

On a public such as that to which political writing (and perhaps we might add political speaking) is now addressed literature would be wasted: they would not understand it, nor would they appreciate it if they did. Our present electoral system is probably the best that the unaided intelligence of mankind will ever devise for fostering all that is most deplorable in human nature, and most degrading to the human intellect.

### CONFLICT.

THE driving spindrift fills the salted air,  
And snows with flecks of foam the verdant lea  
Far from the beaten wave-marge, where the sea  
In fury sweeps the yellow sand-line bare.  
Dense is the swirling sea-smoke's misty glare,  
Wild is the white surf's senseless revelry;  
A thousand shapes of awful phantasy  
Meet in the seething strife, and wrestle there.

When morning lies rose-red along the land,  
And the spent seas breathe out their ling'ring ire  
In soft low sighs of yet unquenched desire,  
Ye who go down unto the shining strand  
Tread softly—for, lit by the dawn's first fire,  
Strange ocean-wrack bestrewn the sea-ribbed sand.

BESSIE GRAY.

### PROMINENT CANADIANS.—II.

DANIEL WILSON, LL.D., F.R.S.E., *President of the University of Toronto.*

THE burden of the Psalmist's span of life—the inexorable threescore years and ten—sits lightly on the lithe and still active figure of the President of Toronto University. Were it consistent with the dignity of advanced years, the learned Doctor seems as able to-day to march with his rifle in the ranks of the Canadian militia as he was, long years ago, when, with flowing locks, though lacking the now venerable beard, I first became familiar with his marked personality. This early reminiscence, slight as it is, and doubtless familiar to many a Toronto volunteer of the exciting times of the *Trent* affair, may serve as a faint indication of what has ever been Dr. Wilson's patriotic habit, viz., enthusiastically to identify himself with the country of his adoption, and loyally to accept the duties and responsibilities of citizenship, into whatever field these might call him, in common not only with his fellow professors and the students of the national university, but with the humblest representative of our young Canadian commonwealth.

The passing years have dealt kindly with the subject of this brief sketch; the figure, always spare, is still erect, and the step has lost little in the march of time of its early elasticity. The eyes look at you with the old-time keen, rapid glance; and there is the same kindly note in the voice, which rises and falls with that familiar, soft, measured cadence which belongs, I think, distinctively to those who hail from the Scottish metropolis. For thirty-five years President Wilson has been connected with the University and College of Toronto, and has given to that institution the abundant fruitage of a rich, matured, and industrious life. During that long period, though he has daily gone in and out among almost all classes of the people of Toronto, and in many ways has contributed to the intellectual life and to the enriching of the scientific thought of Canada, and indeed of the continent, there are not many, I fear, outside of academic circles who recognise the genius, the learning, and the pre-eminent abilities of Dr. Wilson, or who appreciate him as a man at his true worth. In a general way, the few here may know him as a learned scientist, and perhaps as an accomplished *littérateur*; but to the mass of his fellow-citizens he is little more than a prominent educationist, and the head of the national university. If this statement seem unfair, let me ask, How many know of his great reputation and high recognised status in the first scientific circles of the Old World, or who think of him in the light of his deserts—as one of the foremost men of the age in his own special departments of archaeological and ethnological science. Canada as yet has not been fertile in great men; but here doubtless is one, if we are to take the measure of his worth not only from his books, though these undoubtedly are an author's best and truest memorial, but from the estimation in which he is held in high scientific circles abroad, and the unsought honours conferred upon him by many of the learned societies of Europe. Only eminent services to science could have secured him the recognition of crowned heads and the issue of royal diplomas setting forth these services, with enrolment among the distinguished honorary members of the great scientific societies and learned institutions of the mother land, and of France, Italy, and Denmark.

Of Dr. Wilson's early years little, I imagine, is known on this side the Atlantic, unless it has been gleaned from the interesting biography of his distinguished brother, Dr. George Wilson, the eminent chemist, who died in 1859, while holding the professorship of technology in the University of Edinburgh. From this work, however, as in other instances of the youth of eminent men, we learn much of interest—of early years of toil, laborious study, indefatigable research, and an enthusiastic devotion to the pursuits which were to become a life's work. The labour of these youthful days brought Dr. Wilson into almost European repute before he had reached

his thirty-seventh year, the period when we find him transplanted to Canada, at the instance, it is said, of the historian Hallam, who, with Lord Elgin, the then Governor-General of Canada, warmly recommended the appointment of the young *littérateur* and zealous Secretary of the Scottish Society of Antiquaries to the chair of history and English literature in University College, Toronto. The removal to Canada was a grave step in itself. But it was more than this when it broke in, as it did, upon serious studies pursued with great ardour, severed the dearest ties, social and professional, and withdrew from a promising field of labour one who was not only fast making his way to the front, but whose genuine abilities and true scientific devotion, had he remained in it, would doubtless have gained him rich pecuniary rewards with many accompanying honours. However, to Canada he came; and one of the interesting as well as valuable souvenirs of his parting with his Scottish friends and scientific associates is a costly service of silver in the learned Doctor's possession, the inscription on which bears the testimony of his Associates in the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland “to Dr. Wilson's intelligent and faithful labours as Secretary, and to their admiration of his great learning and genius so successfully devoted to the investigation of the archaeology of Scotland.”

Devoted student as he was of archaeology, and much as he had done in Scotland to enrich the subject by laborious local research, Dr. Wilson, in coming to Canada, found a wide field for its pursuit on the American continent; and much has he assiduously gathered in the interval to add to the stores of information and reasonable conjecture in this interesting branch of science. The fruit of this is abundantly found in important treatises on the subject which have come from his pen, as well as in the many occasional papers contributed to the scientific journals and transactions of learned societies in both hemispheres. The number and bulk of the latter would fill many portly volumes, and are in themselves a monument of intellectual labour. In the brief space at my disposal I can give but a bald enumeration of the more important works which have come from Dr. Wilson's pen. The first of these was *Memorials of Edinburgh in the Olden Time*, a work in two volumes, published in 1847, with illustrations from the author's facile pencil. This interesting work, with his *Reminiscences of Old Edinburgh*, published in 1878, reveal Dr. Wilson's tastes as an antiquary and his varied accomplishments in undertaking the work of tracing the history, antiquities, and local traditions of the Scottish metropolis. A contemporary critic affirms of the first of these books, that “these volumes will do the author honour in his native city so long as the ancient capital of Scotland stands.” In 1851 appeared a kindred but more ambitious work in the wider field of Scottish antiquities, entitled *The Archaeology and Prehistoric Annals of Scotland*. This scholarly and elaborate production drew from the historian Hallam the criticism that it was the most scientific treatment of the archaeological evidences of primitive history which had ever been written. The reviewers were also equally laudatory, a high authority saying that the work was “full of original views, bearing everywhere the stamp of independent investigation and of an independent judgment” and calculated “to form an epoch in the study of the earlier antiquities of Scotland and of Britain at large.” Another competent authority speaks of this work as one “of extraordinary merit, particularly in the lucidity of its scientific combinations and inferences, the charm of its style, and the perfect fidelity of its many pictorial illustrations.” A second edition being called for, the author in 1863 republished the work, with large additions and a careful revision, under the shorter title of *Prehistoric Annals of Scotland*. The term “Prehistoric” in its earlier use, in 1851, it may be worth noting, was, I believe, a coinage of the author's; he, at least, was the first to bring the word into vogue.

In 1863 also appeared what may be considered the author's *magnum opus*, a work embodying the results of researches in archaeology and ethnology in both hemispheres, and of which two subsequent editions, considerably re-written, have appeared. Of this production, which bears the title of *Prehistoric Man: Researches into the Origin of Civilisation in the Old and the New Worlds*, the Edinburgh *Witness*, at the time under the editorship of the geologist Hugh Miller, remarks that “the topic is not only vast in range, complex in material, and difficult from its nature, but brings the man who ventures to discuss it into contact with momentous and perplexing questions touching the origin of civilisation, the unity of the human race, and the time during which man has been a denizen of this planet. Dr. Wilson proves himself at all points equal to his task.” This emphatic verdict has been endorsed in other eminent quarters, and high commendation passed upon the book, not only for its scientific value, but for the attractiveness of its literary style. To these works have to be added three volumes, which, though notable in themselves, by no means represent the bulk of Dr. Wilson's purely literary labours. They are respectively entitled *Chatterton: A Biographical Study* (1869); *Caliban, the Missing Link* (1873); and *Spring Wild Flowers*, a volume of graceful verse. In the Chatterton biography, the author has lovingly gathered all that is worthy of record in the career of the ill-fated Bristol dreamer; and the volume is the best tribute known to me to the young poet's genius. *Caliban* is an interesting Shakespearian study, combining great imaginative power with a strong critical faculty, and giving the reader much curious information, with not a little fanciful disquisition, on the Evolution theory. The little volume dedicated to the Muses, of which two editions have appeared, emphasises the twin sisterhood of Science and Poetry, and enshrines some thoughtful lines on religious and moral subjects, with several happy examples of lighter verse. In addition to these published works, a whole library of contributions from the author's pen is scattered through the “Proceedings” of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, the London Anthropological Institute, the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution, the British and American Associations for the