

TORONTO FREE LIBRARY.

AN ADDRESS

TO THE

Board of Management

OF THE

TORONTO FREE LIBRARY.

BY

JOHN HALLAM,

Chairman.

TORONTO FREE LIBRARY.

Gentlemen of the Board of Management:

In accordance with your wishes, I now submit the following scheme for your careful consideration, for the establishment of a free public library on the non-supported principle, and make such hints and suggestions as will be of some practical value in determining what should be done to carry out the project to a speedy success.

Under this scheme, by your assent and aid, a comprehensive, permanent foundation for the encouragement of learning and the free diffusion of knowledge by reading may be established for the real advancement of all classes in the community. Toronto is pre-eminently a city of educational institutions. We all feel a pride in her progress, and feel more and more that it is possible to add a free public library to her many noble and useful institutions. I feel sure that the benefit to the people of a reference and lending library of carefully selected books is undisputed by all who are interested in the mental, moral, and social advancement of our city. The books in such a library should be as general and as fascinating as possible. I would have this library a representative one, with a grand foundation of solid, sound and fact literature, with a choice, clear-minded, finely-imaginative superstructure of light reading, and avoid the vulgar, the seriously sensational, the garbings of the modern press. A non-supported library should be prioritized in its aims, and not a mere curiosity shop for a collection of curious and rare books—their only merit being their rarity, their peculiar binding, singular type, or quaint illustrations. It is very wise to have these literary rarities; but the taxes of the people should not be spent in buying them. A library of this kind, to be valuable as far as our own country is concerned, should contain a full collection of—

1. Manuscript statements and narratives of pioneer settlers; old letters and journals relative to the early history and settlement of Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, and Prince Edward Island, and the years of 1770 and 1812; biographical notes of our pioneers and of original officers deceased, and facts illustrative of our Indian tribes, their history, characteristics, stories of their prominent chiefs, warriors, and warriors.

2. Diaries, narratives, and documents relative to the U. E. Loyalists, their expedition from the old colonies, and their settlement in the Maritime Provinces.

3. Files of newspapers, books, pamphlets, college catalogues, minutes of agricultural conventions, associations, conferences, and synods, and all other publications relating to this and other Provinces.

4. Indian geographical names of streams and localities, with their significance, and all information generally respecting the condition, language, and history of different tribes of the Indians.

5. Books of all kinds, especially such as relate to Canadian history, travels, and biography in general, and Lower Canadian history in particular, family genealogies, old magazines, pamphlets, files of newspapers, maps, historical manuscripts, and autographs of distinguished persons.

I feel sure such a library will rank and demand recognition among the permanent institutions in this city for sustaining, encouraging, and stimulating everything that is great and good.

Free libraries have a special claim on every taxpayer who desires to see our country advance to the front, and keep pace with the world in art, science, and commerce, and augment the sum of human happiness. This far-reaching movement is likely to extend to every city and considerable town in this Province. The advantages are many. They help on the cause of education. They tend to promote public virtue. Their influence is on the side of order, self-respect, and general enlightenment. There are few associations so pleasant as those excited by them. They are a literary park where all may enjoy themselves during their leisure hours. To all lovers of books and students, to the rich and poor alike, the doors of these institutions are open without money and without price.

As supplements to ordinary education, as means for supplying to the masses what defective training or limited resources of money may have deprived them of, and as constant attractions to the many enervating pleasures which have crept into modern life, I look upon them as the best possible agencies and material aids which can be derived.

Looked at from the commonest standpoint—viewed in the dollars and cents light—I maintain that free libraries are profitable investments for increasing bodies. They develop a taste for reading; they keep people out of bad company; they direct the young generation into paths of study; they divert workmen from the street

corner and the low, corrupting dram-shop; and by developing those virtues amongst the multitude, they must necessarily diminish the ranks of those two great armies which are constantly marching to gaols and penitentiaries, and in the same ratio they must decrease the sums of money which municipalities have to provide for the maintenance of those places. And even if these libraries effected no saving of money, nay, even involved an ultimate increase in public expenditure (which they will not), then, I say, it would be still wise to have them; for I contend that it is infinitely preferable to pay for intelligence than to tolerate ignorance.

Toronto on New Year's Day took a step upward on the ladder of progress by recognizing knowledge as the very essence and spirit of power, when they decided to have an officer to represent intellect, and to pay for popular education in a free library sense. By doing so fully and freely, she will stand higher and higher in the scale of cities, not only as the Queen City of the West in commerce, but the attraction and centre of intellectual activity.

I know of nothing more useful, nothing more genuinely ornamental or creditable to a community, than the possession of a good free library, by means of which may be enjoyed the productions of the finest minds—

"Bealms wit and musing mopes.

Lighte who beamed through many ages.

Then let this city of ours be rich in this enduring and splendid possession.

BUILDING AND SITE.

The requirements of a building to be used as a large library suitable for our wants are numerous, and of such a character that no structure can be expected to embody them all unless it has been specially erected for the purpose. Certainly no building now existing in Toronto meets these requirements, or even approximates them. A new building then must be regarded as a necessity. The forethought and anxiety which usually precede the establishment of a new hotel or other business enterprise should here be exercised with at least equal care. The site should be on a populous thoroughfare in or near the centre of commercial activity. The structure itself should be, as nearly as possible, isolated, as to protect its frequenters from the noise and bustle inseparable from its neighborhood. It should be spacious, neat, and comprehensive in design, every detail being actuated with a view to practical utility rather than to artistic effect; neoclassical and ornamentalism should be studiously avoided, as entailing great expense, and as being altogether unnecessary to the successful carrying on of the work of the institution. The building should be fireproof, and have a shelving capacity of not less than 500,000 volumes, in addition to reading-room, offices, and other necessary apartments. I cannot too strongly urge my opinion that every minute detail should be planned with a special eye to some useful end. The ceilings should be plain and not over fifteen feet high, the floors of

tasselled tiles, and the shelving of hardwood, and not to exceed seven feet in height, so that the books may readily be accessible without the aid of steps. Amongst other most important considerations are light, lighting, ventilation, and heating. The arrangements of the windows, more especially those of the reading-room, if not lit from the roof, should be such as to afford the maximum of light, with inside steel shutters, and revolving fans; and other modern appliances for securing perfect ventilation should be employed. The reading room and offices should be lighted with the electric light. This light, with all the modern improvements, is beautifully diffusing, and is very soft and agreeable. The building should be heated with hot water.

The cost of such a building would of course largely depend upon its site and upon the style of its architecture, but we are not entirely without data for forming some idea of an estimate. The Boston Public Library has capacity for accommodating about 225,000 volumes. Its cost was \$225,000, or \$1.20 per volume. The Public Library of Cincinnati has a capacity of 250,000 volumes, and cost \$225,000, being an average of \$1.40 per volume. Both these buildings, no doubt, are admirably suited to the purpose for which they were designed, but in both cases there has been much unnecessary expenditure of money in various ways, more especially in the matter of costly decoration and useless architectural effect, "lavishing upon the coldest what ought to be spent on the people."

The conventional library building in the United States, indeed, is largely ornamental, and, as already estimated, the expense thereby involved should be carefully avoided by us in Toronto. In my opinion a suitable structure, with capacity of 500,000 volumes, may be erected for about \$750,000, not including the site, or an average of 75 cents per volume. The cost of a site very much depends upon location, and would probably be \$40,000. These estimates are, of course, merely conjectural.

LIBRARIAN.

The appointment of a librarian is perhaps the most important of all the questions devolving upon the Board for settlement, for on him more than upon any other factor whatever must the success of the library depend, and it is absolutely necessary that his appointment should be independent of any political or sectarian influences. Men are often pushed into such positions who have no special aptitude by nature or experience, through these influences and the mistaken zeal of their friends, who, if they had the remotest idea of the special abilities needed for a successful librarian, would not embarrass the Board by their importunities. When such is the case the institution loses much of the usefulness, and drags out a miserable existence.

The requirements of a thoroughly efficient librarian, such as we should have in Toronto, are almost insuperable, and are such as are seldom to be met with in a country where bibliography is

yet in its infancy. He must, first of all, be a man of education, with a competent knowledge of English philology. His knowledge of books, more especially of those written in the English language, should be vast and comprehensive. He ought to be at least to some extent familiar with every important work in English literature, and with the chief landmarks in the literary history of Continental Europe. It is, of course, absolutely essential that he should be minutely familiar with the history and literature of our own country. He must be thoroughly acquainted with every book and important pamphlet bearing upon our history, polity, and institutions, and must be able to direct the resources of educated and intelligent persons who frequent the library for purposes of reference. He must be well acquainted with the literature of *Lower Canada*, which implies that he must be able to read it in the original French. He must be a scholar in whose learning and intelligence the public can repose confidence, and who may be implicitly trusted to keep himself abreast of the literary activity of the times. He should be capable of editing and annotating such MSS. as may from time to time be consigned to the library archives, and which may be thought suitable for publication. Then he should be a capable man of business, and familiar with the chief book markets of the world, and with the system of classifying and cataloguing in regard among skilled bibliographers. He must be courteous in his bearing and demeanour, yet of sufficient firmness and strength of character to enforce the rules of the establishment against rich and poor alike.

BOOKS.

Books for college and public libraries should be imported duty free. I particularly wish to impress upon the Board the importance of manoeuvring the Dominion Government upon the subject of admitting free of duty all books purchased in foreign markets and brought into this country for college and public library purposes, the exception to cover two copies of each work so purchased. A similar exemption was long since conceded by the Government of the United States, and is also in force in Victoria, Belgium, France and Germany, and would, I have no doubt, be granted by our own Government upon the matter being properly represented to them. Such a concession would in no way interfere with any existing Canadian industry, as these books are not manufactured here, and their importation can have no effect upon the local book trade beyond stimulating a desire for knowledge and a general taste for reading, and multiply their customers.

WAYS AND MEANS.

The Library Act gives power to the Board of Management to make estimates and serve a requisition for money needed to pay for managing and maintaining the library during

the year. It also gives power to the Council, on requisition of the Board of Management, to raise by a special issue of debentures means for purchasing and erecting the necessary buildings, and in the first instance for obtaining books and other things required to start the institution. The assessment of the city for the present year is \$51,843,581. Over half, and on the dollar, which the law allows, would produce yearly \$26,921,790. As we have neither books nor suitable buildings, it follows as a matter of business that the Board of Management should avail themselves of the full powers of this Act to get the money necessary for carrying out the project and supplying the wants of the citizens in this direction at once. This would give ground and immediate results, and would not cost the ratepayers any more. The Board could then go energetically to work, and have the library ready for opening at the *Spring Centennial*, and it would be one of the grandest features in that celebration. The Board could raise in this way say \$225,000 at 4½ per cent., with ½ of one per cent. for sinking fund to pay off the Free Library debentures in forty years. We could spend for a central site and a good handsome building with reading and lecture rooms, with storage capacity of not less than 100,000 volumes, say \$120,000, and with the remaining \$105,000 buy the books. The annual charge on the library rate would be \$11,250, leaving a balance of \$113,751.25 for the purchase of books, reviews, magazines, and paying salaries, lighting, heating, and otherwise maintaining the library. This sum is about equal to what is annually spent on the *Cleveland Public Library*. This scheme may seem too comprehensive and costly at first sight, but to carry out the project in a manner worthy of our city, and to a successful issue, such will be found necessary.

MECHANICS' INSTITUTE.

These institutions have done good service in their day, but are now being superseded by Free Libraries and Technical Schools. The question of taking over the property of the *Toronto Mechanics' Institute* will come before you at an early day for your consideration. The amendments to the Library Act contemplated this by providing that any *Mechanics' Institute* transferring their property to any Free Library Board, the Board taking such property by the consent of the Municipal Council, will be entitled to the same grant of money from the Provincial Treasurer as the *Mechanics' Institute* would have received. This sum is a yearly grant of \$400, and represents a capital of \$8,000 at 5 per cent. The Library Board will be asked to appoint a sub-committee to confer with the Board of Directors of the *Mechanics' Institute*, to discuss the terms of agreement for acquiring this property for the temporary use of the Library Board until the new buildings are ready, and for winding up the business affairs of that institution.