

The



Owl.

VOL. I.

COLLEGE OF OTTAWA, JUNE, 1888.

No. 6.

UTILITARIANISM.

WE live in an age and in a country when and where every work, whether of hand or brain is measured by the scale of utility. The greater part of people belong to two classes—the money-seekers and the pleasure seekers. To the former the utility of an object means the degree of its convertibility into dollars and cents; to the latter anything is useful inasmuch as it can procure amusement. With both of these classes the worship of the golden calf is the prevailing religion; Mammon has an altar in every household. The place in the public gaze formerly filled by a Sophocles or a Cicero, by a Hofer or a Washington, is now occupied by a Vanderbilt or a Rothschild. The hero is dead, and in his stead reigns the chrysochile.

And this spirit of utilitarianism is all pervading; its effects are felt in camp and court, in temple and legislative hall. Politics and religion at the touch of the Midas hand become venality and formalism. Narrowness of views and sordidness of aims confine and debase the intellect, and the highest form of the new philosophy is refined egoism.

Disastrous have been the effects of utilitarianism upon everything good, true or beautiful, and to take particular cases, a most baneful influence has it exercised upon literature and learning. It is not surprising that the literature of the day

should be of such an ephemeral character. Men whose thoughts are occupied with matters of money have no time to read anything beyond the daily newspaper; those who value wealth above all things because of the pleasures it can purchase find sufficient mental pabulum in the elegantly printed and luxuriously illustrated monthly magazine. Into these two channels flows the literary current, and of the barks which sail thereon those receive the most liberal patronage which can convey us the greatest distance in the shortest space of time. In other words, our litterateurs are pleasing to the popular taste in proportion as they are able to treat of the weightiest subjects in a few columns or pages of musically sounding phrases.

That this should be what is required of our writers is of the greatest possible prejudice to them and to the reading public. The languid curiosity which desires to know the why and wherefore of everything without any effort on its own part, prefers to receive an erroneous idea rather than none at all. The morning paper is supposed to give authoritative utterances on the most important subjects, which may have come under the cognizance of its editor but a few hours before. The weary journalist who, in "the wee sma' hours" pores over the mass of news which the cable brings him, knows that his daily bread depends upon his ability to make it