

# THE SATURDAY READER.

VOL. I.—No. 1.

FOR WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 9, 1865.

FIVE CENTS.

## TO THE PUBLIC.

A boon, good Public—yield it of your grace—  
"Let us be friends," behold the boon we crave.  
We're not the Publisher, with serious face,  
Dreaming of Printer's bills and things as grave.  
Nor yet the Editor, with anxious men,  
As small boys shout for "copy, if you please,"  
Nor o'en the printer armed with weapons keen  
Which make and unmake prodigies with ease.  
But we're, so please you, one who fain would be  
Your right good friend and always welcome guest,  
Whispering at times sweet strains of poetry,  
Then sober prose—anon some sprightly jest.  
We've themes exhausted, "Half a million," nay,  
We know no limit to our varied store—  
Of flood and field adventures, grave and gay—  
Games for the parlour—philosophic lore—  
Thoughts for the statesman—scientific truth—  
Problems and puzzles framed for studious youth.  
Fiction all healthful—not of *Ledger* store,  
Something of everything, we trust, but—*Lore*.  
Then yield the boon, good Public, of your grace,  
As we forswear the role of special pleader,  
And stand unveiled and hopeful, face to face,  
Your friend and servant to command.

THE READER.

## OUR UNDERTAKING.

THE birth of a literary paper in Canada is a matter of some importance, several causes having contributed to make it so. The history of literary journalism in this country is of very small compass, and what little there is to record is of a very sad character. There is scarcely any department of industry on which we could enter, where one bright star, bidding us hope, might not be descried flickering in the distance; scarcely a sphere in which labour or talents can be employed, where some intrepid and fortunate precursor might not be pointed to as a living pledge that there is, at least, a possibility of success. Out of this scarcity we have selected one. The occasions on which Canadians have had an opportunity of bidding welcome to a literary paper, on its advent, have been few, and we must add that the greetings at such occurrences have not been of a very hearty nature; and, indeed, the griefs and regrets at the decease of such publications, although of almost as frequent recurrence, have been equally tame and ephemeral in their character. Advancing theoretical speculations as to the causes of this indifference to native literature would only be a loss of time; it would not alter the naked truth that almost every effort in this direction has been totally unsuccessful, while it might possibly give offence, a rudeness and want of taste, of which we have no desire to plead guilty. We have determined to publish a literary journal, and we have no intention of losing money by it; we have entered upon the task in the full belief that the time has arrived when such an undertaking, if conducted with energy and prudence, must prove successful; and although we are unfortunately without a precedent in this respect, twelve unlucky months must roll by before we shall be convinced of the fallacy of our faith. Our primary object, and we may just as well own it, is to make money; and although we may have select-

ed a somewhat roundabout road to fortune, like most other ordinary individuals, we have chosen the one which, for us, possesses the greatest variety of way-side attractions. As a pledge that we will use every legitimate effort to produce a meritorious periodical, we offer self-interest; it is perhaps the "drossiest," but it is certainly the surest we can give. It is the fairy-wand of every day life, at whose magical touch, order springs forth from confusion, symmetry out of chaos.

It must be apparent to every thinking person that in a new country like this, where the literary arena is limited, the success of a periodical, whose existence depends chiefly upon the extent of its circulation, can only be attained by embracing a large number of interests, or rather by interesting a large number of readers. To command the attention of the politician, questions of provincial policy must be freely discussed; to secure the approbation of the economist, political and domestic economy must have their places; then the general reader who looks after fresh literature, expects the merits and demerits of every new book to be set forth with mirror-like distinctness; the novel reader considers fiction the staple commodity; the man of science would have us devote half our space to the expounding of scientific theories and the recording of scientific researches and discoveries; the lover of music and the fine arts wants at least a page a week; the admirer of the drama considers the stage deserving of more attention than is generally accorded to it. And the ladies? why, they expect a perfect transcript of the London and Paris fashions. Besides, there are a large number of other interests ranging between the hoary-headed old man who wants a decent periodical to relieve the monotony of idle blessedness, to the urchin of a dozen summers, who willingly suspends the pursuit of his favourite studies—the Rule of Three, Grammar, Spelling Book Superseded, &c.,—to luxuriate in the fantastic delights of a good Christmas tale. All this and more must be done, and well done, before the failure of a periodical can be justly charged upon the public.

In handling political and general subjects, we shall endeavour to earn, at least, the palm of originality in our mode of treatment. We shall endeavour to regard the Public as a compound mass of beings possessing equal intelligence, equal understanding and equal judgment with ourselves; and herein will consist our originality. Hitherto Canadian writers have acted towards the public the part of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to Hamlet. How often have they tried to "govern its vanities" with their fingers and thumbs? How many times has it been sounded from its lowest note to the top of its compass? But though they have "fretted" it, they seemingly have not been able to play upon it. The fact is, the public of Canada is not to be played upon by the most skillful performer; and in our opinion the duty of the honest journalist now-a-days is confined to the amassing or compiling of facts and the

placing of the evidence and arguments, on both sides of the question, before his readers in the most condensed and yet comprehensive shape, leaving each individual to use his own judgment and draw his own conclusions. We do not mean to convey the idea that a journalist should withhold his own views on the question he treats of in his paper, but that these should be put forth in the shape of common-sense arguments, and not endearing entreaties or rude badgering, as though the public were a pet spaniel or a rusty horse, innocent of intelligence and amenable only to coaxing or the lash. This is the style pursued by the more respectable journals of this Province at present, and, to say the least, it is anything but flattering to the public.

In fiction, we shall confine ourselves chiefly to the reproduction of the works of British authors of repute; arrangements which we have made with a respectable London publishing house, enabling us to produce the works of some standard writers, at the same time that they are published in England, and before they have been published on this continent. Each of the other departments to which we have referred, we hope, to supply by native talent, and on the whole we are confident of our ability to furnish a SATURDAY READER, which shall deserve and receive generous support.

## VENERATION VERSUS REFORM.

THE people of Quebec seem to be weary of municipal institutions, and have applied to the Legislature to relieve them from the evils of civic government as understood by the Anglo-Saxon race. For this they have been severely censured, as well in Parliament as by the press. But we doubt if the denizens of the ancient capital have not suffered injustice at the hands of their critics and judges. It is certain that the affairs of the city of Quebec have been grossly mismanaged, and that some great change in some direction can alone save them from bankruptcy and disgrace. Now, what are the citizens of Quebec to do in this exigency? Under the existing system, they have, year after year, been hoping that matters would mend; but year after year they have been sinking deeper and deeper into difficulty and debt. Let us not blame them, then, overmuch, if for an extreme evil, they seek an extreme remedy. We do not believe they would act wisely in placing the city funds in the hands of parties irresponsible to the taxpayers; for all experience is opposed to such a step. But while convinced of this, we also believe that our municipal system is greatly behind the age, and requires not only to be amended and reformed, but to be revolutionised, so to speak. A form of city government that was a benefit and a blessing in the days of the Plantagenets and the Tudors, may be anything but a benefit or a blessing in the nineteenth century; yet, in our reverence for the good it has effected in the past, we hold even its faults in traditional veneration. It is the same, too, in the United States, into which the old Puritans