

sentiments were obliterated by the soothing influences of Christian civilization; and the Schoolmen arose to proclaim the might of those Intellectual forces, which gradually broke down the barriers of ignorance and rudeness. As the ages stole their arrows from the quiver of Time, they filled the world's record with the fame of those whose glory it was to wage unceasing strife with the darkness of ignorance; and then, ascending from grade to grade until the heights of Learning were scaled, they planted the standard of Knowledge in the citadel of immortality, upon the bright, unsullied folds of which the sun of Genius glinted in unrivalled beauty. To enumerate the triumphs of letters in and amongst the European nations were a task too great for us to attempt. But it is indubitable that their refinement was the measure of their progress; and greatness attended thereon to prove that "the pen was mightier than the sword." The moral of these reflections affords to those who are interested in the future well being of the Canadian people, a subject of deepest moment. As our fatherlands have advanced with the growth of literature, so it is reasonable to expect that we likewise must progress if, rising above the difficulties which beset us, we honestly and energetically seize as a sacred duty, the task of promoting a Canadian literature, which shall be racy of the soil.

Of all the influences which go to advance a nation there is not one of more potency than the almost divine gift of Song. In all ages, and at all time, Poetry has been the willing hand-maiden of Religion. Indeed the Holy Scriptures are a sacred collection of immortal poems. The language of the Prophets is the inspiration of the muse. Every emotion of which the human heart is capable has been expressed by the chosen writers of the Bible. The hero battling for natural honor and popular liberty—the philanthropist healing the woes of which humanity is the heir and victim—the chaste lover, ardent in very purity of fancy and conception—the mother yearning for her offspring—the child, reverent to the authors of his being—the soul inflamed with the delights of contemplation of him whose love is the treasure of His creatures all, may find in the sacred writings a voice to speak the thoughts which throb and the feelings which sway within the human heart. Therefore it is that Poetry has exercised such a glowing influence upon the peoples. That sublime gift has issued from the wells of genius to irrigate the nations' existence; and in all the phases of their being it has been the poets royal prerogative to touch the deepest depths, of which even the people themselves were unconscious. The Historian and Philosopher deserve well of their race and epoch; but vainly might they strive to wrest intellect from slavery did not the Poet pierce the ranks of ignorance with a myriad arrows of his golden inspiration. Fletcher of Saltoun said wisely when he wrote "Give me the making of the people's ballads and I care not who make their laws." The poet writes upon the tablets of immortality; and the nation dies not which treasures the virtues that are shrined in the shrines of the Song. How much England owes to Shakspeare it were difficult to imagine; and even whilst the Baird of Avon is the benefactor of the world, his native land is greater in the possession of him, than in all the united victories of her captains on land and sea. It behoves us then to treasure our poet-kings. They are the prophets of our future as a people. They are the guardians of the virtues which blending on this soil, common to many origins, shall be the begetting forces of a greatness, truly commensurate with the vastness of our dominion. They are the stars to guide us, which as they twinkle in beauty, are the inspiration to noble deeds.

It is our purpose on a future occasion to group together a few of those who have written upon the youthful records of this country the gleaming fancies, which shall not be the least remembered when Canada from Atlantic to Pacific, shall rejoice in the greatness of national power, and in the refined sentiment of national literature.

JAMES JOSEPH GAHAN.

### Education in Egypt.

#### SCHOOLS OF CAIRO.

A WRITER in the *Saturday Review* gives an interesting account of the present state of Education in Egypt. Speaking of the Schools in Cairo, he says:—There are at present 140,977 pupils under instruction. Of these 111,803 are in primary Arab schools, 15,335 in those attached to mosques, 1,385 are educated by Government, 8,961 by missions and religious communities, and 2,960 in the municipal schools. There are only two female schools returned, those started by the Khédive; but in the Copt and mission schools little girls may be found, though very few indeed—a mere drop in the ocean of ignorance. It will easily be seen that the primary Arab schools educate more than two-thirds of the children, and that they consequently are of the first interest to any one anxious for the improvement of the national culture. Unfortunately, they seem to exist only in order to impart a parrot-like acquaintance with the text of the Koran. For this purpose only have they been endowed by pious people. Any one fresh from seeing an infant school in England would feel a sense of utter bewilderment on entering one in Cairo. Every thing is topsy-turvy. The children read and write from left to right, and even begin to learn their sole lesson-book, the Koran, backward, because the latter chapters are easier and more important. The consequence is that, after a few visits to Arab schools, one cannot help a feeling of surprise when a child sneezes, or shows that he is changing his teeth at the same age as a little European.

One primary school in Cairo is well worth having a peep into. You open a door in the street, and find a room about ten feet square. It is below the level of the road, and lofty for its size. A grated window, high up gives a dim light; but a flood of sunshine comes in at the open door, and strikes full on the bright crimson robe of the *fakkeh* as he sits on his cushion in the corner. At one end stands the only piece of furniture in the room. It looks like a large harmonium done up in brown holland; but turns out to be a box containing the bones of a saint. In front of this curious piece of school furniture squat four-and-twenty little black and brown boys. One or two are disguised as girls, to protect them from ophthalmia. They sit in two rows, facing each other, and simultaneously rock their bodies violently backward and forward as they recite the alphabet, or that verse of the Koran which forms their day's task. The children shout at the top of their little cracked voices in a nasal tone far from musical. The noise they contrive to make is astounding, considering how small they are. If they cease their rocking and shrieking, even for a moment, the master brings down his long palm cane upon their shaven skulls, and they recommence with renewed energy, and an even more violent see-saw. The sentence repeated does not convey the slightest meaning to their minds, nor is any attempt made to explain it. Two or three older children are sitting beside the *fakkeh*, getting lessons in the formation