

free institutions that are our country's pride, and our country's safety: such instances are not rare.

The establishment of Mechanics' Institutes deserves to be marked as one of the great eras in the history of Science, I might say in the history of the World. We know most certainly that the tendency of these Institutions has been to develop the genius, and encourage the perseverance of the Mechanic. We know most certainly that since they were established discoveries and inventions have made a progress unknown during any previous period. It is true, we cannot tell how far those great discoveries and inventions are to be attributed to Mechanics' Institutes. This is a problem which no man can solve. But certainly, when we consider how eminently these Institutions are calculated to spread Science amongst a vast number of people, we may, without presumption, attribute much of the splendid success which has attended Science, during the last half century, to the Mechanics' Institutes.

The original purpose of the founders of the Mechanics' Institutes seemed to have been accomplished, when the system of lectures, and the establishment of libraries were adopted. But such was the general interest taken in the Institutions—the value of the lectures—the spread of general information—that the Mechanics' Institutes were found to be fitted for the promotion of knowledge to a much wider circle than was originally intended, and in this way they became much more extensively useful, and much more objects of general interest.

While we contemplate the more immediate benefit that flow from such Institutions, let us not forget the more remote, but powerful way, in which they act upon a community—upon a nation. The members of those societies are members of the community. You cannot raise the standard of education, of knowledge, of intelligence among them, without powerfully affecting those with whom such members associate; so that in fact, the nation itself may be said in this way to participate in the benefits that spring from these Institutions.