

In his Annual Report for 1852, the Chief Superintendent, after having given particulars as to what had been done to provide a supply of good wholesome literature for the proposed Public Libraries, stated, that, in addition "to the establishment of these Libraries upon a right foundation," he had "deemed it essential . . . to provide for the accomplishment of the following objects:—

1. The prevention of the expenditure of any part of the Library Fund in the purchase and circulation of Books having a tendency to subvert public morals, or vitiate the public taste.

2. The protection of local parties against imposition, by interested itinerant Book Vendors, in regard to both the prices and character of Books introduced into their Libraries.

3. The placing of the remotest Municipalities upon an equal footing with those adjoining the Metropolis, in regard to the terms and facilities of procuring Books, with the single exception of their transmission which is now becoming safe and easy to all parts of Upper Canada.*

4. The selection, procuring, and sending equally acceptable to all the School Municipalities of the land a large variety of attractive and instructive reading Books, and that upon the most economical and advantageous terms.

5. The removal of all restrictions upon local exertion, either as to the sums raised, or the manner of raising them, whether in a School Section, or Township, or County, and the encouragement of such exertions by proportioning, in all cases, the amount of public aid to the amount raised by local effort.

The Council of Public Instruction, in adopting the Library Regulations, in 1853, (after specifying certain limitations in regard to the selection and approval of Books for Public Libraries), stated that:—

With these exceptions and limitations, it is the opinion of the Council that, as wide a selection as possible, should be made of useful and entertaining Books of permanent value, adapted to popular reading in the various departments of human knowledge; leaving each Municipality to consult its own taste, and to exercise its own discretion in selecting such Books from the General Depository Catalogue of the Department as it prefers.

By reference to that Catalogue, as revised from time to time, it will be seen that none of the "Popular" Novels of the day were included in the Catalogue list. But a number of Tales and Stories, illustrative of "Practical Life," and issued by well-known Publishers, were included in the Official Catalogue, under that general heading. In later years "Fiction" was added, but only such sterling works of distinguished Authors, as had merited the general approval of those competent to judge in such matters.

It was no wonder, therefore, that Lord Elgin, the able and gifted Governor General of that period, who was personally cognizant of what had been done to establish the System of Public Libraries, should have referred, in one of his eloquent speeches, at the time, to these Libraries as:—

"THE CROWN AND GLORY OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE PROVINCE."

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* The terms, upon which it was proposed that Books would be supplied to Public Libraries, were thus stated in a Departmental Notice issued by Doctor Myerson:—

The Chief Superintendent of Education is prepared to apportion One Hundred per cent, upon all sums which "shall be raised from local sources by Municipal Councils and School Corporations for the establishment or increase of Public Libraries in Upper Canada under the Regulations provided according to law. Prison Libraries and Teachers' County Association Libraries may, under these Regulations, be established by County Councils, as Branch Libraries."

† On page 194, I have quoted some recent utterances of President Eliot, of Harvard University, on the demoralizing effect of the general introduction into certain popular Libraries "of ephemeral reading matter, which is not good in either form, or substance."