

# THE CANADA CHRISTIAN MONTHLY.

NOVEMBER, 1875.

## Editorial.

### THE FOUNDATIONS.—HOW TO STRENGTHEN THEM.

To get a solid foundation for a city is often a long, toilsome and expensive business. Before a single stone could be laid on another to build up the beautiful city of Venice, and the wealthy cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, thousands upon thousands of piles must needs be driven into the oozy, sandy bottom. As one walks through the palaces and churches of these cities, and admires the stately mansions that line the streets, he is apt to forget the men who cut down the trees in the remote forest, and shaped them into piles, and drove them with heavy hammers into the mud to carry cities on their heads.

*Society* has its foundations as well as cities. Beneath the outward activities of life seen in our streets, and fields, and mines, and woods, there is an unseen foundation on which the ponderous social fabric rests. What is that foundation? Some might answer, *It is physical force.* There is no doubt that the fear of the policeman's baton, the jail and the gallows, is to a large degree the foundation of our social order, especially among the lower classes in the large cities; but as many a bloody revolution shows, such a foundation is a very unsafe basis for society to rest on.

The opinion of others might be that the foundation on which modern society rests are our excellent Constitution and *Laws.* In well ordered society there is always a due respect for law, but the weight is not great that even this foundation can carry. It has been well remarked, "That no matter how good laws are, there is still needed an Act of Parliament to this effect: That all Acts of Parliament be enforced." In Europe there is indeed a certain degree of awe inspired by law, but this feeling is largely wanting on this side of the Atlantic, so that among us it is no uncommon thing for our statute books to contain laws that are allowed, (although good laws), to lie there as dead letter.

The cry was wont to be heard on every side that *secular education* is the true foundation of social order. There is no doubt that education is a good thing when well-directed, but there are startling facts that warrant us to call in question the safety of a community that trusts to mere intellectual knowledge as the foundation of social order. Intellectual elevation and moral degeneracy are often found together. "It may seem strange, says Gladstone, in his *Inventus Mundi*, that the two processes of *speculative ascent* and a *practical decline*, a mental discipline of the few and a general dissoluteness of life should be simultaneous.