

### PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN CANADA.

Although in the early history of this country there are records of several libraries of varying types, it was not until the year 1800 that the first public library in Canada was founded at Niagara. During the first quarter of the 19th century libraries had their beginning in Quebec and Montreal and in Halifax and Yarmouth in Nova Scotia, while there is a record of a circulating library in Western Canada as early as 1824. Nearly all of these libraries have continued to exist in some form—either separately or in amalgamation—until the present time.

Ontario was the first province to make legislation for the benefit of libraries. In 1835 the Government of Upper Canada made grants to Mechanics' Institutes, which were really library associations. These grants were continued until 1857, then withdrawn until they were restored by the Ontario Government in 1868, in which year an Association of Mechanics' Institutes of Ontario was organized, continuing until 1886. During these years several acts were passed concerning these institutes, but the most important legislation was the Ontario Public Libraries Act of 1895, which changed the name of "Mechanics' Institute" to "Public Library." The revised Ontario Public Libraries Act of 1920 is chiefly important for the change made in grants and rate of taxation to be levied for library purposes. Both Saskatchewan and Alberta have Public Libraries Acts (passed respectively in 1906 and 1907) based, as is also the Free Libraries Act of Manitoba (passed in 1899), on the Ontario Act. The Free Libraries Act of British Columbia was passed in 1891. Quebec, in 1890 (2c.34) passed an Act to authorize city, town and village corporations to aid in the support of libraries. The Yukon Ordinance No. 20, 1903, provides for the management of free public libraries in Dawson City. There is no public library legislation in the Maritime provinces.

The Mechanics' Institutes of Upper and Lower Canada were modelled after that founded in England by Dr. Birkbeck. Their purpose was to provide lectures and study classes and a suitable reference library for labouring men and women. The early history of these institutes in Ontario shows that the use made of the libraries was small; but the provision in 1872 for inspection of these institutes, followed shortly afterwards by permission to include a larger range of literature in their libraries, helped materially in increasing the use made of the latter. The result of the Act of 1895 may be seen from the fact that, while in 1883 there was one public library, and in 1895 only 12, in 1896 there were 54, and in 1902 as many as 140 free libraries.

Travelling libraries commenced in 1890, when the Aberdeen Association was organized in Winnipeg with the purpose of distributing literature among the scattered settlers in the Canadian West. Branches of the association were gradually formed in various cities throughout the Dominion and one in England, while the headquarters were at Ottawa. A new work in travelling libraries was begun in 1897 among the sailors, under the auspices of the Upper Canada