

tion. But the aboriginal arts must vanish; the native traditions, in which so much history lies embodied, will scarcely survive to another generation; and as for their languages, if not recovered from the lips of the living generation, they will ere long be as utterly beyond recall as the snows of the past winter. Yet it is to comparative philology that we have to look for the solution of problems of highest interest and value to ourselves. If we are ever to recover any reliable clue to the ancient history of this continent, and the source and affinities of the nations to whose inheritance we have succeeded, this can only be done by means of comparative philology; and for this, the materials must be gathered ere it be too late. "The Comparative Vocabularies of the Indian Tribes of British Columbia," the work of one of our own members, in conjunction with Dr. Fraser Tolmie, which was published in connection with the Geological and Natural History Survey of Canada, in 1864, is a timely and valuable contribution to the desired materials. But the reception which it met with from those in authority was not greatly calculated to encourage the repetition of such disinterested labours.

It is in work of this kind, at once of great practical value, and yet essentially unremunerative, if judged by the test of mere profitable pecuniary results, that Canada has to look for the most beneficial labours of its Royal Society. The history of the Geological Survey, both here and in the United States, is well calculated to guide us in this respect. Geology has long enjoyed the fostering care of the Government in both countries, though rather in its economic than in its scientific aspect. Large sums have been expended, and an efficient staff employed, in surveying and mapping out the geological structure

of the continent. The sister sciences, and especially those of mineralogy and chemistry, have been enlisted in its service; and palæontology has necessarily been largely elucidated in the combined research. But the urgent demand is ever for what are called practical results. True, it is to the disinterested study of pure science, to the love of abstract truth, that we owe all the grand, practical fruits by which science is revolutionizing the world. But Canada has been, till recently, sufficiently indifferent to this; and as for the United States—after doing splendid work in geology, ethnology, hydrography, geodesy and meteorology, and publishing works of no less scientific than practical value—a commission recently appointed by Congress to investigate the operations of the various scientific bureaux, has drafted a bill restricting the work and publications of the Geological Survey, and absolutely forbidding the expenditure of any portion of the Government appropriation for the publication of palæontological material, or for the discussion of geological theories. In other words, there shall be no seed-time for science. Henceforth it must be harvest through all the seasons. This, I doubt not, is a mere passing phase of misapplied thrift, which will speedily give place to a wiser recognition of the economic value of all scientific research. But I refer to such experience elsewhere, rather than to any action in our own Dominion, because we may the more impartially estimate the probable results. The scientific value of the labours, and of the published results, of the United States Geological Survey has been widely recognized; and the restrictions suggested by the recent commission will be felt throughout the scientific world even more keenly than would the withdrawal of American specie and all