

was not a great man, but in his day he had been of immense service to his native country. He had in him that spirit of conservatism which is opposed to wild, rash and often disruptive innovation, and was heart and soul a supporter of the Queen's Government. A good soldier, he had drawn his sword for his king in the second American war,—was present before Plattsburg with Sir George Prevost. A sagacious legislator, he had early been entrusted with the seals of office, and successively filled nearly every station in the administration, and had been twice Prime Minister. His funeral was one of the largest and most interesting that has ever taken place in Canada. The presence of the leading men of the Province, with the representatives of the learned professions, Colleges and Societies, combined with the attendance of the Regular and Volunteer forces, which marched in the procession to the mournful strains of the military band, the scene in the church with the coffin, (on which were placed the sword and hat of the deceased—a colonel in the British army) surrounded with innumerable lighted candles, the chaunting of the funeral songs, and the parting volleys over the grave in the village church-yard, had an impressive character on the assembled throng not soon to be forgot.

Proceeding with our melancholy history we find the names of HON. G. S. DEBEAUXEV, M.L.C., among the dead for this month; also of GENERAL ADAMSON, of Norval, C. W., an old and well-tried soldier, as well as member of the Legislature before the Union; Mr. E. F. RYERSON, County Crown Attorney for Perth; Mr. GUSTAVE JOLY, a Huguenot gentleman, and father of the member for Lotbinière; Mr. W. V. BACON, solicitor, Toronto; and in September, those of Mr. S. W. MONS, Joint Prothonotary of Montreal, and HON. JAMES MONNIS, M.L.C., an old member of the Reform party, who, as Postmaster General in the Hincks' Government, introduced the present uniform rate of 5 cents letter postage.

But, perhaps, the greatest loss Canada suffered during the year is that of the Ex-Chief Justice of Upper Canada, the HON. ARCHIBALD McLEAN, who died at Toronto, on the 24th October, after a long, active, memorable and useful life. He, too, participated in the stirring events of the years 1812, '13, and '14; was wounded at Queenston, taken prisoner at Lundy's Lane, and only released at the expiration of the war. The year 1837 saw the martial and loyal spirit of his nature as fully alive to the dangers which threatened the Province, as they had been in his more youthful days, and he commanded a division to repel the rebels at Montgomery's tavern. Mr. McLean had been a member of the Assembly of Upper Canada for many years, and was twice elected speaker of that body. He had been raised to the Bench as early as the year of the rebellion. His integrity as a Judge was never questioned. Truly was it said of him that he shed honour on the various positions which he so ably filled.

In this same month we recall a plentiful crop garnered to the chilly granary of death. Dr. SEWELL, of Ottawa, one of the most learned of the medical profession; Mr. DESRYERE, of Malmaison; COLONEL DUBBERG, of Murray Bay; Rev. R. A. FLANDERS, of Stanstead; DR. BOCKLEY, of St. Hyacinthe, who had seen service in the British army during the Crimean campaign; Mr. JOSEPH CARY, late Deputy Inspector General; Mr. ROWLAND BURR, who took so deep an interest in the Georgian Bay Canal project; Rev. JAMES SKINNER, of London; and Mr. E. AMBROSSE, of the Gore Bank, Woodstock. Finally, to close the list, ere we roll up the fatal scroll, we find in the two last months of the year, the following recorded as having gone to that bourne whence no traveller returns: Rev. FATHER LEONARD, of Montreal; Mr. D. CARTIER, brother of the Attorney General; Major RYCKMAN, of Hamilton; Mr. P. LETOURNEAUX, of Montreal; Mr. T. EVANS of the same place; Mr. M. TESSIER, for a long period an Officer in the Commissariat Service, Colonel McKAY of Toronto, and Mr. J. MILNE, of Montreal.

Ere many days, another year will dawn upon us. How many of those who will extend a welcome to the new comer will survive to tell his history? Who will write the Canadian

Obituary of 1866? Should we not ask with the anonymous poet:

"But, watchman, what of the night,  
When the arrow of death is sped,  
And the grave, which no glimmering star can light  
Shall be my sleeping bed?"

That night is near, and the cheerless tomb,  
Shall keep thy body in store,  
Till the morn of eternity rise on the gloom,  
And night shall be no more."

## OUR COMING LITERATURE.

THE close of the seventeenth and that of the nineteenth century were marked by the decline of English literature. At the former period the great writers of the Elizabethan age and their immediate successors gave place to the wits and withings of the time of Charles the Second, whose productions are a disgrace to our language. Frivolity, indecency, immorality, and profanity, ran riot. There were exceptions, it is true; but even Dryden and Butler, for instance, with all their genius present in their writings many of the worst faults of their wholly worthless contemporaries. It was the fashion to be filthy; and they must needs defile themselves, by "mangling with the puppies in the mud." They had to gratify the public taste of their day, and that taste was vitiated to an extent which we trust will never again be witnessed in any nation or community speaking the English tongue. It is as painful as wonderful to reflect that he who painted Zimri and Achitophel, who wrote "Alexander's Feast" and the Ode to St. Cecilia, should also have written some of the plays which bear his name, though now happily all but forgotten. The light that led him astray in these last works was certainly not light from heaven, whencesoever it may have proceeded. The literature of the close of the eighteenth century was chiefly characterized by feebleness, with again a few eminent exceptions. It strikes us that we are once more sinking into some similar slough of despond. The men who have cast a halo of glory on our literature for the last fifty or sixty years have passed or are fast passing away, and we cannot see those of the present generation who are fit to succeed them. We fear the age of giants is to be followed by the age of dwarfs. Nor do we say this as *laudatores temporis acti*, admirers of by-gone days. Who among our more youthful writers are to be regarded as worthy successors of Scott, of Byron, of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Macaulay, Thackeray, Dickens, Tennyson, Irving, Prescott, and many more, some living and some dead, whom we might name? If they are to be found, they are Josephs whom we know not. Our old men prophesied, but our young men only dream dreams, and their visions are of lean kind, foretelling a famine in the republic of letters. We have small literary men and women in abundance, of the new race; but this is not a case in which quantity makes up for quality. In fact, whenever great writers are scarce, the mediocrities take possession of the stage, and we accept them in the absence of their betters. Of our crowd of popular writers whose books now find delighted readers, how few will be remembered or read a score of years hence? Their elders and their equals or, perhaps, their superiors, have been forgotten, and so will they. Who now reads Monk Lewis, Mrs. Radcliffe, Miss Porter, and a long array of such writers whom our fathers and mothers, our grandfathers and grandmothers used to hold in such huge admiration? The jaws of darkness have devoured them up.

The authors are dust,  
Their books are rust,  
Their souls are with the saints, we trust.

Well, they did the work allotted to them in their day and generation; and they and their tomes repose, side by side, sleeping the sleep that knows not waking. Yet no writer of the present time, 1865-6, is so great a favourite as Mrs. Radcliffe once was. The sensation her tales created seems absolutely incredible to us, and would be quite so, were not the fact so well attested. Monk Lewis was read everywhere—"upstairs, downstairs, and my lady's chamber,"—while the Misses Porter's "Scottish Chiefs," and "Thaddeus

of Warsaw" were pronounced miracles of human talent. Does not the knowledge of what these once famous personages were and are teach a lesson that ought not to be lost on us?

Let it not be supposed, however, that we object to the perusal of works of fiction. Far from it; there are novels that are worth their weight in gold. There is Don Quixote. What modern history, in as many volumes as the reader pleases, is it that the world would not rather see perish than this immortal production? There are many others, both in our own and other languages, which are scarcely less valuable. No, we do not object to novel-reading, and we are not ashamed to say it. Nay, for that matter, numberless famous men,—authors, statesmen, and warriors,—have been of the same opinion. We could name them by the dozen, but it will be sufficient if we mention Dr. Johnson, Charles James Fox, the poet Gray, George Canning, and Lord Jeffrey. But we confess that we dislike bad novels as much or more than we dislike bad writings of any sort. We think we can safely refer to our own pages in proof of our views on that point. We have avoided the publication of any tale or article in the least liable to reproach on the score of morality, sentiment or even style, for a vicious style is one of the many evils the reading public has to complain of. What, for example, can be more absurd than that species of composition of which the wisdom and wit chiefly consist of stale aphorisms and staler conceits embodied in bad spelling and bad grammar, and with which the literary market is inundated of late? If any one doubts the influence of the teachings of the press in this respect, let him look to the history of France, past and present. The encyclopedists had their day, and we all know the result; and we verily believe that the existing condition of that nation, social and political, is in a great measure attributable to the evil influence of the French writers of fiction. The United States is also suffering from the same cause. Not to speak of political journals, a species of literature has sprung up in the country almost as prejudicial to public morals as that which prevailed in England in the reign of Charles the Second. The difference between them is, that the one assumes a false sentimentality, the other prided itself in its undisguised profligacy and wickedness. Which of the two methods is the worst and most dangerous we will not pretend to assert, but both are decidedly bad. We, at least, have pursued and will follow a different course, and, we trust, not altogether in vain.

But it is not the mere lack of first rate talent in our come or coming writers that we have most to dread. The tone assumed, and the taste evinced by many of them is still more to be feared. We have the spasmodic school, the eccentric school, the false sentiment school, the sensational school, the ungrammatical school, and a school combining all those faults. We repeat our conviction therefore, that we are in imminent danger of a disastrous revolution in our literature.

As a frontispiece to Mr. Gerald Massey's edition of Shakespeare's Sonnets, there will be given a new portrait, or, as the editor styles it, a "recovered likeness of the man Shakespeare." The circular says:—"It is claimed for this new reading of 'Shakespeare's Sonnets' that it fathoms and unfolds a secret history which has been sealed for two centuries and a half, and solves one of the most piquant and important of literary problems. It shows how the things here written were once lived by Shakespeare and his friends; how the poet was still the player, and wore the dramatic mask in his 'idle hours'; how the 'sweet Swan of Avon,' like Wordsworth's swan, upon St. Mary's Lake.

'Floats double, swan and shadow.'

It corrects the grave errors made by superficial research, and clears up the mystery of Thorpe's (the printer's) inscription." We must not forget, however, that similar promises of clearing up the mystery hanging around these poems have before now been made by other editors.