

survived its usefulness. The board of directors were readily convinced that the public library was the direct successor of the Mechanics' Institute, and the site and building covering it were conveyed to the Corporation, the Institute was taken down and the present library, representing the best type of a modern public library building, was erected upon the site.

Paradoxical as it may sound, the present generation is indebted, far more than it perhaps realises, to those gentlemen who in 1875 succeeded in altering the Market Hall and turning a portion of it into a public library; for it was the appearance presented by the photographs supplied to Mr Carnegie which convinced that gentleman, more than the correspondence did, of the need of proper facilities for carrying on the work of the Library.

The new Central Library, which was opened in October, 1913, by the Mayor, Mr Thomas Kay, J.P., exercised a remarkable influence upon the number of readers, and some idea may be gathered of the appreciation of the change of venue and of the improved conditions offered by the adoption of the safeguarded open-access system, whereby readers are admitted to the book-shelves and permitted to select their own books, that the number of tickets in use has increased from 1,500 in 1902, to 15,000 in 1922. In addition to the Central Library there is also a branch, opened in 1908, in the Reddish district, as the result of an agreement entered into with the Reddish authorities when that locality was amalgamated with Stockport, and forms part of a block of buildings comprising, in addition to the library, the municipal baths and fire-station in the Gorton Road. The branch is conducted on the same lines as the central library as regards the admission of the public to the shelves.

Another phase of the library movement is the provision of School Libraries, administered from the Central Library by the library staff. Under the scheme brought into existence by the munificence of the Governors of the Ephraim Hallam charity, aided by a grant from the local Education Committee, each elementary school has permanently located in the school building a small library, ranging from 350 volumes in the larger schools, to 200 in the smaller. These school libraries are particularly well fitted for the dissemination of books into the household; by this means books of a recreative character are introduced into many homes where such material is, to a great extent, non-existent. It has been discovered that not only do the children read the books, but also the parents and other members of the family. The total circulation of books by the school libraries is over 80,000 volumes per annum, and the teachers have noticed since the introduction of the school libraries a large increase in the vocabulary of the children and a wider appreciation of reading. A teachers' and students' reference section has been added to the reference department, the result of a gift of money from the Governors of the Ephraim Hallam Charity. The books in this section are principally for the use of teachers and students studying for the profession, although at the same time they are available for the general public.

To the question whether there has been an improvement in the reading taste of the people, and what has been the influence of the public library on that taste, is not quite so easy of answering. The latter part is scarcely within the province of the library, which is to supply the public to the full extent of its resources with reading matter as required, and although there is nothing in the shape of censorship rigidly exercised so long as the literature is not subversive of morals or good taste, an endeavour is made to provide it. The