

Laws to prevent the full development of the economic forces may possibly be passed, by limiting the quantity of land which an individual may purchase from the government; but this would not prevent aggregation, when aggregation was proved to be the best means of increasing national and individual wealth. The Canadian farmer is a competitor with the farmers of all other countries; and it is important that he should carry on his work on the most favorable conditions. The steam plough, largely used in Great Britain already, is destined to play a great part on the prairies of the North-West. The most perfect machinery of every other kind will be used there. The conditions of future success point to large farms; and no where is there a better field for them than in our North-West, which is destined to become one of the principal granaries of the world.

A FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY.

Alderman Hallam has been exerting himself with commendable activity to secure for Toronto a free public library. He proposes to follow the plan acted upon in many English cities, and levy a rate for its support. The tax would be small; and the effect of the existence of a free library could not be other than good. Whether a library of current literature is what is most required is a point on which a difference of opinion exists. Alderman Hallam aims to make the proposed free library answer a two-fold purpose: the diffusion of current literature and the placing of books of reference within the reach of all who may require them. In our opinion the greater need exists for a reference library; and we are not at all sure that any library under municipal control will ever fully respond to this demand. Books of reference are sometimes scarce and dear, and we doubt very much whether the average tax payer would consent to their being purchased at the price that must be paid for them. This is the difficulty which to our mind stands in the way of carrying out a worthy object. For the purpose of merely supplying cheap current literature, we fear the movement could hardly be justified.

But the aim is to combine the two departments of a lending and a reference library; and in this form, whatever may be our doubts as to the success of the plan, we cannot withhold our support from the efforts that are being made to remove the stinging reproach that Toronto, a city of 100,000 inhabitants, cannot boast the possession of a single library that is free to the public. The great majority of the books in demand by the general public come under the head of fiction. We do not object that the literature of the day should be cherished by the mass of readers, though we could desire to see a better proportion of solid works sought after. The great majority of mankind desire to be amused; it is only the few who will in preference take the trouble to acquire valuable information. Meanwhile, we must be content to take things as they are, hoping for an improvement in future. The people who read only novels to-day may be led to read something more substantial to-morrow. Except that it is poor and not free, there is perhaps no good reason why the Mechanics' Institute should not answer the purpose of

a merely popular library of current literature. If this library is to be taken over by purchase, it will be necessary to proceed, in this part of the business, with great caution. Many of the books are worn, soiled and of little value. In fact, a large portion of them have seen their best and most of them their worst days.

Never was current literature, especially of the class most in demand, so cheap and easily accessible as now. There are few persons who cannot afford to pay fifteen or twenty cents for a good book in a popular form; and the circulation of such books is enormous. But although this condition of things lessens the necessity for a merely popular free library, it does not at all diminish the need for a reference library. From the municipality we shall never obtain the latter without the former branch. Let the experiment be made, by all means. But in saying this, we are not free from doubt as to the result. The best reference library cannot be got in this way, though something may be done in that particular. When wealth increases, some millionaire will seize the opportunity to make a name for himself by founding a great public library. It will scarcely be given to any one man, however wealthy, to complete the edifice. But he may give it a start and his name. Meanwhile, let us try what can be done by way of municipal effort. The voting on the proposal to establish a free library in the city of Toronto, will take place at the same time as the municipal elections.

STATISTICS OF INDUSTRY.

The Ontario Bureau of Industries proposes to collect statistics of manufactures, in the same way as it has got those relating to agriculture—by making enquiries by means of circulars. The form of the schedule is that used by the Census Department of Canada. But it does not follow that answers will be volunteered where there is no power to force any one to reply. Three questions are asked to which it is not likely many will reply. Those are: the average number of persons employed, the total amount of wages paid, and the value of raw materials used during the year; the total products. This would give a key to the amount of profits made; and is a kind of information not not likely to be volunteered. "The aim," the circular states, "is not to collect returns of all the industries of the Province, with the minuteness of a census, but rather such returns as may be classed generally under the head of factory industries." In any department dealt with the returns ought to be complete; if not they would be misleading, unless care were taken to show that they were incomplete. Even partial statistics would throw light on certain points, if the enquiries we have enumerated were answered. If the total quantities were matter of estimate these returns would, in that respect only give the value which attaches to conjectural statistics.

The list of industries concerning which information is sought by the circular of the Bureau, includes button, biscuit, bent-stuff, Boot and shoe, cigar and tobacco, hosiery, corset, cotton, woollen, pump, sash and blind, railway car, scale, shingle, trunk, box,

sewing machine, starch, vinegar, and woodenware factories; meat-curing and packing houses, breweries and malting houses; agricultural implement works, nail and rivet works, glass works, salt works, brass works, edge tool works, engine and boiler works, broom and brush works; rolling mills, scutching mills, flour and grist mills, gypsum and phosphate mills, paper and pulp mills, tanneries, distilleries, oil refineries, pot and pearl asheries. We observe that saw mills appear in the list; so, too, do carriage and waggon shops, carding and fulling mills and cabinet shops; a tolerably numerous group of establishments in this country. To these are to be added musical instrument factories, brick and tile yards, ship yards, and even gas works. The agricultural works and the tile yards have a specific set of questions asked them not asked of others.

HARDWARE MANUFACTURERS AND THE RETAIL TRADE.

Dealers in hardware at wholesale tell us that justice is not done them by Canadian manufacturers, in that the margin of profit allowed them by the manufacturer is too small. "It costs 11 per cent. to handle and sell shelf hardware," is the conclusion of a leading house in Montreal, "while on some descriptions of such goods made in the Dominion we do not get over 7½ from the maker, and on other lines from 10 to 12 per cent." A Toronto house considers the seven or eight per cent. profit margin obtainable on metal goods of Canadian production insufficient, and objects strongly to the policy adopted by makers of sending travellers out to sell to country retail dealers, upon the pretext that the wholesale trade does not buy a sufficiently large share of their production.

If this be a correct statement of the attitude of our manufacturers in this line, we venture to think that the policy will be none the worse of reconsideration. Is it not better, we would ask, now that the wholesale hardware trade is admittedly in fewer hands, to sell all one's product to a few good houses in the business centres than to scatter it over the country in the hands of a thousand retail dealers, great and small? The plea of "too many eggs in one basket" does not necessarily apply here. The alternative system of distributing a thousand dozen or a thousand gross among five hundred customers in a hundred different places is not without its drawbacks. It will be contended, of course, that higher prices can be had from the smaller dealers; and if that were the only consideration there would be some force in the contention. But sending travellers, with sets of samples, to visit country places, is a heavy item in the year's expenses. Collecting numerous accounts of small individual amount, by means of country private bankers or through other sources, is another considerable item. We recall one wholesale firm, who, when some years ago they ventured into "selling the retailer direct," found it needful to exactly double their office staff. Delays, discount on cheques, returned goods, petty open accounts, disputes, loss of interest—all these things must be expected by those who prefer to credit retailers.