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THE

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URING this present year of grace, the Free Library, so long desired and liberally subscribed for by the citizens of this city and suburbs is at last established. It is a good sign when the populace of any country clamour for free intellectual privileges; it is a better one when the clamour takes a practical turn, and results in an institution like the one lately established in Toronto. In these days of enlightenment and research, in a country like Canada where free education is offered to all, and where the

children of our mechanics, and servant girls, frequently develop into professional men and highly cultivated women, it is beyond all things an essential that some means of ready reference, some medium whereby the best works can be borrowed and read without expense, should be attainable in our midst. And

now, that these benefits are provided by our own enterprise, and the ready liberality of the ratepayers of this city, let us briefly review the advantages we gain, with their attendant disadvantages, the result of our expenditure and the working of the institution since its late opening, as shown by the manner in which it is patronised, and the correspondence in the daily press.

In the first place, then, as to our advantages, which include the result of the city's outlay. Without being called upon to expend a single dollar, all respectable persons of both sexes have access to a fine building, well warmed and lighted, a large and commodious reading-room, supplied with all the principal magazines, journals, and newspapers from England, the United States, and the different provinces of our dominion, and to a large collection of books from which they can select works to carry home and read at their leisure. In this latter respect, the residents of Toronto have an advantage over the residents of London, England, since readers in the British Museum, and other kindred institutions are not allowed, under any circumstances, to carry a book out of the reading-room. All this we receive as a result of the large sum of money expended, and the indefatigable exertion of such men as Mr. John Hallam, Mr. Bain, the Librarian, and others.

That the scheme is working well is proved by the very large number of persons who take advantage of the benefits offered. Still, we think that certain improvements might be made without entailing much expense, or any very great amount of additional labor.

The first point we notice is that the staff of attendants at the main branch is quite inadequate to the demand. Large crowds gather daily at the counter, and have to wait frequently for half an hour or more, before the one, two, or three attendants can get them the book they require. This will not do. Business people have no stray hours to waste in their busy lives. Respectable persons wanting employment are plentiful enough, and a few should be engaged, so that persons wanting books could be supplied at once.

The general demand for a classified catalogue has found its way into the daily press, and the very natural desire of the people should be gratified at once. A person wanting a good work on Geology may be totally ignorant under what author's name to look for such a book; besides which, the written catalogue pasted up on boards with its three supplements is confusing enough, anyway. An excellent way of meeting this difficulty was suggested in one of the papers last week, the correspondent suggesting that a large number of paper-covered, classified catalogues should be issued and supplied to the public at ten cents apiece, by which method they could study their catalogues at home, and at their leisure; valuable time would be saved to the readers, and a good deal of trouble to the attendants.

We cannot help noticing, much to our dismay, that a very very large proportion of the books already catalogued are novels. Now, novels are good enough in their way, many quite unobjectionable for general purposes, but it must be quite evident to all, that if seventy or eighty per cent of the books issued are novels, the intentions of the founders, and the use of the institution, is nullified.

\$50,000 was not laid out by the citizens of Toronto in order that girls and boys should be supplied with dime and

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