

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Public and School Libraries.

A few matters of a general nature need to be considered in connection with the subjects I have been discussing :

In 1899, this Province spent \$56,769.77 in books, and \$11,045.60 in magazines and periodicals for its public libraries. Of this amount, the Legislature gave \$44,748.97. Let us consider, in this connection, the following facts also contained in the Educational Report for 1899. There are 5,120 rural public schools and 201 rural separate schools, outside of the schools in the cities, towns, and incorporated villages. In 30 of these municipalities, there are no public libraries, while outside of them there are only 196; that is, there are over 5,000 rural school sections which the public library does not reach, and which, so far as I can find out, have few, if any, libraries of any kind. I have already shown how important it is that a taste for good literature should be cultivated in all our schools, in the Public Schools in particular, where the large body of our people receive their education. Is our library system as effective as it can be made? I doubt it very much; and I have two suggestions to offer for its improvement:

(1) Where Public Schools now exist, the Library Boards should co-operate with the School Boards, and their teachers. The good librarian knows much about books and something about children; the good teacher knows much about children and something about books. In many of the U.S. cities and towns I visited, special provision is made in the Public Libraries for the wants of both pupils and teachers. Books suitable for them are bought, and arrangements made for their distribution. Selected sets, often to the number of two or three hundred volumes, classified for the different grades and consisting of 20 or 25 copies of each book, are sent at the beginning of a term to the Grammar and the High School. As soon as one set is read, it is replaced by another, at the request of the Principal; and the reading of such books in school and at home, under the teacher's guidance, is made a prominent feature of the course. Teachers also have special privileges, being allowed to take out from half a dozen to a dozen or so at a time. Another illustration may be given of this system of co-operation. In Belleville (Ill.), the State Superintendent tells me, some years ago, under the direction of the Superintendent of Schools, every teacher read a given number of books, classified them for the school grades, and reported to a committee appointed to group them. Lists were then printed on large cards which were placed in the library for the use of the children. New book lists are posted in the same way. At the approach of national days like Washington's and Lincoln's birthday, Memorial day and others, when the older pupils are assigned themes or questions for debate, the teachers give the librarians the subject, and the books treating of them are placed upon the inspection table for their use. Moreover, the teachers' own pedagogical library has been placed in a separate case in the library and is cared for by the librarian. A room in the library is also set apart for the use of the teachers.

(2) The travelling library scheme which is to come into operation this year in Ontario, admits, I believe, of a very desirable extension.

Each Public School Inspector's district should have a central library suitable for the teachers and pupils of the rural schools, under the charge and management of the Inspector. The books could be distributed by him from time to time amongst the different schools of his inspectorate, and, in this way, the public libraries, what Carlyle calls "*the University*," could be brought to every fireside. The system of exchange would make its value a maximum one. If the Legislature gave an annual grant for this purpose, supplemented by at least an equal amount from the county, an inestimable boon would be conferred on the rural districts. Such provision would, of course, only supplement the reference libraries which we hope to see some day in every Public and Separate School in the Province. I venture here to express the opinion—in which I believe many concur—that the general interests would not suffer if the amount of money for this purpose, say \$10,000 a year, were diverted from the present grant to Mechanics' Institutes.

School Boards and their Powers.

As I have already pointed out, one of the evils resulting from the competition amongst schools is the attempt often made to undertake work for which the staff is in-