

The Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture in 1876, as given above, viz.: "That it is very difficult and sometimes quite impracticable for Institutes located in small places to introduce and sustain Evening Class instruction, except, perhaps, on a very limited scale, and embracing only the rudiments of knowledge," bears out to a considerable extent the reasons advanced why Evening Class instructions as a rule have failed in Ontario.

That the majority of the so-called Mechanics' Institutes are only circulating libraries, and that too for the dissemination of light literature, is an established fact; and if Doctor May, instead of merely stating this fact, had as in other instances, also proposed a remedy to cure this growing evil, it would have made his proposals more complete; though it may be a question whether it is more difficult to induce members of Mechanics' Institutes to abandon novel reading, and select instead thereof practical and useful books, than to attend Evening Class instruction; the former might in many instances be accomplished by one single good lecture, in the other even numerous lectures have failed to produce the desired effect. And although there may not at first sight appear to exist any connection between Evening Class instruction and novel reading, yet upon closer investigation it will be found, that those who employ their evenings with novel reading are seldom found among those who attend Evening Class instruction; they find no time and have no inclination for sound, solid thinking and learning. And so long as clergymen, professional men, and other gentlemen of education and standing in society recommend and defend, or approve of novel reading, so long will their efforts to establish successful Evening Class instruction fail. Prohibitory laws and restrictions would only increase the evil, as all prohibitory laws do show; "forbidden fruit tastes sweetest" is an old and a true saying; yet if by precept and persuasion—which are the only available remedies in our days, when the whole country teems with light literature, with works of fiction of a most pernicious character—the malady of novel reading can be cured, and the public become induced to read books of practical use, of sound information, or of innocent amusement, then there is a fair prospect that, led on by the information gathered in such books, the inducements offered to them to join Evening Classes will bear fruit; and that by this process Evening Class instruction may, at least in some localities, be successfully established, notwithstanding the many other impediments above enumerated; for it should always be borne in mind, that since it is proved that by far the larger number of books taken out for reading from the libraries are novels, and that chiefly by the younger members—by those who ought to attend Evening Class instruction but do not—hence, that if the number of those who read books of practical use and of sound information is materially increased, the chances of making up a class as contemplated will, by parity of reason, also materially increase.