

had men of talent in Canada that our literature is so scanty, but because remuneration for literary labour is not great enough to withdraw talent from more lucrative walks of life, and because our society is without that large class of men, inheriting both wealth and culture, who, in the old world compose the powerful body of literary volunteers that so ably supports the army of professional writers.

I would not be understood to imply that Canada has not produced some literary work. Mr. Morgan's carefully compiled dictionary of Canadian authors is a large volume, and shows what a host of writers in all departments of literature Canada has produced; and M. Edmond Lareau's "*Histoire de la Littérature Canadienne*," gives further evidence of the fact. But while we are thus surprised at the number of men who have resorted to the press in order to circulate their thoughts, we are the more surprised that so little of this vast mass of printed matter should have possessed sufficient value to survive.

Fifty years ago there had been hardly a book published in Canada. Political pamphlets had streamed from the press, and nineteen newspapers (the number existing at that date) gave a meagre outline of home and foreign news; but the leading spirits of the country were too immersed in political strife to devote time and thought to literature. Of intellectual activity displayed by men of great intellectual power there was no lack, but the activity found vent in only one direction. Neither before nor since has Canada possessed a band of men of greater power than those who, on both sides, fought the battle of the Constitution in the House of Assembly, and, unfortunately, out of it too. There were Bédard, Papineau, Lafontaine, Jules Quesnel, John Neilson, Sir James Stuart, Andrew Stuart, Chief Justice Sewell, and a multitude of others, men of lofty talent and wide acquirements, but who could spare no time from their all-absorbing

occupations to write aught more pretentious or enduring than political or professional pamphlets. In 1823, however, a magazine was started in Montreal, "*The Canadian Magazine and Literary Repository*;" and in 1824, a rival appeared in the same city, "*The Canadian Review and Literary and Historical Journal*," both conducted with considerable ability, though written in a painfully stilted style, and displaying too strong a political bias to circulate beyond the limits of the Montreal English party. In 1824, moreover, appeared in Kingston the first two-volumed novel issued from a Canadian press, with the ominous title "*St. Ursula's Convent, or the Nun of Canada*," containing scenes from real life." But it was not till political quiet succeeded the turn of nearly half a century, and liberty of the press allowed our newspapers to expand from shabby semi-weekly sheets into daily journals, which were usually so short of matter that the aspirant after literary fame could be pretty sure of being allowed a corner for his pet production in prose or verse, that we began to produce *belles lettres*. The sum total of what has been published since in *brochure* or in book form is really very considerable. Of course most of it possesses no value, but it is not in Canada only that measures of quantity and quality as applied to literature are not convertible terms. And out of the mass some shelves full of really good books can be picked. It is not fair to call John Galt a native author, but Judge Haliburton was born, bred, and educated in Nova Scotia, and, therefore, we may claim the author of "*Sam Slick*," as altogether our own. Mrs. Moodie wrote before she emigrated to Canada, but she was fully naturalised when she published "*Roughing it in the Bush*," and Mrs. Leprohon is by birth and at heart a Canadian. Other English ladies have written good stories with considerable skill; and more cannot be expected, considering how few anywhere succeed in doing better.