

project, announced in the foregoing communication, will not be misunderstood by those, at least, who remember the Editorial note on the subject in our issue of July last. Since that date His Excellency seems to have changed his design with regard to the institution it was understood he was then about to inaugurate. 'The Canadian Academy of Letters' has broadened out into an association composed of scientists as well as *littérateurs*, the former being the more numerous, and likely to be the more efficient body. The necessity of this enlargement of the scheme will, of course, be apparent; and it is one that might have suggested the limiting of the scope of the Society to the labours alone of those who represent Science. Named, as we learn the Association is to be, after the Royal Society of England, it is, we think, a matter of regret that its intended Canadian counterpart did not imitate its English model and modestly refrain from taking literature under its patronage. In Canada there were special reasons why this course should have been followed, not, it is true, because literature in this country has assumed any magnitude, but for the contrary reason, among others, that it is of too slight a growth to be placed at a disadvantage with the stronger department of science. General objections to an official patronage of Letters we need not here go into, nor need we repeat what was said in the July Magazine as to the doubtful gain to literature in the founding of a Literary Academy, an institution which has never taken root in England, and is a dubious success in France, except as it slakes the thirst of the mortal 'immortals' for the ribbons and distinctions it confers. But what, we would ask, is to be the practical influence of this society upon Canadian literature? We are all serving but an apprenticeship to letters in Canada, and it would seem, at least, premature to elevate any set of men above their fellows, and to confer upon them a distinction which the public is likely to be slow to recognize, and sure to be jealous of its own exclusive right to bestow. An Art Academy is an idea we can grasp, and the motive of which, even in a small community, we can readily comprehend. An Association, composed of specialists in Science, is also intelligible; and organization in its interests is not only commendable but in a great measure a neces-

sity. The former, happily now an existing institution, has given proof of its *raison d'être*; the latter, if established, we incline to think would similarly justify itself. But not so, in our opinion, a Canadian Academy of Letters;—and for the following reasons:—First, because the function of such a body, we take it, would in the main be critical; and this, while our literature is in its nonage, would not be helpful. We must have growth, as Comte says, before we have discipline. The spontaneous activities, as one of our own writers expresses it, must work and produce some solid results before the organizing faculty can find profitable employment. Secondly, the Academy having little to do, we fear that its members would develop censoriousness or dilletanteism, either of which would be fatal to the intellectual life. Thirdly, because the erecting of a caste in Letters—the sure result of admittance into a select body of literary men—would have a prejudicial effect upon literature, tend to nourish conceit, and lead to undesirable jealousies among our writers. Fourthly, for the reason that appointment or election to the Association would, we fear, be degraded to marketable uses—a result which, in our limited field of literature, would not add to its honourable pursuit, or tend to its healthy advancement. And, fifthly, because the Academy, in the invidious distinction it would be likely to make between literature and journalism, would offend and alienate a large class of men upon whom falls the toilsome yet important work of educating the community through the agency of the Press—a class to whom the country owes much, and which it would be an ungracious act to debar from honour. The plea upon which journalists would be excluded from an Academy of Letters, it will be admitted, is one which even in older communities it would be delicate to act upon. In Canada, no safe distinction or separation between the different departments of the profession could well be made. For here, the *littérateur*, if he is to live by his pen, is almost sure to take to journalism. In cases where this occurs, selection or rejection by the Academy will always entail a nice discrimination, and more than likely lead to an embarrassing result. For, looking to the mental equipment now-a-days of writers for the press, and remembering how few