

THE CANADA

EDUCATIONAL MONTHLY

AND SCHOOL MAGAZINE.

MAY-JUNE, 1884.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES.

BY THE REV. W. H. WITHROW, D.D., F.R.S., CAN.

I AM glad to have an opportunity of speaking a word of congratulation on the opening of this free public library. I can think of no more worthy mode of celebrating the semi-centennial of this fair city than by the inauguration of this beneficent institution. I can scarce conceive of a grander monument of the city's progress or a more auspicious omen of its future welfare. I confess that I have more than once felt that my native city, notwithstanding its literary pre-eminence, compared unfavourably with many less populous and less wealthy cities in Great Britain and Europe and in the United States, from its lack of a public library. I rejoice that that reproach is now taken away, and that through the energy and enterprise of Messrs. Hallam and Taylor, to whom more than any others the existence of this

library is due, and through the intelligent liberality of the ratepayers of Toronto, we see opened to-day this magnificent institution.

I regard this library, if the Hon. Minister of Education will permit me to say so, as in a very important sense the complement of our Public School system. Only a few of our young people can pass from the Public schools to the colleges or universities of the country. But these free libraries, which I hope to see multiplied throughout the land, are the people's colleges, where the poorest lad or the toiling artisan shall enjoy the best teaching in the world. "The true university of these days," says Carlyle, "is a collection of books." All education that is worth anything must be largely self-education. I am sure that the learned president of University College will agree with the opinion that many a self-taught man—who has never seen the inside of a college—self-taught like

* The substance of an address at the opening of the Free Public Library, Toronto, March 6th, 1884, revised by the author for the C. E. MONTHLY.