

# The Canadian Journal.

TORONTO, AUGUST, 1853.

The commencement of another volume of the *Canadian Journal* offers a suitable opportunity for reviewing the progress which has been made during the past year, by the only scientific Society in Western Canada, which has hitherto been bold enough to publish a record of its transactions. So numerous and yet so fruitless had former efforts been to sustain in full activity a Society devoted to scientific and industrial pursuits, that when it was proposed—not much more than two years ago—to place the Canadian Institute upon a broad basis, and to publish its transactions, few, but those who laboured unremittingly for the accomplishment of that object, imagined more encouraging results than those which had been already attained by some of its predecessors. The experiment, for such it undoubtedly was, has been eminently successful, and the monthly records of the past Session of the Institute afford the strongest assurance that its general design was wisely conceived, and the efforts to sustain it spirited and generous.

Although much has been already accomplished, and the first impulse given to the representation of the interests of Science and the Industrial Arts in this Province, we are fully aware that the Society will not yet admit of any relaxation in the support and co-operation of its promoters. It will require the continuance of active exertion for several years in order to combine that intellectual strength which matured and well-directed associations almost invariably command. That the Canadian Institute will grow with the growth and strengthen with the strength of the country it represents, we do not for a moment question; but, in order to arrive rapidly at the age of entire self-reliance, when it will draw to itself that literary support which it has hitherto solicited, the undiminished exertions of its present members are still in request. On the score of pecuniary resources, there is happily neither difficulty or doubt. The Provincial Government, with a liberality which cannot fail to secure the gratitude of all who can appreciate its value, has extended its powerful arm to lift into active and vigorous life the youngest of Canadian Societies. It will be a source of lasting benefit to its present and future members, to be able to recognize some of the fruits of that timely aid in the form of well-filled library shelves and a growing museum of Industry and Art.

Embracing now nearly three hundred members, scattered over every part of the Province, the Institute is rapidly becoming the acknowledged centre of practical and theoretical Science, as well as of Literature, in Western Canada,—a country whose sudden increase in wealth and population, whose astounding progress in railway enterprise and commercial activity, are unmistakable announcements of her social and political progress, and significant indications of her future destiny. May we not also see in the sudden spring of the Canadian Institute, from the weakness of

infancy to the vigour of youth, an equally encouraging sign of advancing appreciations of the claims of Literature and Science. It would be unreasonable to suppose that there could already be found among the transactions of the Society, or in the contributions to this Journal, any positive additions to knowledge such as illumine the records of kindred associations in older countries. And yet a search would not be altogether in vain. Ethnologists will be thankful for the glimpse which is given of the condition and numbers of the race now passing away from the prairies and forests of the British Possessions in America. "The time may not be far remote when posterity may be counting its last remnants, and wishing that we in our day had been more alive to the facts, and more industrious in setting up marks by which we might measure the ebbing tide, and comprehend the destiny about to be consummated."\* Meteorologists will acknowledge the worth of the elaborate monthly tables of temperature, magnetic disturbances, barometric fluctuations, rainfall, &c., which emanate from the Provincial Magnetical Observatory, and from the private Observatory of Dr. Smallwood, in Lower Canada. The hourly corrections of the Thermometer in Canada, derived from seven years of hourly observations at Toronto, will convey information to future observers of the most valuable description, which would, probably, have never seen the light but for the Canadian Institute.† Our readers will recognize with pleasure the local direction taken by many of the authors of the papers read before the Society at its weekly meetings. We venture to say that there is no surer way of awakening an interest in the study of Natural Science, than by selecting those departments for discussion which will permit of illustrations being brought from our forests, rivers, fields or rocks. Among the contributions to the Society's transactions, having a local or Canadian interest, we may mention:—"The Mineral Springs of Canada;" "The Provincial Currency;" "The Valley of the Nottawasaga;" "The Poisonous Plants in the neighbourhood of Toronto;" "The Rocks of Toronto," and "The Land Birds wintering near Toronto."

The subjects brought under the notice of the Institute during the last Session, will naturally attract the attention of those who interest themselves so far in its proceedings, as to endeavour to discover the tendencies of the Society from its transactions. Out of seventeen papers communicated during the Session of 1850-'1 and 1851-'2, no less than ten treated on topics relating to the Engineering and Surveying professions; whereas, out of fourteen papers read before the Society during the Session of 1852-'3, very few allusions were made by members to subjects bearing directly upon those professions. We give below a classification of the papers submitted to the Society during the last three years:—

1850, 1 and 2.

Engineering and Surveying.....	10
Geology and Physical Geography.....	6
Meteorology.....	1

\* On the probable numbers of the native Indian population of British America, Capt. J. H. Jeffry, R. A., read before the Canadian Institute, May 1, 1852. See Can. Jour. Vol. 1, p. 193.

† See Can. Jour., vol. 1, p. 77.