

Literary Criticism.

"PICTURESQUE CANADA."—PART I.

American citizens are born "calculators," and, according to the testimony of one of their prominent teachers, (cited in our last number) arithmetic forms the principal element in a large proportion of their schools. Encouraged as they have been, to "calculate" from their cradles, it is to be expected, that we, on this side the line, should have some experience of their calculations, and perhaps one of the most felicitous results of this mental exercise is found in the volume entitled as above. It is highly advantageous to this Dominion that persons should have cropped up who, in promoting their individual interest, should concurrently advance that of this country. The costly publication which has resulted from so much calculation on the part of our neighbours, is illustrative to a greater extent than they intended, for it is one thing to invest dollars by the hundred thousand, to devise an elaborate scheme of canvassing, to map out this Dominion, the United States, and the world at large in accordance therewith, to secure the services of the highest class of artists, to advertise largely, to purchase the glossiest paper, the best type, and even to obtain an editor with position and repute, and yet to culminate in illustrating a signal deficiency of literary perception, a deficiency so striking that, in common with almost every other literary production, governmental or otherwise, that we have seen emanating from Canada, it is calculated to raise a laugh among the cultivated at the expense of the Dominion, which will be supposed to be answerable for its demerit. No sooner do we reach the third line of the work than we are led to suppose that the author plucked his quill from a tailor's goose, for we find him remarking that "in taking stock of national outfit, Quebec should count for something." The confusion of figures involved by "taking stock" being united with "national outfit," is singularly discordant, and either of these forms of expression, if regarded separately, is equally incongruous; had they occurred in a thesis of a boy of fourteen, his teacher would doubtless have visited them with a bad mark; when we reach the fourth line, we learn that "we have a future, and with it" (that future) that great red rock, and the red cross flag that floats over it are inseparably bound up; the Principal of Queen's University has probably (like Dr. Wild) been so immersed in the profundities of classical literature that he has devoted but little time to the study of the vulgar tongue, otherwise he would hardly write of a flag being "bound up" with a rock; we trust, however, that the illustration afforded by the Principal, of the little that comes, in his own case, of a college education, although that illustration was not one of those which entered into the "calculations" of the publishers, may result indirectly in the educational benefit of the country. We find ourselves threading our way among long labyrinthine sentences, characterized by a style of diction so homely as to amount to vulgarity, before we have passed two pages, and in the former part of the second, we are told that "the city and the Province of Quebec preserve . . . the faith that the revolution has submerged in the France of their forefathers;" whatever that may happen to mean. The hushness of another of the opening sentences, which appears to quote Voltaire, will probably befog ninety-nine readers out of a hundred: this celebrated author's "appreciation" of the

loss of Canada is related to have been "like unto his estimate of 'those miserable Jews,' about whose literature the world was not likely to trouble itself much longer when it could get the writings of the French *Philosophes* instead." We venture to regard such a sentence as the foregoing, as singularly misplaced within a dozen lines of the commencement of such a work as that of *Picturesque Canada*. We don't reach the end of the second page before we come to positive bad grammar—"wide-extended," where a grammarian would necessarily have written "widely extended." As we proceed, we are struck with a succession of faults of composition too numerous to indicate, until we are brought to a stand by "all the way down to Cap Tourmente . . . an unbroken forest ranged," we are set wondering whither the forest "ranged," and are left without enlightenment; the next phenomenon we meet with, is that of a "mountain turned into an immense picture suspended high in air;" a remarkable conversion of a mountain certainly! Then we read of snow "shading the soil," protecting it possibly from the scorching rays of the sun; we learn that "a good snow-fall means roads," and that "an excessive supply of snow and ice can never be so bad as the pall that covers England and Scotland half the year, and makes the people 'take their pleasures sadly,' some of us have lived half a century in "merrie England" without coming in sight of "the pall," or of the people who take their pleasures sadly; we suspect that the pall overhangs the intellect of the Principal of Queen's University, and now that we have survived the perusal of his fourth page, we have concluded that it would have been well if the publishers of *Picturesque Canada* had required him to graduate at one of our public schools prior to undertaking so responsible a position as that of editor of their costly and elaborate enterprise.—*Ed.*

We learn that the Reverend Doctor Hunter has embarked in the vocation of life assurance, and we think that most persons will concur with ourselves in the opinion that the affairs of "the life that now is" will be more congenial to the Reverend gentleman's capacity than pretending to occupy himself with that "which is to come."

AN OLD JOKE.—A man went into a drug store and asked for something to cure a headache. The druggist held a bottle of hartshorn to his nose, and he was nearly overpowered by its pungency. As soon as he recovered he began to rail at the druggist and threatened to punch his head. "But didn't it help your headache?" asked the apothecary. "Help my headache!" gasped the man. "I haven't any headache. It's my wife that's got the headache."

CRITICAL ASSOCIATION.

It is gratifying to learn that certain gentlemen in Toronto, who meet weekly for social intercourse, cultivate such friendly relations as admit of their calling each other to account when any of them is found tripping in pronunciation, in quotation, or in grammar. If they hear any of their associates tripping in public, they call the delinquent to account on the first occasion of meeting privately. If such a practice had been more widely adopted, we should not find Heads of Colleges publicly proclaiming their bad English, and other blunders, as they now elect to do.