

advantages capable of being derived from this measure are so manifold that I shall be glad to learn that extensive application is made of the provisions of the law."

But it is not enough that legislative authority has been granted for this purpose; neither will the response of the municipalities, by sanctioning the levy of a rate, be sufficient. Something more is needed, and that is the active co-operation of intelligent citizens in each locality. This is indispensable in order to give life and energy to this movement; and this, it may be hoped, will not be wanting in Upper Canada. The result of the experiment in Ontario will be of no small interest to the other provinces of the Dominion.

I am not unmindful of the fact that the experiment in Ontario is not altogether new. More than thirty years ago the lamented Dr. Egerton Ryerson, included in his great and comprehensive plan of public instruction, the foundation of township libraries throughout the province. But this attempt was attended with very partial success. The township libraries still exist; but, in most places, it is reported that they do not thrive or give general satisfaction. Two causes, I think, have contributed to their failure. Firstly, the township libraries were established on the principle that Government aid, to an extent equal at least to that of local contributions, might always be expected. This forced the libraries prematurely; whilst their growth, to be healthy, should have been the result of spontaneous action, put forth in places where the necessity for a free public library had been felt, and acknowledged by the preponderating voice of the community. Secondly, these township libraries were supplied with books from a central depository, where they had been purchased wholesale, and copies of the same work were distributed everywhere. Such a cast-iron method of forming libraries throughout the land is obviously objectionable. It destroys the individuality which should characterize every separate library as well as every individual man. There are undoubtedly certain standard works of reference which are indispensable in all public libraries, but upon this foundation a superstructure should be built in accordance with the predominant tastes, mental pursuits, or class of studies to which the mass of the frequenters of the library may specially incline. If at the outset this cannot be ascertained, it should be the aim of those who are deputed to select the books to give at least a distinctive character to each collection by making a specialty of some particular subject. This would render every library an object of interest to the country at large, as well as a vehicle of instruction and entertainment to its owners. The lack of specialities in any library not merely brings the collection down to a monotonous and uninteresting level, but to an equal extent lessens its attraction and impairs its usefulness.

In these days of mental activity every public library should, as far as possible, keep pace with the times. The peculiarities of each collection will naturally depend upon local considerations, and upon the disposition and requirements of its supporters. But besides this there is apparent in self-governing communities an increasing interest in the great questions of the day. New topics are continually arising upon which it is the natural desire of all intelligent persons to obtain accurate information. "The Literature of Public Questions" must, therefore, find a prominent place in all popular libraries; and in proportion as this want is well supplied we may estimate their practical value to the people. If complete in this department, members of town or county councils, of a provincial Legislature, or of a Federal Parliament, will alike possess equal facilities for studying the history and present aspect of questions, in the settlement or application