the greatest utility would result from a distribution of selected Parliamentary Papers among the Institutes. No difficulty, we apprehend, will for the future, be found to exist in this country if timely application be made in the proper quarter. We regret to say, however, that there is at present extreme difficulty experienced in obtaining some Parliamentary papers. They appear to have been distributed so indiscriminately immediately after their issue that at this period no complete copies are to be obtained of many important documents. The Canadian Institute has not yet succeeded in obtaining one perfect copy of the Provincial Geologist's Reports.

2nd. Books, Maps, Apparatus, &c.

The Rev. T. S. Howson, M. A., (Liverpool,) thought it might be of the greatest possible advantage to the whole country, if a permanent exhibition of educational apparatus could be established in London. He had learned more on the preceding evening by looking at the apparatus exhibited at the Mansion-house, than he could have done by reading a dozen catalogues.

Dr. Booth said, it was in contemplation by the Society of Arts to get up an Exhibition of Educational Apparatus not limited to the models produced in this country, but comprising those, many of them much superior, made on the continent, and especially in France and Germany. In fact what the Great Exhibition had done for manufactures they wished now to do for education; they would get the best models from different countries, and then gentlemen interested in the subject would be able to visit the Exhibition, and select such apparatus as they found best fitted for the purposes of instruction.

Mr. Pond (Southampton) said, in reference to the question of interfering with trade, the booksellers at Southampton had, unasked, made a reduction to the Polytechnic Institution there; and provided they were properly secured from private individuals getting books at the reduced rate, he felt sure that booksellers generally would readily agree to the arrangement.

Mr. Rodgrave said that the Committee intended to take precautions that private persons should not be able to avail themselves of the advantage of the reduction, and booksellers would in point of fact be benefited by books getting noticed in quarters which they did not before reach.

The following Resolution was then moved, and carried unanimously:—

"That this meeting approve the steps already taken by the Institutes' Committee of the Society of Arts, respecting the cheapening of books, maps, diagrams, and apparatus; and request them to continue their labours."

With respect to books, maps and apparatus for educational purposes, the Canadian Institute has nothing to do, the duties of that department being most efficiently executed by the Education Office. In this particular, indeed, Canada is already far in advance of all probable results arising from the exertions of the Society of Arts. In 1851, the Chief Superintendent of Schools, in his Address to the Governor General upon the occasion of the opening of the new Normal and Model Schools, remarked that "the facilities for furnishing all our schools with the necessary books, maps and apparatus, will soon be in advance of those of any other country." The spirit of the resolution above quoted, is well worth the careful consideration of all literary and scientific bodies in Canada. It has already been carried into very successful and active operation by the Chief Superintendent of Schools for the formation of school libraries. Why should it not be adopted by self-sustaining schools 'of larger growth'?

3rd. News rooms and reading-rooms. Fiscal regulations retarding the spread of knowledge, scarcely exist in Canada. The following resolution has, therefore, no application in this country, except in relation to foreign books:—

"That this meeting is of opinion that the fiscal restrictions on paper, advertisements, news, and foreign books, have an injurious effect on the Institutions in Union with the Society of Arts, and that the Council be requested to proceed with their investigation on the subject, with a view to the abolition of all such restrictions."

One indignant speaker said that—

"It gave him a sense of shame at times when he saw the advertisements of professors of other countries announcing instruction at such low rates as 6d. per lesson, to think that for each of those announcements these gentlemen must pay 1s. 6d. to the English Government. He thought this was a question therefore on which the Chancellor of the Exchequer ought to know their opinion."

The following resolutions on the subject of lectures and class instruction, were carried unanimously:—

"That this Conference do express its confidence that the Society of Arts will make the best possible arrangements for facilitating the supply of Lecturers to the Institutions in Union; and does not deem it expedient to attempt to define the modes by which such arrangements should be made."

"That the infusion of science and art into elementary instruction is required by the people generally, and is desirable for the ultimate success of Mechanics' Institutions, which could then advance science and art more efficiently by systematic class instruction."

"That it is desirable that the training-schools of this country should introduce into their courses of study a more thorough knowledge of the natural and physical sciences, and a system of instruction in art; and that the Council of the Society of Arts be requested to forward this Resolution to the President of the Council of Education, and to the various training Institutions."

The legal position of the Institutions in England is peculiar, and all discussion on that subject possesses, consequently, a local interest only. It is worthy of remark that one of the members stated that "he thought the experience of by far the greater number of Institutions, not only in London, but throughout the country, would show, that unless those who were now subject to taxation had some hope of immediate relief, the disruption and close of many of them would take place."

"The Chairman, in concluding the proceedings, said the Conference had been sitting five hours and a half; 106 speeches had been made, and each had occupied on an average three minutes and a half. He thought that was a statistic worth recording."