

livered in many places. But there are among us some who have also delivered such lectures. I believe my friend on my right, Mr. Ingham, has been good enough to do so. Others present have done so. Our two vice-presidents I know have, and there may be other gentlemen who have done so. Now I think that, however good lectures may be, they are not a substitute for reading or a substitute for books. They are a most useful auxiliary to the reading-room and to books. The great object of the lecture is, I think, to lead people to books, ("Hear, hear," and applause), not to let them go away satisfied that they have got from the lecture what no lecturer would ever think or dream himself capable of giving them, a thorough knowledge of the subject on which the lecture is given; because the great object of the lecture, I think, ought to be to excite an interest, to stir up the mind, and to excite that curiosity of the mind which is implanted in every man, and which only wants a right direction, and to give that curiosity a right direction. If lectures are so understood,—if they are intended to stir up a spirit and taste for reading,—then I think they are in a proper place, and cannot be too highly commended. (Applause.) Books, however, it has been observed by M Guizot, in a recent work of his, in a sentence which is worth remembering: "Books are the tribute from which the world is addressed." Lecturers can only address the few present confined within the walls in which they lecture, but books circulate among thousands. Books convey sentiments, exhortations, narratives, incidents and instruction, which may be diffused as the means of spreading those books exist; and therefore I still, without undervaluing the advantages of those lectures, attach the greatest importance to the reading-room to a well selected library, and to the itinerating libraries. (Loud applause.) I will just, then, advert for a moment or two, now before I sit down, to allusions which have been made towards the conclusion of the report, to the complaint which has been made by some—they are termed ignorant people, and I believe, generally speaking, that ignorant and perhaps not very zealous friends of education do complain—that these mechanics' institutes have been failures.

We very often hear it said that they are failures. In one respect, and to a limited extent, they certainly have not answered the reasonable, I don't say sanguine expectations of those by whom they were first advocated, and by whom they have been supported. I mean that there has been apathy which was hardly expected among the great body of the working people. They have not shown that interest in mechanics' institutions—that desire to avail themselves of the benefits which one hoped and expected would be the case. At the same time, as I said before, the growing influence and extending agency of that influence shows that there is an increased appreciation of its benefits among the working classes generally. But don't let this discourage the friends of education. Let them do as we have done to-day at our meeting—let each man bring his own suggestions and his own experience into the common fund; and if we find that the result which we anticipated has not been attained to the fullest extent, let us consider whether it is not partly our own fault, and whether we are using the right means.—whether there is not something else which we can do which will tend to remove those obstacles which may have unhappily stood in the way of the complete success of these institutions. (Loud applause.) And here let me just say that sometimes people depreciate them and say, "Why, what can a man get from reading the books in these institutions, for the knowledge is all superficial and will do very little good?" and they therefore throw cold water on the efforts of benevolent persons who try to spread education among the masses of their countrymen. I was reading the other day one of those able papers written by one of the deepest thinkers, perhaps, of modern times—I mean the late Sir James Mackintosh—in which he combatted this objection. I contend there is no deeper thinker and better informed man—a man whose knowledge can be called deeper than his upon most subjects; and yet he says, he stands there as the advocate of superficial knowledge. I don't mean of superficial knowledge as against knowledge of a deeper kind, but superficial knowledge in those who have to choose between what may be termed superficial knowledge and ignorance. Sir James