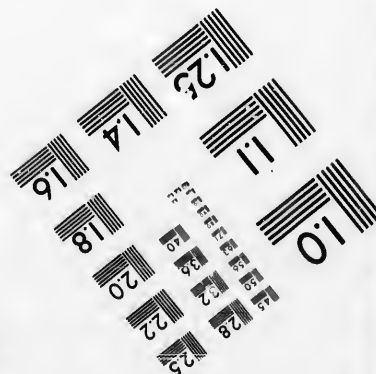
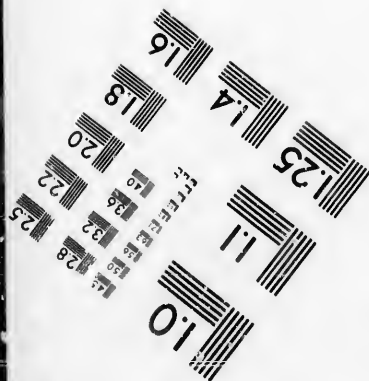
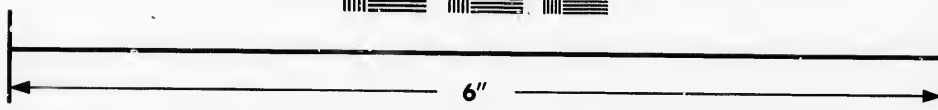
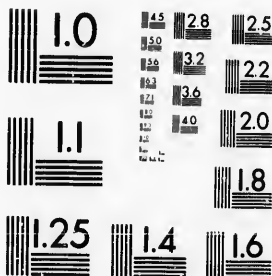


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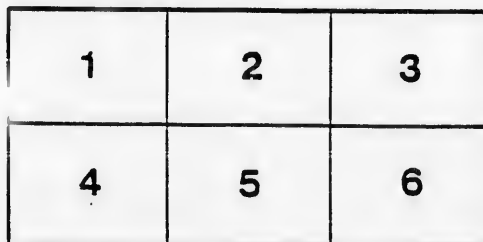
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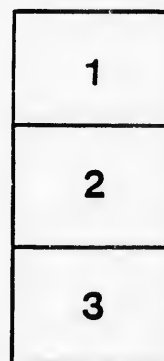
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A REVIEW

OF THE

SPECIAL REPORT

OF THE

MINISTER OF EDUCATION

ON THE

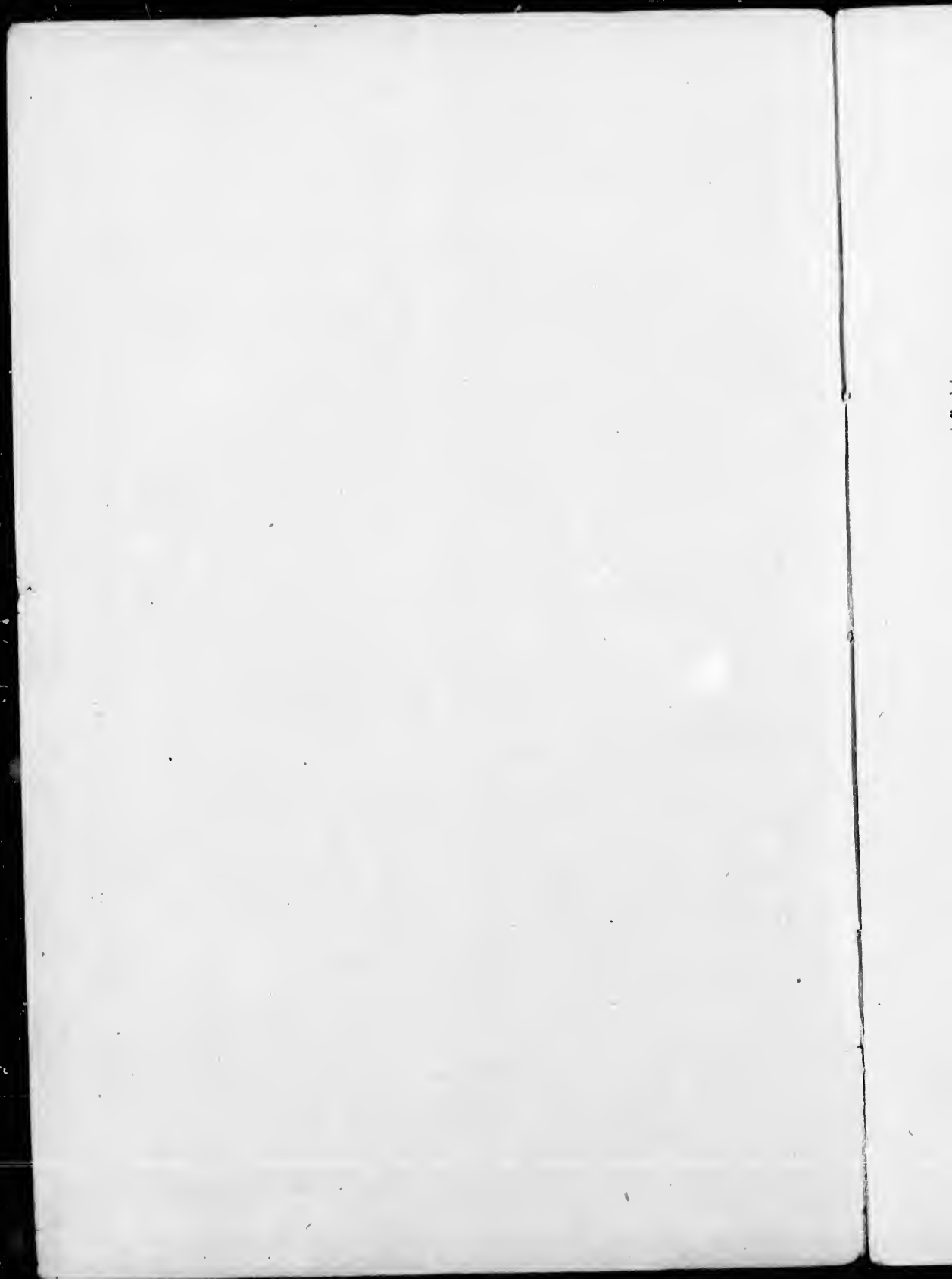
MECHANICS' INSTITUTES

ONTARIO.

BY OTTO KLOTZ.

PRESIDENT OF THE PRESTON MECHANICS' INSTITUTE, ONTARIO.

Toronto :
WILLING & WILLIAMSON.
1881.



MECHANICS' INSTITUTES.

In the Special Report of the Minister of Education on the Mechanics' Institutes of Ontario, the public receives a foreboding of the changes that are in contemplation in regard to those Institutes, and which will probably become law at an early date.

Prominent among these changes are : That as large an amount as possible of the Provincial Grant be made applicable for Evening Classes, and that the residue be applied for Library purposes ; that regulations be made by the Education Department, under which the Legislative Grant will more effectually aid in securing the objects intended, involving a satisfactory Reading Room, with supply of periodicals and Library of useful and selected books, and Evening Classes not only in the subjects of elementary instruction contemplated by the statute, but in technical instruction, and its encouragement by prizes and scholarships ; and that a general system be established for raising the necessary local or municipal contributions for effecting those improvements, without any further demands than the liberal grant which the Legislature has from time to time made for the purpose. These are the outlines of the contemplated changes to the Act relating to Mechanics' Institutes, and contained in the Address of the Minister of Education to the Lieutenant-Governor. In that Address the Minister of Education states that he had appointed S. P. May, M.D., Superintendent of the Educational Library and Museum, to inspect the various Mechanics' Institutes of Ontario, to examine into and investigate the condition of the same, to obtain full information, and to report to him. The Minister also admits that the language of the statute is ambiguous, not as to a Reading Room or a Library being required to be actually established and Evening Classes organized, but in leaving it in question whether payments for rent and other accommodations by the Institute can be considered and allowed for as part of the moiety to be locally raised for Reading Room or Library purposes, in order to satisfy to that extent the conditions imposed by the statute for obtaining aid from the Legislative Grant. This Report of Doctor May covers 208 pages of considerable information, and bears evidence that that gentleman has endeavored to inquire into the present standing, efficiency and defects of the Mechanics' Institutes in Ontario, and to suggest remedies and im-

provements where he considers such desirable, and has had the satisfaction that the Minister of Education has approved of the same, by his recommendation of the changes above mentioned.

The Report gives a number of proofs that the chief object for the establishment of Mechanics' Institutes in this Province, and of legislative aid to the same, has been to establish Evening Classes for adults, for working mechanics, in those subjects which have most important relations to their several industries, and to provide for the special and higher wants of all different classes of artizans; that class instruction specially adapted to the wants and circumstances of working men should occupy a prominent position among the objects sought to be promoted by Mechanics' Institutes; and that it is the characteristic work of Mechanics' Institutes to teach the application of knowledge required in ordinary schools to the practical purposes of life, including such technical subjects as relate to the everyday pursuits of the various classes of the working population. It is held that as our public system of education improves and ramifies throughout the country, the necessity for Evening Classes for teaching adults the rudimentary branches of learning will diminish. It is also held that competent instructors and lecturers for technical instructions are readily available in the staff of the High Schools in most of the localities in which there are Institutes; while it is also admitted 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.

It is proposed in that Report that only two hundred dollars be the maximum allowed for Library and Reading Room, and that the balance of the Legislative Grant be solely applied for practical instruction; that Evening Classes be assisted by the Government *pro rata*, according to the number of pupils in attendance. The mode for making such appropriation is also shown, and the various subjects for practical instruction and lectures are therein enumerated. It is also proposed in that Report that an annual sum, not exceeding \$50, be apportioned from the Legislative Grant for Museums, provided that an equal sum be expended from local sources; and further, that a series of public lectures on Science be given as a trial experiment at a few of the Institutes, and that the expense of the same be paid from the Mechanics' Institutes fund. The "*Binary system of delivery*," as introduced into England, is recommended for small towns and villages.

The present system of giving \$400 for every small Institute which agrees to raise \$200 from local subscription is declared a failure by that Report; the payment thereof improper and not business-like, and the system of distribution as not established on equitable principles; also that the majority of Institutes would be more successful if they received

a regular sum of \$100 per annum for the purchase of books than they are at present under the present erratic system ; and also that the majority of the so-called Mechanics' Institutes are only circulating libraries, and that too for the dissemination of light literature. The Report then recommends that the annual grant to Mechanics' Institutes be paid in proportion to the work done ; namely, that each Institute be paid from the Legislative Grant the sum of one dollar for every subscribing member, up to a maximum sum of \$200, for the purchase of books, newspapers and periodicals, provided that a sum equal to one-half of the grant be contributed by the municipality, and applied for the same purpose.

On light literature and fiction, the Report gives tables in the appendix, showing the large proportion of works of fiction in the libraries, and the still larger proportion of that class of literature taken out of the libraries for reading ; and it gives extracts from several other reports, wherein complaint is made of the strong tendency for novel-reading. Of ephemeral literature, it is said that it fosters discontent with the peaceful, homely duties which constitute a large portion of average men and women's lives ; and novel-reading is described as intellectual dram-drinking, affording a temporary exhilaration, but ultimately emasculating both mind and character ; and as the Turk eats opium, the Hindoo chews betel nut, and the civilized Christian reads, so opium, betel nut and novels all alike tend to produce that dizzy, dreamy, drowsy state of mind which unfits a man for all the active duties of life.

The Report strongly recommends the establishment of a good Reading Room for every Institute, containing newspapers and periodicals, particularly those relating to science ; and also recommends that such papers and periodicals be loaned to members if a Reading Room is not attached to the Library.

Upon the manner of the payment of the Legislative Grant it is recommended in that Report that a system similar to that which is in use in the Education Department for the payment of books purchased by school trustees from local booksellers be adopted, and that payments to booksellers and teachers be made direct from the Education Department. Among the other recommendations in that Report will be found : A proper system of classification of books in the libraries ; a regular set of books for cash, invoices, vouchers, and for books delivered and returned ; the appointment of women as librarians, because they can be employed at a far less cost and make excellent librarians ; the establishment of Industrial Exhibitions conducted under the management of Mechanics' Institutes ; the removal of the Reference Library from the department of the Commissioner of Agriculture, where that library has been since the abolition of the Board of Arts and Manufactures in 1868, to the department of Education ; a convention of the executive officers of Mechanics'

Institutes to meet annually for discussing, considering and recommending improvements; a privilege to visiting members, who shall enjoy the privilege of the Institute visited by them for thirty days free of charge; and that booksellers who supply books to Mechanics' Institutes shall not be elected as officers or directors to those Institutes.

The public is also informed by that Report that the directors of the several Institutes visited by Doctor May were unanimous in opinion that Evening Classes would be the safeguard of those Institutes in future; that the Mechanics' Institutes as a rule are under the management of gentlemen of influence and wealth, and possessing enterprise, education and intelligence; that wherever the affairs of an Institute have not been properly conducted it has arisen either from not understanding the conditions of the Act, or from following the course of their predecessors in office, and that the majority of the Institute officials were very decided in their opinion that the Mechanics' Institute Association of Ontario should be abolished.

In the Appendix to the Report will be found abstracts from the Annual Reports of Mechanics' Institutes, as required to be made by statute, and to these several abstracts Doctor May has added his remarks respecting such Institutes. In these remarks some interesting matters are revealed; existing defects as well as existing excellences are shown; the ambiguity of the language of the statute, referred to by the Minister of Education in his Address, is proved in numerous instances to demonstration, by showing the different interpretations of the same by officers of Institutes not only, but by the heads or officers in the Departments of Agriculture and of Education and the Association of Mechanics' Institutes. Thus, while numerous Institutes, with the approval of the Inspector, have charged a portion of the expenses for rent, fuel, light, and Librarian's salary, to Reading Room account, Doctor May has declared that practice illegal or inadmissible, and has been upheld therein by the Minister of Education. In some instances similar charges have been made to Library account and to Evening Classes account, and have been equally declared as inadmissible. Those charges thus declared inadmissible or illegal have, in some instances, been struck out altogether, while in other instances one-half or another portion thereof has been allowed, and the parties notified that in future no such charges must be made. Teaching music has been construed by some Institutes as coming under the head of "Evening Classes," and accordingly money has been allowed and charged for by these Institutes. One Institute has actually charged \$288 in Evening Classes account, which were paid for teaching pianoforte chiefly to the children of members. This sum the Minister of Education allowed, because the Directors of that Institute had been notified by Professor Buckland, the Secretary in the Office of the Commissioner of Agriculture,

and by Mr. Edwards, Secretary of the Mechanics' Institutes Association of Ontario, that instrumental music might be taught and charged the same as other subjects; but the Directors were notified that in future music will not be considered as one of the prescribed subjects for Evening Classes. In one or more instances it is shown in those "Remarks" that Inspectors grossly neglected their duties, and charged fees for inspecting where no Institute was in existence; and in several instances it is shown that either incorrect accounts or no accounts at all had been kept, while numerous other Institutes are highly praised for their efficient management, the excellent state of their libraries, their superior catalogues of books, the classification of the same, and the general proficiency of those Institutes.

Throughout the whole "Report" there is abundant, incontrovertible and plain evidence that from the origin of Mechanics' Institutes in this Province (1835) to the present time (1881), all attempts to make Evening Class instruction in Mechanics' Institutes if not universal at least general, have proved a failure, and a grand failure. Only a small number of the Institutes that have from time to time obtained Legislative Grants have established Evening Classes at all, and among this small number there has been an infinitesimally small portion which has had classes in technical subjects of advantage to the artizan, mechanic, and other industrial classes; all the rest of this small number have only had classes in the elementary branches.

The Board of Arts and Manufactures failed to create any general interest in the mind of the public for the establishment of Mechanics' Institutes and in their contemplated School of Design, and that Board was abolished in 1868; in its place the "Mechanics' Institutes Association of Ontario" was organized; that Association has devised various means to promote Evening Class instruction; and as will be seen from abstracts of their proceedings published in the "Report," their efforts have not been crowned with success. The Commissioner of Agriculture, in his reports to Parliament, of which abstracts are given in the "Report," also shows and expresses his regret that in so many Mechanics' Institutes class instruction in such subjects as are necessary to be understood by artizans of all classes has not as yet been introduced, and even where it has, the results in several instances have not been encouraging. And the tabulated statements prepared by Doctor May and given in the "Report," as also the Annual Reports issued by the Mechanics' Institutes Association, show, so to say, at one glance, that only a few Institutes have had Evening Classes established, and that all attempts heretofore made, all the devices and schemes concocted, all inducements offered by prizes or otherwise to induce the public in general to promote, and the artizans, mechanics and others to attend, Evening Class instruction, have utterly

failed ; but that only in a few isolated cases the contemplated technical instruction has been given, and in these cases only partially.

In the Report, Doctor May gives ample evidence that he has performed the duties imposed upon him by the Minister of Education with thoroughness and ability ; the published results of his personal visits to the Mechanics' Institutes in Ontario are of great interest and value to the public ; the Doctor, however, does not confine himself to merely giving specific information in regard to every Mechanics' Institute in this Province, by personally examining into and investigating the condition of each Mechanics' Institute, and obtaining full information, and reporting to the Minister of Education, as that gentleman defines the Doctor's functions in his Address. The Doctor has also undertaken to interpret the meaning of the statute ; he has declared that legislative aid to a Reading Room is not in any case to be expended for any part of the rent, fuel, light or salary of Librarian attending to such Reading Room, and in accordance with that interpretation, has disallowed such charges and declared them inadmissible, while probably the greater number of Mechanics' Institute officers and the Inspectors have held that at least a reasonable portion of such expenses are legitimate charges to Reading Room account, and that the language of the statute fully bears out this latter interpretation. The Minister of Education, as above shown, has subsequently confirmed Doctor May's disallowance of those charges ; yet it is somewhat singular that even subsequent to such positive interpretation and confirmation, the Minister of Education, in his Address, informs us that the language of the statute upon that subject is ambiguous.

The Minister of Education informs us in his Address that elementary instruction forms the subjects for Evening Classes contemplated by the statute, while Doctor May shows that the chief purposes for which Mechanics' Institutes were established was for imparting *technical education* to the working classes, to provide for the special and higher wants of all different classes of artisans.

Doctor May appears to feel very sanguine that Evening Class instruction, such as he holds is contemplated by the statute and the purpose for which Mechanics' Institutes were established, if established and conducted under regulations made by the Education Department, will be a success, and both the Doctor and the Minister of Education assert that competent instructors and lecturers on such subjects are readily available in the staff of the High Schools in most of the localities in which there are Institutes. But unfortunately here the Doctor fails in furnishing even the slightest particle of proof that his scheme will bear any practical result. Where, it may well be asked, has the mere issuing of regulations for schools ever induced any person to take lessons ; especially where the offer of free instruction, and a money prize for competency in addition

thereto, as have been offered heretofore for the same object, have utterly failed to procure pupils? Where, again, is the proof that such competent instructors and lecturers, as above referred to, are readily available, when it is a well known fact that only exceptionally teachers of schools can be procured or induced to give Evening Class instructions; that they either require their evenings for relaxation or for study, or for the performance of domestic duties, or for next day's preparations? Where is the evidence that by such a proposed set of regulations in any one Institute, except in a few cities, even the minimum number of pupils can be brought together for forming any one of the numerous classes of instruction laid down in the new programme? when it is a lamentable, yet a well known fact to all the many officers and other gentlemen in smaller towns and villages, that notwithstanding their constant exertion and endeavor to get together a sufficient number of young men to form a class, they have almost invariably found it impossible to do so, either from a total failure of getting together at least twelve who were willing to attend a class, or from a failure to get those twelve to all agree upon one and the same subject of instruction; and to attempt to form four, three, or ever two separate classes, is almost out of the question.

The Doctor gives the practice which obtains in England and in Scotland regarding Evening Classes, and thinks that because in those countries Evening Classes have been successful in instructing artisans, mechanics and others, the same can be done in Ontario; yet experience has heretofore shown that Evening Classes have as a rule proved a failure in Ontario, and have only been kept up in isolated cases. To give the plan and results of Evening Classes in large cities like Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester, and others, and to infer from these that the same or anything like success can be accomplished in our small towns and villages, where by far the larger number of Institutes are established, is an inference which is not supported by circumstances. The fact is that the population is too small in our small towns and villages, that it is too heterogeneous and of too roving or moving a nature. Experience has amply demonstrated that the almost constant moving from one place to another of men employed in factories or other places, the artisans, mechanics, and other factory hands, is one of the chief causes why those very men for whom the Evening Classes are intended do not as a rule become members of Mechanics' Institutes.

To maintain that that which several hundred of gentlemen of influence and wealth, and possessing enterprise, education and intelligence, as the Doctor himself described the managers of Mechanics' Institutes, as a rule have failed to accomplish, with all their practical experience, local knowledge, energy and earnest will, can and will be accomplished by a set of regulations emanating from the Education Department, is somewhat incredulous.

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.

Doctor May declares the present system of giving \$400 for every small Institute which agrees to raise \$200 from local subscription a failure, the payment thereof not business-like, and the system of distribution as not established on equitable principles; and therefore recommends that the annual grant to Mechanics' Institutes be paid in proportion to the work done in Evening Class instruction, that the maximum allowed for Library and Reading Room be two hundred dollars, and holds that the majority of Institutes would be more successful if they received a regular sum of \$100 per annum for the purchase of books than they are at present under the present erratic system.

It has, however, been held that the Legislature in their wisdom, and after much experience in the matter, established the principle upon which the present law is founded. It has been proved beyond question that Institutes in small towns and villages absolutely require annually a large amount of money aid besides the funds raised by members' fees, not only to call such Institutes into existence, but to keep them in existence, and to render them useful to the people of that locality; while to Institutes in large towns and in cities, with about a thousand members and numerous other sources of revenue, the Legislative Grant constitutes an item of secondary importance; and it is for this reason, for the purpose of helping those most that are most in need of help, and who without a liberal help would starve, that the Legislature in their wisdom established the present mode of distribution as under existing circumstances the most equitable, and did not deem it wise to pay aid to Evening Class instruction according to the number of pupils attending, and considering that *as the work done*; no doubt well knowing that in a sparsely settled section of the country, in small towns and villages the work of inducing and gathering a small number of persons to attend Evening Class instruction, to keep up the same and make it successful, is far greater than in a large city where those desiring such instruction come to a certain office and have their names enrolled; and also that the *work done* by a teacher who instructs only twelve pupils must be done as thoroughly as by the one having a class of forty. It would be very questionable equity to give to a city Institute which has 500 pupils in its Evening Classes out of 50,000 inhabitants twenty times as much legislative aid as to a small Institute having 25 pupils out of 1500 inhabitants; the iniquity of such a system will even become more apparent when it is taken into consideration that the salary paid to a teacher instructing a class of twelve pupils is not much if any less than that of one having forty pupils, and that those small classes are generally found in small places where the majority of Institutes are situate. Nevertheless, as experience has proved in many instances that the nicest and finest theories have proved abortive in practice, so it has often been found that the machinery employed and the rules adopted in carrying out a plan

founded upon the noblest of principles have either utterly or at least partially failed to accomplish the object desired ; and this latter case may with truth be applied to Mechanics' Institutes, for no one pretends that they have collectively accomplished that for which they chiefly received legislative aid, and that even half as many Institutes have ever been established as there should have been, in view of the liberal aid offered by the Legislature. Under these circumstances no one disputes that there is abundant chance for improvement. The Doctor styles the payment of the Legislative Grant unbusiness-like, and says that an Institute may draw \$400 by merely agreeing to raise \$200. This in substance is quite correct ; and while that rule has been very convenient to some Institutes, being thereby enabled to first draw and expend the \$400, and then in the course of the fiscal year raise the \$200 and expend it afterwards but before the close of that year, other Institutes have failed to raise the \$200, and having already expended the \$400 grant, have become involved in difficulties ; to reverse this rule—to require said \$200 first to be raised and expended and then pay the Legislative Grant—might prove to be a remedy that is worse than the disease. The disease, if such it can be named, is at all events only found in a few Institutes which did over-estimate the amount of their revenue for the then current year, the reoccurrence of which may be easily guarded against without reversing the present rule, and thereby causing inconvenience and actual loss to that large number of Institutes that did fulfil what they undertook to fulfil.

The Legislature by this rule show their liberality towards the Institutes, and their confidence in the officers of the same. Experience has shown that in all cases that liberality has been appreciated, and that only in a very few instances that confidence is proved to have been misplaced ; and in order to punish those parties for such breach of confidence, it would be the very opposite of justice and of equity to establish a rule which would hurt all alike, the guilty with the innocent.

The present mode of payment may, if considered in a strictly commercial sense, be *not business-like* ; but since the Legislative Grant is far more of a philanthropic than a commercial nature, strict rules of business ought not to be applied. All the Act requires is that the grant be properly applied. To ascertain this, a system of inspection by highly educated and responsible men exists ; and if these are found derelict in their duties, it is the province of the Department to call them to account. But when that inspection has been properly performed, the Government is placed in possession of the facts, and knows whether or not the grant has been properly applied. The paying out of the grant some months sooner or later does not materially affect the public treasury, while either is of vital importance to the Institutes.

It may be that some Institutes would be more successful if they

received a regular sum of \$100 per annum for the purchase of books ; but the difficulty will be to decide which Institute belongs to that class. And whatever mode may be adopted, and whoever may be entrusted with the judgment upon that subject, the probability is that such decision will create dissatisfaction, and be of injury instead of good to the public.

The recommendation of Doctor May, that a good Reading Room be established for every Institute, deserves encouragement, especially since (as the Doctor remarks) it supplies, by its scientific periodicals, the latest improvements and discoveries long before they are obtainable in a book form. Permitting members to take home periodicals the same as books is a rule introduced with good effects in several Institutes; and the establishment of a Museum in connection with Mechanics' Institutes will no doubt prove a great attraction, and if mechanical, philosophical and kindred apparatus were allowed to be purchased out of the Legislative Grant (which at present is not specially permitted), Institutes would thereby be made still more attractive, and in consequence thereof, more useful; moreover, by such permission, Institutes that already have a fair sized library might more judiciously expend the money than by constantly adding books to the shelves. A regular and well devised system of classification of books, and numbering thereof, is not only very desirable, but, for a proper management of a library, is indispensable; and that proper books of account should be kept is self-evident, since without them no account can be rendered. The appointment of women as librarians may be thought advisable, because they can be employed at a far less cost than men, and make excellent librarians. This no doubt is correct, if women could only be got to perform those duties, and could be relied upon to remain in office for any reasonable time; but the experience which some Institutes have made has compelled them to abandon that plan and again engage men who will stay, and will not easily resign. The country is already so overcrowded with exhibitions of various kinds that strong efforts are being made to reduce that number; therefore, however praiseworthy in theory it may be to have Industrial Exhibitions conducted under the management of Mechanics' Institutes, for Ontario at least such establishments appear to be uncalled for. From Doctor May's statement the public is informed that the majority of the Institute officials were very decided in their opinion that the Mechanics' Institute Association of Ontario should be abolished. This is only a confirmation of the views frequently expressed and even published by such officers, and it may therefore be taken for granted that that Association will soon share the fate of its predecessor, the Board of Arts and Manufactures, and be numbered among the things that once were but are now no more. Peace be to its ashes.

Instead of this Association the Doctor proposes a Convention of the Executive Officers of Mechanics' Institutes to meet annually for discussing, considering and recommending improvements.

Now, this is almost precisely the system that obtains at present under the statute; with this difference, that the annual meeting of the officers of Mechanics' Institutes is presided over by the President of the Association. Such a convention would necessarily have to elect a presiding officer and a secretary, probably also a treasurer, since a society without funds is ever a helpless, powerless, inchoate body; a properly organized body would require of necessity an executive head or committee, and by establishing the same we would again have a body very similar to the Executive Committee of the Association.

That booksellers who supply Institutes with books should not be directors of the same, is according to a sound principle in law, that no person can purchase from himself, that prohibition is in the municipal law in regard to councillors, in the School Act respecting trustees, and is generally acted upon by the Court in all similar cases. Giving members of Mechanics' Institutes, when visiting other Mechanics' Institutes, the privilege free of charge for a certain limited period, is similar to a system which obtains among many other societies, and is commendable. The recommendation that for the payment of the Legislative Grant a system similar to that which is in use in the Education Department for the payments of books purchased by school trustees from local booksellers be adopted, and that payment to booksellers and teachers be made direct from the Education Department, is probably the most objectionable, impracticable and unpalatable of all Doctor May's numerous recommendations; and if it is desired to make the gentlemen who manage the affairs of the Institutes at present feel perfectly disgusted with such red-tapism, such cumbersome machinery, such guardian-like system, a sure way to do so will be to inaugurate that system proposed by Doctor May. It may be that some of the same gentlemen who are Trustees of Schools are also Directors of Mechanics' Institutes, and that they in their capacity as trustees do submit to the present rule of signing certificates, attaching the school corporation seal, and making a declaration to a simple account for prize books or for school library books, but certainly they do so unwillingly. However, as many school boards or school sections do not keep a school library, or do not annually purchase library books or prize books, and those who do seldom oftener than once a year, school trustees are seldom required to comply with those rules, while with Mechanics' Institutes the matter stands quite differently. They have annually several accounts to pay for books, periodicals and teachers—some Institutes probably more than fifty or sixty such different accounts. To require, as the Doctor proposes, that booksellers fill in their accounts in printed forms supplied by the Education Department, showing the classification of books, prices, etc., to require these accounts to be signed by the officers—which means in some cases nine Directors, a President, Vice-President, a Secretary and Treasurer—and

have the corporate seal of the Institute, is almost an impossibility, and such an unnecessary and most irksome and unpleasant duty, that it cannot be surprising that men of independent minds, yet willing to aid with all their energy, ability and knowledge in the promotion of the objects for which such Institutes are established, will resign their office in perfect disgust.

Again, the Doctor speaks of local booksellers. If this means such as keep their store in the locality where the Institute is established, then it may happen that only a small number of the accounts will need to be sent to the Department under those rules, and in that event the intended scrutiny of the Institutes' accounts will be only very partial; but if even all accounts for books bought from Toronto or other booksellers in Ontario are to be subject to those rules, there still are a number of accounts, legitimately chargeable to Legislative Grant account, that cannot be furnished in that prescribed manner; among these are numerous receipts for newspapers and periodicals, and also accounts for books bought outside of Ontario, either from publishers in the United States or imported from Europe.

Again, the Doctor says that that plan of printed forms would be advantageous in showing the number of volumes on different subjects purchased by each Institute; while it is an established fact by the best librarians in Britain, France, Germany, Italy and the United States, that a proper classification of books is a most difficult work; that the title of a book is often misleading, or has no reference at all to the subject upon which the book treats; and that it often requires considerably more than a mere glance at a book to determine the class in which it should be placed; and with such facts before us, to expect that in a bookseller's store, where the books are not examined, they will be so classified as to be reliable for the Department of Education to ascertain the number of volumes on different subjects purchased, is an erroneous supposition.

Again, the purchasing of books and the paying for the same is a purely commercial transaction, and therefore should be conducted upon commercial principles and in a business-like manner. One of these essential principles is prompt payment at maturity. How can this be effected if the accounts have all first to be signed, sealed, sent to the Department, examined there, and returned, which requires weeks, if not months, to have all this performed, and that in consequence thereof the bookseller or other creditor is unnecessarily kept out of his money? The present system of purchasing and paying for books, periodicals, teachers, etc., has at least that in its favor, that it can be and generally is done in a business-like manner; by the proposed plan it never will be done in a business-like manner. If Institutes obtain the Legislative Grant they need not buy on credit, but can and often do pay cash for their purchases, and often do

so with advantage ; if, on the other hand, they purchase on time, it is usual to send the account at maturity for payment ; here again, as in numerous other cases already shown, the impracticability of that new plan or system is fully demonstrated.

The Public School Inspectors are at present entrusted with far higher and important duties relating to schools than those of their duties which relate to Mechanics' Institutes ; they, as a rule, perform their duties relating to schools in an admirable manner ; they report thereon to the Minister of Education, and these reports form the chief source of his information respecting Public Schools, and that high officer must necessarily be guided thereby to a considerable extent in his official acts. The Public School Inspectors, as the Inspectors of Mechanics' Institutes, stand under the charge or are accountable and have to report to that same Minister of Education ; and it would be most remarkable if that gentleman could not make those Inspectors perform their less important, less intricate and less laborious duties equally as well as their higher ones ; and that being accomplished, there is no need for any change in the inspection of books of accounts, and of all other matters devolving now upon Inspectors of Public Schools.

The recommendation, however, that a general system be established whereby the municipality where a Mechanic's Institute is established will be required to pay or contribute a certain amount for the Library, Reading Room, Museum, Evening Classes, and working expenses, is one which no doubt meets with general approval by all parties who are interested in the establishment and maintenance of Mechanics' Institutes, and many a struggling Institute will hail with delight the happy advent when such a system is declared the law of the land. It is true that some Municipal Councils have already nobly come forward by exercising the power given to them by the Municipal Act, and have liberally voted a handsome sum in aid of the Mechanics' Institute established within their municipality ; but unfortunately that number of Councils is very small ; as a rule, it has been found that the Councils are not willing to do much if anything in granting such aid ; and as they are now required by law to raise sufficient funds for Public School purposes for the education of the young generation, it would be only fair to require those bodies to provide similar aid to Mechanics' Institutes, and thereby on the one hand further to aid in the diffusion of useful knowledge within their municipality, and on the other hand to lessen evil habits which obtain among young men and young women.

By a careful perusal of that "Special Report," it becomes evident that there exists a strong desire to centralize the whole management and the whole supervision of the various and numerous Mechanics' Institutes in Ontario into one Department, from which all supervision directly issues,

all rules for the guidance of officers in every particular emanates ; without whose consent, approbation and sanction, not even a newspaper or a book can be bought and paid for out of the Legislative Grant ; which will assume all judgment in the selection of reading matter, apparatus, Museums, and various other things, and the prices to be paid therefor, and the management of Evening Classes, appointment of teachers, and salaries payable to them—a Central Department which regularly issues its mandates, orders, rules and regulations, list of penalties in store for those who refuse to obey, and its decisions or judgments, against which there is no appeal ; thereby degrading the office of a Director of a Mechanics' Institute to a mere machine or menial servant, considered only fit to do mere drudgery work and to carry out the behests of that Department, but treated as being totally incapable of judging as to what is best and most suitable for the promotion of the objects for which Mechanics' Institutes were established.

While at the present time the office of Director of a Mechanics' Institute is a highly honorable one, requiring energy, talent, judgment, education, tact, and ability of considerable magnitude in order to qualify him fully for the various duties connected with that office, it may be added that the office requires leisure time for the performance of its duties.

And since that "Report" states that the officers of Mechanics' Institutes are usually selected from the most respectable and influential representatives of our people, and that the Mechanics' Institutes, as a rule, are under the management of gentlemen of influence and wealth, and possessing enterprise, education and intelligence, the question may well be asked : Why degrade a large number of men holding a highly honorable position in society, and ably filling the same, to that of a mere machine or a menial servant, because there are a few men to whom the same office has been entrusted and who are found wanting ? Is not this rather a retrograde step instead of progress ? To establish such a law would in principle be precisely the same as if Great Britain, having first given one of her colonies a representative government and released the same from the position of a Crown Colony, would, because some of the inhabitants thereof had proven themselves to be yet unfit for self-government, deprive that colony of the boon presented to her and again declare her a Crown Colony. Great Britain has again recently declared that she never will do such an act, and that wherever a colony which once has obtained self-government finds in its midst such an ungovernable element, other means than that retrograde step must be devised to conquer that element.

At the present time, under the present law, the principle of self-government in the management of Mechanics' Institutes is clearly manifested ; and as already pointed out, there is ample machinery provided by the statute for due supervision if that machinery is only properly set in motion by the Department upon which that duty devolves.

Where, we may ask, would be the consistency if, on the one hand, public institutions in England and in Scotland are held out as examples desirable to copy from, and British institutions, British rules, British principles and British laws are almost constantly quoted in support of proposed laws and actions in this country; and if, on the other hand, the same parties quoting the former would propose a new law or rule which is diametrically in opposition to an established British principle? Yet this is precisely what is contemplated by the proposed change in the management of Mechanics' Institutes.

As it may be argued that, since Public Schools and School Trustees stand under the same or very similar rules as those proposed for Mechanics' Institutes and Directors thereof, no objection should be raised against that new scheme, it may be well to inquire whether that argument is admissible.

Public Schools are and must, according to law, be established all over the country; Mechanics' Institutes are not, and the law does not require that they must, but only permits their establishment. The establishment of every Mechanics' Institute is voluntary. Several Public Schools are established in one and the same municipality, and all draw money from the Legislative Grant, while only one Mechanics' Institute in a municipality can draw such money. For the maintenance of Public Schools, including the teachers, municipalities must provide all the means; for the maintenance of Mechanics' Institutes the money is only collected by voluntary subscription, except the share of the Legislative Grant.

For the due attendance of pupils at the Public Schools the law provides compulsory measures, and pupils are taught free of charge; while in order to obtain pupils to attend Evening Class instruction of Mechanics' Institutes, they must often be urgently solicited to do so. They are, besides that, required to pay fees for tuition, and the law has not and cannot make provision for a compulsory attendance at such instruction.

Public School Trustees are provided with laws to carry out the objects of Public Schools; Directors of Mechanics' Institutes must beg of the public to assist them in carrying out the object of Mechanics' Institutes. Public School Trustees are generally men who have themselves children at school, and as such have a direct and personal interest in the school; while Directors of Mechanics' Institutes are frequently men who are not, or at least not to such an extent, directly and personally interested in Evening Class instruction of a Mechanics' Institute, or in the greater number of books in its library.

Public Schools are and have been for generations popular institutions, known and admitted to be indispensable; without them the public would never submit to be. Mechanics' Institutes, however, are not yet really popular—not yet admitted as being indispensable; looked upon with the

greatest indifference by the great bulk of the people, including men of the highest standing in society, and of superior intellect, have never yet been seen by thousands of men and women of intellect and culture. The very name appears to be sufficient to cause the aristocracy (?) to look down upon them with contempt.

For the office of School Trustees there are usually candidates offered; to procure working Directors for Mechanics' Institutes, men have often to be sought and solicited. It appears that about every office to which the law attaches some authority, as to that of Trustees, there is a certain charm; while that of a Director, having no such law support, is less attractive. The school laws, the rules and regulations from the Department, are now so extremely restrictive regarding the selection of teachers, the programme of studies, and various other matters, that the office of a Trustee is almost reduced to a mere machine or figure-head, who has no opportunity of developing individuality, or applying superior education, energy, talent or thought. On the other hand, a Director of a Mechanics' Institute—fortunately not yet restricted by law and departmental rules and regulations—has ample scope in the discharge of his various important duties to develop individuality, and to apply fully all his tact, knowledge, superior education, energy, skill and ability. Where, it may therefore be asked, is the analogy between Public Schools and Public School Trustees on the one hand, and Mechanics' Institutes and Directors thereof on the other, that would warrant the application of the same departmental rules and regulations to the latter as to the former?

Can it be reasonably expected that an Institute founded upon a voluntary system, depending for its maintenance and usefulness, for the promotion of its chief object, upon the energy, skill, ability, tact and intellect of its Directors chosen from and among its own members—will continue to secure in its service a class of energetic, talented, skilful, able and intelligent local managers; will prosper better; will with greater certainty attain its chief object—when a single central power in the Province monopolizes all the intellectual work, that very work which gives real stimulus to local managers, and without which many influential, intelligent, wealthy and independent men could not be induced to take the office of Director of a Mechanics' Institute; and when, in order to make the degradation more keenly felt and seen, that deprivation of intellectual work is substituted by a code of rules and regulations which are impracticable in the extreme, and which on the face thereof bear evidence that those same men whom the Report admits to have been chosen from the most respectable and influential representatives of our people, and who are gentlemen of influence and wealth, possessing enterprise, education and intelligence, are nevertheless not to be entrusted with the management of their own joint local affairs, in which the Government of the

Province is at the utmost only interested in the small sum of four hundred dollars annually.

Will the public be served better by theorists than by practical men? Are we to have autocracy or oligarchy introduced into our system; or will we in future be allowed to enjoy, as at present, the privileges of self-government.

May every Director and other officer of a Mechanics' Institute use his best endeavors, and continue to show during his term of office that the trust reposed in him has not been misplaced in forwarding a good and a noble cause; and any and every attempt at a degradation must fail, as it ought to fail!

OTTO KLOTZ.

PRESTON, March, 1881.

