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ON THE IMPORTANCE OF MECHANICS' INSTITUTES.

THE necessity for the promotion of knowledge among the mechanics of Canada cannot be over estimated, and in no way can mechanical information be better afforded, and scientific knowledge brought within reach of that important class of the community, than by the establishment of libraries of reference in every small town and village throughout the Dominion. Standard works of the Arts and Sciences are so expensive to purchase, that they are beyond the means of any working mechanic to obtain, who has a family to support, and many of these books, when purchased at a sacrifice of some of the comforts of life to his family, are found to contain but a portion of the information sought for; for this reason mechanics are deterred from expending money in books, that are only in, part, of any service to them in their particular trade. The consequence is that, from the want of such books to refer to from time to time, and also some of a light, pleasing, instructive, and domestic character, all desire for reading is lost, and many men who would have risen to a high position in their respective trades, and have been of great service to their country, plod on to the end of their days as mere journeymen, from the want, in early life, of that nourishment to the mind that would have stimulated it to action.

The usefulness of institutions like mechanics' institutes, for affording such information as artisans, particularly young men, require to know, and through which they can keep themselves posted in all the new inventions and improvements of the day, cannot be doubted, and if they were more numerous, it would be of great advantage to the country; their usefulness, however, to a great extent will depend upon their management by those who are nominated, annually, to superintend their affairs. In making these remarks upon their management we by no means do so a reflex

upon any particular institution, we speak entirely from our experience of the mismanagement that has taken place, not only in mechanics' institutes, but in many other institutions where its members are appointed, not from their qualifications and suitability to office, but from personal reasons, and who are allowed to remain from year to year office-bearers, without taking any active interest whatever in the institution whose welfare is entrusted by its members into their hands.

If an institute answer no other purpose than that of supplying a few scientific books and periodicals for the use of its members, then it fails in the main object for which such institutions were originally intended, and it is therefore with reference to this point that we wish to call the attention of our readers. Too many of the institutes in Canada (and unfortunately we have but few of them) are mere news-rooms, or places of reference to such works as they may contain, whereas they ought to be institutions for the promotion of useful information and instruction, not only through books, but by practical instruction to the mechanical classes; but this is seldom the case. But why should it be so? Why should not the same energy which is shown in similar institutions in England and in the United States be displayed in Canada? The answer is, as before stated, simply because those who are chosen for members of the committees are too often men of inactive minds and sometimes not connected with any mechanical business, consequently little able to judge of what is required of them; or, men too old and devoid of energy to act, men who accept the office as a compliment, or consider it, on account of their position and age, as a right. Such men are mere drags to the wheels of action and impede progress, and should at once retire and give place to younger and more energetic members, who would initiate something that would tend to instruct and benefit those with whom they are associated. Year after year such men are re-elected simply because, in social life, they are respected, and it would, perhaps, give offence to displace them for those more youthful; this is a great mistake, for under their somnolent influence year after year do such institutions grow more feeble and less supported, until they gradually expire. Now, that which is particularly wanted in the management of mechanics' institutes is that the boards of management should be composed of younger men,