

fact that men of letters by no means take that leading position in political affairs that we would expect in a country where the press is so powerful. It must be remembered, however, that it is only within a very short period that the American Republic has had a literature of its own. The absence of a large class of professional literary men—excepting of course journalists—may be easily accounted for by the fact of the splendid career open to enterprise in a new country. So many undertakings and speculations, leading to the acquisition of wealth, are open to men of action, that there has been hardly room, until recently, for the purely literary man. Within a very few years, however, the United States has been able to present a noble array of talent:—Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, in history; Longfellow, Whittier, Bryant, in poetry; Cooper, Irving and Holmes, in general literature; besides very many others, almost as eminent in the same or other departments of letters. With the acquisition of wealth, intellectual tastes have been developed, and a literature, essentially American, has grown up. The statesmen of the early days of the Republic were men of highly cultivated minds, who found in the pursuit of letters agreeable rest from the absorbing public cares which naturally weighed down those who were engaged in building up a great state. Franklin, a patriot in the real sense of the term, was a man of science—a moral and political philosopher of a high order. Jefferson's attainments were of a very superior standard, and his public writings exhibit a purity and conciseness of style that have been rarely surpassed by the best English political writers. John Quincy Adams—the son of that John Adams who was called by Jefferson, “the column of Congress, the pillar of support to the Declaration of Independence, and its ablest advocate and defender,”—was an active pamphleteer and contributor to the periodical literature of his country. It is unfortunately too true that men of conspicuous talent do not now possess the influence they should in the arena of politics, and that they have too often to yield to the reckless, noisy demagogue. We must agree, however, with a distinguished British American statesman,* whose terrible death is still so fresh in our memory:—“It needs no argument to prove that in this reading and writing age—‘the age of the press,’ as it has been called—power must be wherever true intelligence is, and where most intelligence, most power. If England conquers India by intellect and bravery, she can retain it only at the price of re-educating India; if a Czar Peter and a Czarina Catherine add vast realms to the Russian Empire, they, too, must send out the schoolmasters to put up the fences, and break in the wild cattle they have caught; if a United States reaches the rank of first powers, it must at the same time send its best writers as ambassadors of its interior civilization. To this end Benjamin Franklin, Irving, Everett, Paulding, Bancroft, Motley and Marsh have been selected with the true instinct of mental independence, to represent the new country at the old courts of christendom; while Payne, Gooderich, Hawthorne, Mitchell, and other literary men, have filled important consular offices, by the dictation of the same sentiment of intellectual

*The Mental Outfit of the New Dominion: by T. D. McGee. Montreal, 1867.