

bering that formerly the township libraries were loudly and almost universally complained of as ineffective and worthless, and that they were emphatically condemned by the popular vote, which at a single election, in 1859, abolished them in two-thirds of the townships throughout the State. The township library system was tested faithfully, and for years. The sum of twenty-five dollars, in addition to the fine moneys, was annually appropriated in each township, being upwards of \$12,000 annually for the State, for the purchase of books. At first, each district was allowed to draw quarterly, its quota of books, thus making temporary district libraries; but it was found, as might have been easily foreseen, that many directors would not take the trouble to go each quarter, to the township library for the books; while others drew them but failed to return them, and so the libraries were in danger of being utterly scattered and lost. Then the law was modified so as to permit the Inspectors to suspend the distribution to the districts, and to permit readers to draw books directly from the township library. This was found to confine the advantages, practically, to persons living in the immediate vicinity of the library, while in the distant districts, the books were never seen. *But a worse evil grew up in the systematic plans of peddlers to palm upon the libraries a mass of cheap, trashy, and often pernicious literature. One or two wealthy booksellers kept their peddling agents traversing the State, and many are the tricks by which they boasted that they cajoled the Inspectors.* A few libraries were well selected and well kept; but so valueless for public good, and especially for the education of the young, had the great majority become, that all intelligent friends of education desired a change.

An act was passed, in accordance with numerous petitions, authorizing the townships, by a popular vote, to distribute their libraries permanently among the districts. Out of 537 townships 350 at once voted the change, and by large majorities. But unfortunately the same legislature that authorized the change of system, took away from the libraries all regular support. The district libraries were thus left to starve from their birth, or to depend upon the uncertain and fitful support that the township might appropriate. The districts owning them could not vote a dollar to buy books, except in the hurry and bustle of the annual township election day, and by a general vote of the township. The result was easy to be seen. In a few townships, strong and influential friends of the libraries have succeeded, against all opposition, in carrying the appropriations; but in the great majority of cases, the matter is either entirely forgotten, or successfully opposed, and these important agencies of public education are left to waste away. To base an argument against district libraries, on their inutility and decline under such a system, is as unjust as to condemn a dying man for his idleness.

If the apparent estimate of a majority of the people as thus indicated by the failure to vote library appropriations, is to be taken as an evidence of the real value of public libraries, we might well doubt the propriety of seeking to maintain them; but when we reflect how slow the common schools grew into popular favor, we may wisely wait for the "sober second thought" of the people. Were it not for the strong stimulus of the public school moneys, hundreds of districts would even now, go without schools for years: offer a similar stimulus to the libraries and every district would maintain one as certainly as it does its school.

It is on the testimony not of the multitude of districts which never had, or never properly maintained, good libraries, but of the few that have thoroughly tried and proved them, that the evidence of their usefulness rests. It is certain that our best and most enterprising districts are universally in favor of libraries, and count them as important, if not indispensable, adjuncts of their schools. It is possible that we may need to wait for the growth of a wiser and more intelligent public sentiment to support them universally; but the day will certainly come when the district library will be considered as necessary an agency of public instruction as the district school. Wise men will not long continue to neglect the aid of literature—one of the mightiest and surest and cheapest teaching forces in the world. The great writers will be allowed to assume their rightful place among the great teachers of mankind.

Two important amendments concerning libraries were enacted at the last session of the Legislature. The first made it obligatory upon the school officers to expend their library money each year, and to purchase books, *under the State contract*, when not otherwise ordered by the district or township; the second allowed districts to expend their surplus funds for libraries, after having maintained a free school eight months in the year.

Two other amendments are very much needed; first, to require the districts, instead of the townships, to set apart some portion of the two mill tax to be appropriated for the support of the library; and second, to create a State library fund, analogous to the State school fund, either from a collection of all the fine moneys into such a general fund, or from some other source, the proceeds of

which shall be annually apportioned to the districts maintaining district libraries, on condition of their raising a similar amount for the purchase of books. Such a law would incite every district to a steady effort in the support of libraries, and make libraries a permanent and potential part of our school machinery.

#### 4. SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT.

The School Law provides that the treasurer of the state, upon the order of the superintendent of schools, is hereby authorized and directed to pay over the sum of ten dollars, out of any moneys that may be in the public treasury, to every school district which shall raise by tax or subscription a like sum for the same purpose, to establish within such district a school library, and to procure philosophical and chemical apparatus; and the further sum of five dollars annually, upon a like order, to the said districts, upon condition that they shall have raised a like sum for such year, for the purposes aforesaid.

The selection of books for such libraries shall be approved by the board of visitors of each town.

The board of visitors of each town shall make proper rules and regulations for the management, use and safe keeping of such libraries.

The State Superintendent in his report for 1863-4 remarks:—The library law was passed in 1856, but few districts applied for money under the law till the beginning of 1857. Since that time one thousand and fifty certificates have been received and as many orders have been issued for library money. More than one-third of the districts have complied with the requirements of this chapter, and have received the appropriation from the state.

The beneficial results of this act have been seen in the interest which has been awakened in schools and districts, where libraries have been purchased, and in the great advantages secured to the schools, which have thus been supplied with reference books, maps, and apparatus.

There has been a slight increase during the past year in the number of the applications for library money. The whole number of orders drawn has been seventy-four. Of this number, twenty-six were for the first instalment of ten dollars each; fourteen were for the second instalment of five dollars each; seven for the third instalment of five dollars each; ten for the fourth instalment of five dollars each; nine for the fifth instalment of five dollars each; three for the sixth instalment of five dollars each; four for the seventh instalment of five dollars each; and one for the eighth instalment of five dollars.

## II. Papers on Libraries in Upper Canada.

### 1. MECHANICS' INSTITUTE LIBRARY, TORONTO.

From the annual report, we learn that this very important department of the Institute has been considerably improved during the year, by the addition of numerous new publications, besides several of the older and more valuable works. From year to year the library is becoming more and more attractive, as is evident from the greater number of readers. This gratifying result may be attributed in a great measure to the increased facilities for access which the members have to the more popular volumes. So great has the demand become, that not only duplicate copies, but in several instances as many as four, six, eight, and twelve copies of the works of popular authors have been procured.

The number of books in the library at the date of the last annual report was	-	-	-	-	-	5554
Added during the year	-	-	-	-	-	528
Presented during the year	-	-	-	-	-	40
Bound up from reading-room	-	-	-	-	-	76
						644
Total	-	-	-	-	-	6198
Lost and worn out during the year	-	-	-	-	-	98
Leaving now in the Library	-	-	-	-	-	6100

Through the instrumentality of Mr. Rice Lewis, late President of the Institute, Mr. Crossley, the eminent carpet manufacturer of England, presented the Institute with a valuable set of books, handsomely bound, in token of his regard for Mr. Lewis.

The reading-room has also been improved, several of the most important English and American commercial publications, besides various periodicals and magazines, having been ordered since the last report. The addition of commercial publications has rendered the reading-room still better adapted to the requirements of the mercantile world.