

AID TO MECHANICS' INSTITUTES.

The Government of Ontario, by the Hon. the "Commissioner of Agriculture and Arts," and sustained by the unanimous vote of its first Parliament, has, by the recent enactment, done more to foster our Mechanics' Institutes, and assist them in their legitimate work of imparting useful instruction to the industrial classes of the community, than has ever before been done in this country; and at a very small cost.

For several years, every incorporated Mechanics' Institute in the Province, no matter what the number of its membership, the state of its library, or the work actually done in promoting the legitimate objects of such institutions, received from the Legislature the sum of \$200 per annum. A few years since the grants were withheld, and, in consequence, many institutes "went down," or have ever since been in a languishing state—with difficulty keeping open their doors.

The present Government having determined to withhold any further grants to the Board of Arts and Manufactures—not because it had not done good service with the small amount annually voted to sustain it; for the contrary was the fact—the commissioner deemed it his duty to assist the Mechanics' Institutes in objects beneficial to the operative classes; and with that view, it is provided that any Institute appropriating from its own funds, or obtaining subscriptions in its locality, for the purpose of evening class instruction for its pupils, or the purchase for its library of books on "mechanics, engineering, or chemical or other manufactures," shall receive from the public funds *dollar for dollar* of such appropriation or contribution, up to the sum of \$200 for any one year.

It may be that for a while but few Mechanics' Institutes will avail themselves of this provision; but that some will do so at once, we have no doubt; and as the benefits derived by the pupils, and by the readers of these practical works in their libraries, become apparent, the number of institutes claiming the proffered aid will no doubt increase.

We are always glad to hear of the existence of a Mechanics' Institute, with its circulating library of books, although such books are not of the practical character of those above mentioned; because it is, as it were, a home to which every young mechanic may turn and say, "this is our institute," and which by its appliances exercise an influence for good over many, keeping them from the saloon and gambling house, or even worse haunts of vice; but we can never look upon an institute as fulfilling its mission, until it provides a class of reading or the mechanic and manufacturer that shall be

of benefit to him in his calling; and gathers into its evening classes a number for instruction in useful departments of knowledge.

The Reading Room with its newspapers and magazines of light literature; the library with its books in history and travel, and works of imagination; its concerts, re-unions, literary readings and lectures, are all well and pleasing in their way; but they should only be considered as a means to an end; and that end should be the class room and teaching lecture, and a library of well selected technical books. We believe the step now taken will conduce to this result; and if it should be found that the small grants under the Bill are judiciously used, it may be that future Legislation will extend the aid beyond its present limits.

In connection with this subject we might refer to the "Association of Mechanics' Institutes," the incorporation of which is provided for in the Bill, and whose annual meetings are to be held at the same time and place as the Provincial Exhibition is held in every year. This association, if judiciously managed, may be the means—in connection with the grants referred to—of putting new life into many of the Institutes. At its annual meetings the discussions might profitably turn upon the kind of technical books most desirable for the Institutes; the subjects most suitable for class-teaching, and the selection of teachers; and other topics of interest. The association might also make arrangements for the procuring of suitable books, from an approved list, at a great reduction on the ordinary retail price of such works. The constitution and by-laws of the association will no doubt provide for these things. We wish the Institutes every success. Our heart is with them in their work, and our hopes are for their rapid progress and improvement. We know of the benefits derived by many a young man from connection with them. Youths away from their families and homes, amongst strangers in our own city and in other places, through the influence of some friend have become connected with its institute, and taking an interest in its operations, their whole train of thought and associations have been changed, and they have been saved to society to become useful members thereof.

TECHNICAL EDUCATION.

We publish in this our last number, a final communication from our esteemed friend, "S. R.," on the subject of technical education. We hardly know what to say to our correspondent's reasoning, as he scarcely touches the points on which we have written in the *Journal*, or the arguments advanced