

family house, or the contents of a library of some standing, how soon you come to strata of fossils! In some such strain, at least, we are probably ready to speak of long rows of folios, quartos, *et infra*, that meet the eye; although with books, as Milton admonishes us, there is a difference. They are not absolutely dead things, but "do contain a potencie of life in them," to use his own words "to be as active as that soule was whose progeny they are." So that, let its exterior be ever so antiquated, and its interior ever so dry, it is difficult to find a book that is wholly fossil. There are yet subsisting within it particles of a vital force, even as in the seemingly cold ashes of the hearth, you shall sometimes find, if you stir them, a spark or two of live fire.

I have been led to these thoughts, from having had occasion lately to disturb the contents of an out-of-the-way shelf, which I had made a kind of limbo for old School-books and other chance survivors of the period of boyhood and youth. Old friends of this sort, associated with the first awakening of the mind and its earliest growth, we are all of us, I suppose, more or less loth wholly to part with; although, generally, in the lapse of years, most of them pass away out of our sight, dissipated and lost, one scarcely knows how.

Now it had happened that in the receptacle referred to, I had stored away a good many of such waifs and strays of the past, on re-handling which, I found to my surprise and no slight pleasure that not a few among the motley assemblage had begun now to acquire the odour of antiquity and to be entitled to classification under the head of "curious." I have accordingly thought that possibly a brief account of some of them might not be unacceptable. To you perhaps as to me, the objects presented will be as "the distant spires and antique

towers" of Eton, seen from "the stately height of Windsor's brow" were to Gray, restorative for a while of the sensation of youth; but far from our review be the morbidness of spirit which marks and surely mars the famous composition of Gray.

I have ventured to name 1818 and 1881 as my Then and Now, partly for the sake of the alliteration, if one may so speak, of the figures; but also because, at the former date, there can be no doubt every thing that was homely and old-fashioned in school-books and juvenile literature was still flourishing in full vigour; whilst, at the same time, it is certain that from that date onward the revolution in matters educational which has landed us where we are to-day, became more and more perceptible. Further too, I think I have reason to believe that the fascination of books must have begun with oneself about that time, recalling as I can do now, with considerable freshness, the rude wood-cut or copper-plate illustrations, if not the text, of several small tomes which about that time came in my way.

The books in my recent find, then, may, as I hope, assist us in taking stock of scholastic and literary progress amongst us, furnishing for the purpose some material for comparison and contrast. In several instances, too, they may give, incidentally, an idea of what the disadvantages of a young aspirant after knowledge were in this region of Canada some sixty years ago.

I have doubts as to being able to inspire in you the interest which I find enkindled in myself by the somewhat unpromising row of volumes before us. But should I succeed in doing so in even a moderate degree I shall be content. If no other result ensue, it may refresh the eye to gaze, for a short while, upon their not forgotten sheepskin and brown calf covers, once smooth and bright, now rubbed and faded; the joints in some