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THE INTELLECTUAL PROGRESS OF CANADA DURING THE LAST FIFTY YEARS, AND THE PRESENT STATE OF ITS LITERATURE.*

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WITH the year 1874 closed the fiftieth year of the existence of our Society; and, therefore, I have thought an appropriate theme on which to address you is the intellectual progress of Canada, and more especially of the Provinces of Quebec and Ontario during the last half century. At its creation, expectations of a very exalted kind were entertained with regard to the influence of our Society. In their address to the public, its founders said: "It will raise us in the moral and intellectual scale of nations. It will cherish our noblest feelings of honour and patriotism, by showing that, the more men become acquainted with the history of their country, the more they prize both their country and themselves. In a literary point of view, it is fair to expect that the formation of this Society will introduce a lasting

bond of union and correspondence between men eminent for rank, erudition, and genius, from one extremity of the British provinces to another." We can scarcely claim to have fulfilled these anticipations; nevertheless, our Society has doubtless done much to encourage and foster a love of literature in this city, and in its publications it has distributed to historical students the world over documents to which they have acknowledged their indebtedness. The Society has always afforded its members access to a good library, and, in addition, has tried in various ways to stimulate literary activity and to encourage investigation in physical science; but the results have not been encouraging. Yet, when we look to see what success similar endeavours, made by kindred societies, have met with, we find that the disappointment has been general. We are, therefore, led to seek for influences operating everywhere in Canada, which are detrimental to literary culture and literary production; and

* An address read before the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, on the 3rd of March, 1875.