

Canada. Proceeding now to a more extended review, we find that a few papers exercised from the outset a very decided influence in political affairs, and it is to these I propose now to refer especially, before coming down to later times of extended political rights and consequent expansion of newspaper enterprise. The oldest newspaper now in Canada is the *Montreal Gazette*, which was first published as far back as 1787, by one Mesplet, in the French language. It ceased publication for a time, but reappeared about 1794, with Lewis Roy as printer. On the death of the latter, the establishment was assumed by E. Edwards, at No. 135 St. Paul Street, then the fashionable thoroughfare of the town. It was only a little affair, about the size of a large foolscap sheet, printed in small type in the two languages, and containing eight broad columns. In 1805, the *Quebec Mercury* was founded by Thomas Cary, a Nova Scotian lawyer, as an organ of the British inhabitants, who, at that time, formed a small but comparatively wealthy and influential section of the community. Mr. Cary was a man of scholarly attainments and a writer of considerable force. The *Mercury* had hardly been a year in existence, when its editor experienced the difficulty of writing freely in those troublous times, as he had to apologize for a too bold censure of the action of the dominant party in the Legislature. But this *contretemps* did not prevent him continuing in that vein of sarcasm of which he was a master, and evoking, consequently, the ire of the leading Liberals of those days—Stuart, Vanfelson, Papineau, Viger, and others; and one of the results of his excessive freedom of speech was an attempt to punish him for a breach of privilege; but he remained concealed in his own house, where, like the conspirators of old times, he had a secret recess made for such purposes, and where he continued hurling his philippics against his adversaries with all

that power of invective which would be used by a conscientious though uncompromising old Tory of those days, when party excitement ran so high. The *Quebec Gazette* was at that time, as in its first years, hardly more than a mere *résumé* of news.\* Hon. John Neilson assumed its editorship in 1796, and continued more or less to influence its columns whilst he remained in the Lower Canada Legislature. In 1808, Mr. Neilson enlarged the size of his paper, and published it twice a week, in order to meet the growing demand for political intelligence. The *Gazette* was trammelled for years by the fact that it was semi-official, and the vehicle of public notifications, but when, subsequently,† this difficulty no longer existed, the paper, either under his own or his son's management, was independent, and, on the whole, moderate in tone, whenever it expressed opinions on leading public questions. Mr. Neilson, from 1818, when he became a member of the Legislature, exercised a marked influence in the political discussions of his time, and any review of his career as journalist and politician would be necessarily a review of the political history of half a century. A constant friend of the French Canadians, a firm defender of British connection, never a violent, uncompromising partisan, but a man of cool judgment, he was generally able to perform good service to his party and country. As a public writer he was concise and argumentative, and influential, through the belief that men had in his sincerity and honesty of purpose.

\* From 1783 to 1792, the paper scarcely published a political 'leader,' and so fearful were printers of offending men in power, that the *Montreal Gazette*, so late as 1790, would not even indicate the locality in which a famous political banquet was held, on the occasion of the formation of a Constitutional Club, the principal object of which was to spread political knowledge throughout the country. See Garneau II. 197 and 206.

† In 1823, an Official Gazette was published by Dr. Fisher, Queen's Printer. 'Canadian Magazine,' p. 470.