

manufacturer ; one hotel keeper ; one tobacco manufacturer ; one carriage manufacturer, and fifteen others whose names do not appear in "Bradstreet" as having any mercantile or mechanical business.

Thus it would seem that, out of thirty-five delegates, only two appear to have been working mechanics, viz.: one master machinist and one carriage-maker — Thirty-seven Institutes sent no delegates at all to the meeting. Surely this does not look much like a success.

Now let us review the sums advanced to the Institutes in proportion to their members. We are informed the Statute provides "that for every dollar subscribed or appropriated, by an Institute for certain specified purposes, such Institute shall be entitled to receive two dollars, up to a maximum of \$400." Our correspondent presumes that, "the proportion of mechanic to non-mechanic members is fully as great as is the proportion of mechanic to the non-mechanic members of the whole community." This is taking it for granted that non-mechanics, under the Act, have the same rights and privileges as mechanics.

On examining last year's return of the different Institutes, we find that Wingham received \$400 for only 45 members—equal to \$9.10 for each member ; Kemptville received \$400 for 53 members—equal to \$7.52 for each member ; Preston received \$8,88 for 69 members—equal to \$5.79 for each. Several others received from \$2.50 to \$5.00 for each member. Welland, with 100 subscribers, appears to have only received \$102, or about \$1 for each. There is something in this statement which is not clear, and requires explanation. It may be that funds in some other shape have been appropriated in order to obtain a large grant, irrespective of the number of the members of the Institute.

Very few of the Institutes appear to have made any reports, and the few that did so gave anything but a flattering statement of their affairs.

We also find, in reference to the annual report, that the percentage of books of fiction to technical works, in one Institute is as high as 85 per cent., and in several others from 50 to 80, a few from 10 to 25, and from 25 to 50. The city of Hamilton has from 70 to 75 per cent. books of fiction.

Now we will venture to assert that a large proportion of the technical works to be found on the shelves of the Institutes are either of little practical use in the present day, or are too abstruse to be understood by mechanics of limited education, or for those who desire to improve their minds by self-culture ; and we further assert that many of the directors who have the selection of the books have not the requisite knowledge of the works which are most required, and that, in consequence, a large sum of money is annually expended injudiciously.

We have taken some pains to bring this matter before those with whom lie the power to place the institutions on a much better footing than formerly, and we have the pleasure to know that steps are being taken in that direction. But whatever changes are made, mechanics must distinctly understand that they must no longer be supine, but arouse themselves from their lethargy, and not wait for others to rouse them up ; they must put their own shoulders to the wheel, organize themselves into a compact body to work for their own weal, their own improvement, and for the welfare of their country.

When we hear mechanics complaining of the arbitrary power shown by employers over them in manufactories,

we cannot help feeling that the cause of such lies, to a great extent, with mechanics themselves. If they were a more united body and better educated, they would not only obtain, but maintain, a better social standing, and lessen the distance between the employer and the employed. The really skilful man would be rewarded ; for the pressure that would be brought to bear on the manufacturer by a body of intelligent and educated class of artisans, would have such weight as to force attention.

A discrimination in the wages between the skilful and unskilful mechanic, when working at the same bench together, would have to be recognized, and there would no longer be so many of our best mechanics leaving the country for better wages.

Would that we could see the same interest taken by the industrial classes, and, in fact, by the whole community, in literature generally, technical or otherwise, as in the United States. In the New England States alone there are over 400 free libraries, supported by the municipalities and occasional donations. It is only when these institutions are made almost compulsory—that is, by corporations supporting and taxing the people for them, that they really become practically useful ; otherwise, for a short season, one or two energetic men, by taking the lead in such institutions, may manage to keep them up for a few years, but they will ultimately fall through.

The city of Boston is an astonishing instance of what public spirit can do with an enlightened people. It is only about 28 years since the movement was started for the formation of a public library ; in 1852 the first book was laid upon its shelves, and it now has a library of nearly 400,000 volumes, if not over that number. Two years ago its loans amounted to 1,183,991 ; the increase of its readers, in 1878, was 32,179. But to give an example of the appreciation of the public of the value of this noble institution—as all strangers after a fortnight's residence in the city are entitled to all its privileges, on producing references—only one volume, at the end of a year, was missing in one department, out of 11,723 issued. Among five branches connected with the main library, not one volume was lost from an aggregate circulation of 275,654, and in South Boston only one out of 140,677. The Boston Free Library receives its support from the interest derived from donations of its original founders, and subsequent gifts, and also from an annual appropriation of funds by the city government.

Is not such an institution, and similar ones throughout the States, well worthy of emulation by cities in Canada ?

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OBELISKS AS LIGHTNING RODS.—M. Le Page Renouf suggests that the ancient obelisks of Egypt may have been intended to serve as lightning conductors. The evidence is found in an inscription from the temple at Edfu, published by Brugsch-Bey in September, 1875. In the thirty-fourth line of this text "two large obelisks" are expressly said to have been constructed "for the purpose of cleaving asunder the storm-cloud of heaven."