

## In the Gallery or a View of the Past.

Opening lecture at Acadia College, delivered Friday evening, October 7th, 1904.

BY REV. A. W. SAWYER, D. D., LL. D.

The new books in our library are stored in cases on the lower floor. Students wishing to be up-to-date select books for reading from these shelves. In the gallery and in some other obscure places are stored multitudes of books that are supposed to have outlived their usefulness. They rest in their places undisturbed, and the dust of the years settles on them. We are interested in exhumed relics that indicate something of the civilization of oriental people thousands of years ago. It might not be without interest and profit, if occasionally we should give some attention to the thought and life of people who lived in days nearer our own.

We can find among these neglected books many interesting and suggestive volumes. Here is a copy of Cicero's writings with learned annotations, in three large quarto volumes, bound in parchment and dated hundreds of years ago,—a monument of the industry of scholarship in the past. Here are books, Latin, German, Dutch, and in other languages, dating back two and three hundred years, printed in black letter and in all sorts of type. With some pains one might arrange a series of these books illustrative of successive styles of printing for three centuries. Some years ago there was in the library a copy of the Geneva Bible, first published in 1650. The antiquarian bookseller would know its value. Some visitor was so in love with the old book that he secretly took it away. It was never returned. It is not the only book that has been abstracted from the library and so brought injury to someone's conscience. Here are provincial records reaching back nearly to the beginning of civil government in these provinces; books of travel in different parts of Canada; books relating to the religious condition of the people in the eighteenth century. No one has time to read them now. Here are rows of books containing discussions on religious and theological subjects by leaders of antagonistic parties, who contended each for his faith, believing that survival of the church and the salvation of the world depended on the persistence of the particular form of doctrine which he held. Now no one cares to examine these discussions which once awakened so much interest. They were once widely quoted by reverent disciples. Now the question which of them was right, or were they all astray, is a matter of complete indifference to us. Here are long rows of Reviews, English, Scotch, American, reaching back nearly to the beginning of the last century. In these volumes are articles that made, others that marred the reputation of men of letters; political articles that made and unmade governments; eloquent articles on the civil revolutions and commotions on the passing years. These books were once considered a valuable acquisition to a library; but they stand here apparently unread. One reason may be that the themes assigned to students in these years are not discussed in these books.

Here is a copy of Samuel Johnson's Dictionary, in four volumes, of the ninth edition, corrected and revised, published in 1805; presented to the library by R. R. Duncan, of Grand Pré. Johnson died in 1783, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. A memorial statue was placed in St. Paul's church. His great work stands here, to all appearance unopened; except it may be by some casual visitor. The author, after his protracted labors, seems to have anticipated that the time would come when the work would lapse into disuse, for he says at the end of the preface: "I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave, and success and miscarriage are empty words; I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or to hope from censure or from praise." Still it becomes us to remember that this work marks one of the stages by which the Standard and the Century Dictionaries were made possible for us.

But I wish to call attention more particularly to some of the contents of these shelves that may reveal to us something of thought and life in portions of the Anglo-Saxon people in the second quarter and early portion of the third quarter of the last century, and present some thoughts naturally suggested by this review. If the references to New England are more frequent, it is because that section is more largely represented on these shelves, but other material will be at hand to unite us to a wider outlook.

Let me first call attention to text-books, some of which are here, others are suggested. Webster's Spelling Book, with its sober maxims at the bottom of the page and its moral lessons at the close; Reading Books of all grades in which the authors inserted long and appropriate selections from the Bible—a method that would not be tolerated now; Grammars, Murray's, Smith's, Gould Brown's, Sanborn's; Arithmetics, Pike's, Adams's, Colburn's, and a little later, Greenleaf's; Walker's Natural Philosophy; Geographies, Malte-Brun's, Smith's, Morse's, Olney's. The only interest that these names can awaken in most of you is due to the fact that you never heard them before. Several of them were really good and useful books, but they were dropped by the way and have been left and forgotten.

It would be possible to make from these shelves nearly a complete set of College Text books of fifty and sixty years ago. Here are selections from the ancient classics edited

by famous scholars who, in their own personalities exhibited in almost perfect degree the fruits of classical scholarship and culture. Here are the mathematical books over which Freshmen and Sophomores worried sixty years ago. It was the day of Blair and Whateley in Rhetoric and Logic; of Dugald Stewart and Wayland in Intellectual and Moral Philosophy; of Lyell and Fownes in Geology and Chemistry; of Silliman and Olmstead in Physics; of Edwards on the relation of Psychology to Theology; of Paley and Butler on Nature as prophetic and illustrative of Revelation.

Now all these books which fulfilled a large and honorable service have been placed on the upper shelves, and other names fill their places in College Calendars. Nevertheless men of pith and power trained by these instrumentalities for distinguished and useful lives.

Mention of an Educational Agency of fifty years ago, of which not much account has been made in books will be in order—the Lyceum Lecture. It was in its nature akin to the University Extension of a later time. Mr. W. H. H. Murray, in a recent article in which he gives some review of his earlier years, says: "What courage, scholarship, talents, grace and liveliness of person, and what enthusiasm for the right, for the larger thought, for the nobler life did the speakers of the old platform represent."

Why this Agency, which had such positive influence in promoting general intelligence and cultivating taste and fellowship in learning, should have so completely disappeared, it might be difficult to tell. The great increase in the circulation of periodical literature in England and America in the last fifty years may furnish a partial explanation. Perhaps the greater tension of life in later years has created a demand for more recreation and amusement; and the concert and the opera have taken the place for better or for worse.

Of the books for general reading some representatives are on the shelves in the gallery, some still claim a place on the lower floor. Macaulay and Prescott are less frequently mentioned now than formerly. All students were expected to read Carlyle's and Macaulay's Essays. They nursed their ambition on Carlyle's Heroes and Hero-worship. Books of travel in Central America, the Islands of the Pacific, Africa, Asia and the Polar regions were widely circulated. Narratives of later travellers now claim attention for the day. Of novels, Scott, Cooper, Thackeray, and Dickens were in demand. Hawthorne's greatest works were published about the middle of the century, but his genius appears to have been discovered by critics of a later date. It was considered good form to have some acquaintance with the writings of Addison, Johnson and Irving. Whether these authors are read in these days you can tell better than I. In Puritan New England, Burns and Byron were under interdict, Childe Harold was permissible, the Cotter's Saturday Night was commended. Bonnie Doon and Sweet Afton with some of Longfellow's shorter pieces were sung in the parlor. Evangeline's long journey was followed with interest by all who liked a wholesome love story. Wordsworth was admired by a select few, but was considered too tame by others who preferred to have their mental nutriment more highly spiced. Cowper was a favorite for family reading when the sofa was drawn forward and the family gathered round the open fire. Round a register or before a radiator the charm would hardly work. Tennyson at first was regarded as a sentimental amateur. His title to lasting fame was at length recognized. Milton was orthodox and diligently read. Strange as it may seem there were educated and literary persons who said, we can very well dispense with Shakespeare. Books on the lives of missionaries and their fields of labor were eagerly sought out. These books are seldom called for now. The romantic period of missions is past. Here are devotional books once highly prized but no longer mentioned in publishers' catalogues. Here are commentaries, Stuart, Hodge, Alexander, Barnes, and others from which a minister would hardly quote now, lest some of his congregation should think that he was a generation behind his time. But I fear that these references have already been extended too far.

About the middle of the century, some young men both in England and America were writing for the public from a somewhat new point of view. They represented a changed conception of life, the significance of which was hardly appreciated at the time. They modified the character of literature by turning attention to the subjective side of experience and thereby prepared the way for still greater changes. Their names would scarcely be recognized by the greater number of the audience, but their influence was not inconsiderable among the forces that formed the character of the present time.

In no other way are we able to discern so clearly the difference between the world in which we live and the world in which men lived three generations ago as when we note the changes that have taken place in scientific opinions and beliefs.

The inception of these changes dates back as far as the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The suggestions and observations of still earlier years led the way to the formation of theories that came, as the years passed, to be generally accepted.

Before the middle of the nineteenth century the Geol-

ogists had established the general outline of their theory respecting the successive strata of which the earth is composed. The study of fossils had convinced them that vegetable and animal life in successive gradations had existed on the earth through long periods of time. Though these views at first met with general disbelief, yet on account of the scantiness of the material that could be used to controvert them, the disbelief gradually gave way to acquiescence.

The possibility of the transformation of species had been suggested at different times in preceding centuries.

In the closing years of the Eighteenth century Lamarck and others were advocating the doctrine that life appeared on the earth by spontaneous generation from lifeless matter and that species had advanced by gradual transformations from lower to higher forms by natural causes through all grades of vegetable, animal and human life. Before the middle of the century Archaeologists had begun to gather facts which indicated that a high order of civilization had in periods quite beyond the limits of the accepted Chronology. Later discoveries confirmed this view and carried the age of Primeval man back to a more distant past. The conclusions of Geology have been accepted. The doctrine of the transformation of species by the slow action of natural causes if it fails as yet to receive universal assent, is so generally approved in the realm of Science that its claim to the right of way is not altogether unreasonable. The theories of Geology demand millions of years for their application. The slow transformation of species by natural causes also demands millions of years. Archaeology and Ethnology are working back indefinitely on the same lines.

If now we bear in mind that Geology claims long ages in place of the "six days" of Creation; that the modern doctrine of species makes them the product of natural causes slowly working through unnumbered aeons, instead of being the effects of immediate acts of creative power; and that Anthropology accepting the foregoing conclusions traces the human race back to some dark period in which it was developed from an ancestry that reaches back through stages inconceivable in number to the first vitalized cell that appeared on the earth, we shall then be able to get some proper conception of the great difference between the world of thought and belief in which men lived in the second quarter of the last century and the world of thought and belief in which we find ourselves.

By the middle of the century the conclusions of the Geologists had won general acceptance.

If the interpretation of the Biblical account of Creation, which had commended itself to scholars of an earlier period were adopted the "days" would represent indefinite periods of time, the two records would be in harmony and science would become an aid in interpreting and illustrating the Scriptures. This suggestion met a sympathetic response. About the middle of the century books and articles appeared in considerable number setting forth the new harmonization with stores of various learning and sometimes with fascinating eloquence. It seemed that something had been done that would stay. Of these we may mention Hugh Miller's Old Red Sandstone and Footprints of the Creator, John Harris's Primeval Man, Pye Smith's and Hamilton Smith's Natural History of Man.

Now these books, once approved by learned men and widely read are here on these gallery shelves among the unused books. How has this come about? As expositions of Geology later works have taken their places. As Apologetical they were constructed with the doctrine that species were the result of distinct and immediate creative acts. As the theory of the gradual transformation of species received valuable support from the investigations of Darwin and other scientists and affected so generally the minds of educated persons, these books lost their relation to the thought of the time and disappeared.

The changed condition will require that the work these men understood will have to be attempted in some other form.

This result has been reached with considerable jarring of thought and feeling on the part of many persons. Others say that Science is, and probably always will be incomplete; the great truths of the Bible remain unchanged. The Bible has been in some peril ever since it came into existence. It has survived and maintained its authority hitherto and it may be trusted to take care of itself. The book-sellers tell us that it is still the best selling book on their shelves.

Other lines of study both in the realm of thought and of practical affairs would equally well exhibit the vast difference between the present and the past; but we cannot pursue them now.

Perhaps it has already occurred to you that these references to the past and its relation to the present have been made with a purpose. Some useful lessons both for the young and the old are suggested.

It is not the order of nature that the men of one generation should live by reproducing and repeating the past. In the history of a free and intellectual people, each generation will do its own work in its own way, do its thinking and make its own books. The reign of authority in the realm of thought is passing. Each new generation will review the work of its predecessors, accept what is approved and add to or change it as may appear best. No age can worthily fulfil its mission by simply copying the thinking of men of an earlier