

Milnes, Sir James Stephen, and others eminent in English literature.

In 1855, the Act of 1850 was repealed, and a new Act passed, by which several changes were made, in the mode of introducing the law into towns and cities. By section 4 of the new Act, the mayor of any municipal borough, the population of which exceeds 5,000, shall, on the request of the Town Council, convene a public meeting of the burgesses. Ten days' notice of the time, place and object of the meeting must be given at church doors, and by advertisement. If two-thirds of the persons at the meeting determine that this Act ought to be adopted, the same shall take effect. By sec. 15, the rate levied is not to exceed one penny in the £.; and section 23 enacts that if any meeting determine against the adoption of the Act, no other meeting for the same purpose shall be held for at least a year.

Other great cities followed the example of Manchester, and now Public Libraries and Museums flourish in twenty-five English towns, and are the daily resort of thousands who there seek "to satiate that inextinguishable craving of the soul of man for exact knowledge, for abstract truth, and for comprehensive principles." Doubtless, as Sir James Stephen observed at Manchester, "Such collections are not without their inconveniences. It may be admitted that they tend to a desultory, discursive, and idle use of books. But which is that of all the blessings we possess of which some similar abuse is not possible?" Besides, it must be remembered that many who begin with the lighter description of literature, are gradually drawn on to graver studies, in history, political economy, or science.

The people of the United States have been noted for the ample provision made for the education of the young, and this preliminary training has been wisely followed up by the establishment of free libraries in several cities, thus throwing open to all classes what, in the words of Bulwer, "are the school-rooms of grown up men." The noblest public library in the world is that of Boston. The edifice containing it was completed eight

years ago, at a cost of \$360,000. On the 1st August last, according to a statement in Mr. Torrance's lecture, "it contained 123,016 volumes, and 32,558 pamphlets. During the previous year, it had circulated over 197,000 volumes, or an average of over 707 per day. There were used for consultation in the building in the same time 13,090 volumes, and during the same period 290,950 visits were made to it for the purpose of reading in its halls, or of taking out or consulting the books to be found on its shelves." This Library, though also receiving aid from the City Treasury, has been chiefly built up by the princely donations of which it has been the recipient. Mr. Joshua Bates, of the Barings firm, London, alone contributed the sum of \$100,000; Mr. Jonathan Phillips gave \$20,000; the Hon. A. Lawrence, \$10,000; and Theodore Parker bequeathed to it his own noble collection, comprising 17,000 volumes. The main object sought is to provide useful and entertaining books, which may be taken out and read in the homes of the citizens. There is also a Library of Reference in an Upper Hall. In 1861, it was ascertained that 23 per cent. of the books in the Lower Hall were English novels, which was believed to be a fair proportion of light literature for the popular demand.

It is not necessary in this Journal to enter at length into the advantages derived from a Public Library. They have been set forth in words of glowing eloquence by Dickens, by Thackeray, by Bulwer, the men who have delighted and instructed millions of the present generation from their infancy. The reader will find the subject ably treated in the lecture of Mr. Torrance, to which we have before referred. One reflection, however, occurs to us as of special force in a young, and, comparatively speaking, poor country. How can we, in this colony, hope to have a creditable literature of our own, or to make an important advance in any department of learning or science, while those amongst us whose minds are enkindled by the fire of genius are debarred from access to any considerable collection of books, and are thus unable to follow out the studies begun,