

You might think that I had something to report from England. But in England, while I was there, the thoughts of everybody were absorbed by what was passing on the political scene. I confess I had hardly eyes for anything but the cloud which had gathered over my country, and the peril which threatened those august institutions so long the admiration and the guiding light of the world. The great lesson which I brought back from England was that faction—call it by the name of party or by what other specious name you will—if it is allowed to prevail over patriotism, may bring the noblest and mightiest of nations to the dust. However, in England, amidst the political convulsions education was marching on. I saw everywhere new improvements in the method of teaching, in apparatus, in school buildings, and increased efforts to unite the parts of the system, from the universities down to the elementary schools, and mould them into a perfect whole. Marvellous is the advance in these respects. I was at Eton, where we were supposed to have the best, and certainly paid for the best, of everything, and I doubt whether our school-rooms, and books, and apparatus would now pass muster with the inspector of a Common School. I turned up the other day a child's book with wood-cuts, printed fifty or sixty years ago. It had belonged to a wealthy family, and was no doubt deemed a work of art in its day: in the present day it would be deemed beneath contempt. Among other signs of advance, cities had largely availed themselves of the Act empowering municipalities to raise funds for the maintenance of public libraries. A movement appears to be going on for the institution of a public library in Toronto. Nothing can be more laudable than the object. But before taking any practical step, we ought, perhaps, to consider how far the question is modified by the extraordinary development of cheap printing, which seems likely to prove an event in intellectual history second in importance only to the invention of printing itself. Not only novels, but works of all kinds, literary and scientific, standard as well as the most recent, can now be bought for a few cents, and everybody can have as much reading as business men or artisans have time for, at the cheapest rate in his own home. By exchanging with neighbours, the home library may be still further enlarged. The need for city libraries, therefore, seems to be less. What would be a certain benefit in its way is a provincial library of books of reference and other works not likely to be reprinted in a cheap form, to which students and persons engaged in special researches, or in need of special information might resort. It has occurred to me that the Parliamentary Library might be developed into something of this kind. Members of Parliament might use it, so far as they had occasion, all the same. It would be essential to have a good librarian, a man thoroughly conversant with books, who would be able to guide readers to the authorities for any special line of study,