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CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS.

MONTREAL, SATURDAY, JANUARY 17, 1874.

THE DESBARATS LITHOGRAPHIC AND PUBLISHING COMPANY.

The Engraving, Printing and Publishing business founded and heretofore carried on by G. E. Desbarats, will henceforth be continued by a Joint Stock Company under the above title. This Company, which will shortly be incorporated by charter under the Great Seal of the Dominion of Canada, has acquired the property of "The Canadian Illustrated News," "The Favorite," "The Canadian Patent Office Record and Mechanics' Magazine," "The Dominion Guide," "L'Opinion Publique," and other publications issued by G. E. Desbarats, also his Patents, in Photo-typing, Photo-lithographing, Electro-typing, etc., and the good-will of his large Lithographic and Type Printing Business.

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Meanwhile, the ample Capital at its command will enable it to push the existing business to the utmost extent compatible with its present location; to improve the above mentioned publications in every particular, and to satisfy its customers, as to promptness, style of workmanship, and moderation in prices.

The Patronage of the enlightened Canadian Public in every part of the Dominion is solicited for this new Company, which will strive to build up a business alike beneficial and creditable to Canada.

We have received directly from the proper officials the address of the Canadian National Association to the people of Canada. We have read it carefully and with every disposition to do it critical justice. We could hardly do less, seeing that we were among the first who, tired and disgusted with the narrow spirit of partisanship which prevails in the political world of Canada to-day, have advocated a policy of thorough independence and demanded that our young men should come forward and take the lead in the business of the country. There is no denying that the two parties which have divided and still divide the state, are thoroughly selfish, and look to their own aggrandizement, as well as to their own hold of power, as the *primum mobile* of their actions. When Sir John A. Macdonald fell, many even of his supporters hoped that he would be succeeded by an era of healthful, invigorating reform. Instead of that, the old leaders of the Grit and Rouge parties came into power, and their movements during the two months that they have been in office, prove that they are pursuing the same old partisan policy which they have followed for the last twenty years. Honestly, what could be expected of Mr. Dorion, as a politician and a leader, however much we may respect him as a man? And Mr. Mackenzie, in every public utterance of his since his advent to the Premiership, in his speech at Sarnia, in his address at the Huntington dinner, and in his late manifesto to his constituents, has displayed a capacity for abuse and a narrow spirit of partisanship which are profoundly discouraging to all those who expected from him, at least, the qualities of broad statesmanship. With every disposition to do the new Cabinet justice, there is reason to fear that they will follow in the footsteps of the men whom they have ousted, and we have absolutely no guarantee that they are any purer than the former. Holding these views, we cannot do otherwise than welcome the appearance of a party of young Canadians who, like ourselves, are resolved to burst asunder the trammels of old party ties, and take a manly, independent stand on the basis of "Country and Canada first." But when we have said this, we fear we have gone as far as the present circumstances of the country will warrant. Mr. Foster, Mr. Howland, Mr. McWilliams and other officers of the Canadian National Association, are sagacious enough to know that theirs is only a feeble beginning and that it will take years of patient struggling against the rooted prejudices of the extremists of both the old parties, before their ideas will begin to germinate and bear fruit. The late Henry Raymond, of the *New York Times*, once told Carl Benson, that, from his experience, it took between five and seven years to drive a new theory into the heads of the people. Our friends must make

up their minds to exercise that heroic patience which is both an indication of strong character and an almost infallible earnest of ultimate success. And there is more. They will have to be much more definite and outspoken than their address is. Theirs is a new party. It must therefore have a *distinct* policy. Its main stays must be taken from the best points of the existing parties, but it must have a rallying cry of its own, whereby to engage the masses under its standard. "Its platform" as set forth in an appendix to the address, contains eleven articles. The first of these is "British Connection: Consolidation of the Empire." This article is drawn from the Conservative party, and is a definite repudiation of both annexation and premature independence. So far, so good. The Income Franchise, Encouragement of Immigration, Improved Militia System, Reorganization of the Senate and Pure and Economical Administration are doctrines derived from the Reform party. That is, also, very well. But where is the novel, the distinctive feature? Perhaps this—the imposition of duties for Revenue, so adjusted as to afford every possible encouragement to Native Industries." This is a bold announcement in favor of Protection, as opposed to Free Trade, on the one hand, and to discriminating tariffs, on the other. Let the new party make this one point its *cheval de bataille* and then its name "Canada first," will have a meaning which the whole people will understand. If it does so, it will find itself at war with monopoly and in harmony with the masses. It has, however, an arduous work before it. The address is verbose and shadowy. Action is required more than words. Let our friends show us what they can do and how far they are willing to go, and then they may rely upon our support.

The peculiar cry of dissatisfied politicians seems to be that their opponents "have had their day." The Young Canada people tell us that everybody, except themselves, has had his day, and now Mr. Devlin, who wishes to unseat Mr. Ryan in Centre Montreal, whimpers that "Mr. Ryan has been in Parliament for seven years, and surely he has had his day." The appeal is pathetic if it is nothing else.

"The Policy" has come at last. Welcome Little Stranger! Are you satisfied, gentlemen of the Opposition?

(For the Canadian Illustrated News.)

IN MY STUDY.

II

More and more in literature are we falling into the fashion of those Athenians of old who spent their time in nothing else than either hearing or telling something new. We must know what is going on in the world; we must know what living men are saying on living questions; we must know what new ideas are springing up; and the demands thus made on our time and energies are such as almost to shut us out from intercourse with the departed great whose names we still honour and with whose works we are supposed as a matter of course to have more or less acquaintance. There are some who think that our business is exclusively with the modern world, and that we should not trouble or burden ourselves with reviewing or keeping in memory the productions of a dead past. My friend Hardtack, who is devoted to natural science and finds nothing interesting that does not illustrate some "law" or other, was, the other day, looking over the lecture list of a certain literary society in which we have a common interest, and perceiving that there was to be a lecture on some mediæval writer, "What," he exclaimed "is the use of unearthing these mummies? What can we learn from such a poor dark age as that?" I did not discuss the matter with him because probably we should have had to dig too deep down to find a basis of agreement on which to build my argument; but in my own mind I felt it was quite within the bounds of possibility that even that "poor dark age," rightly interpreted and represented, might afford me a very large amount of instruction, however unprofitable it might prove to my more "practicable" friend. Is there, then, no interest, no instruction, in studying the expanding mind of childhood? Or can it be that while the childhood of the individual is eminently worthy of study, the childhood, or comparative childhood, of the race is worthy of none. I do not hesitate to say that no man can know himself well who has so forgotten his childhood as to have lost all sympathy with childish ways and insight into childish ideas; and that similarly no man can fully understand the present age who does not constantly view it as the outcome of all the past, and does not gratefully acknowledge that to those ancestors whose errors it is now so easy to smile at we owe that brain-power, those habits, and those social and political institutions through which we have been enabled to achieve the works that render our generation memorable. We inherit their stored-up treasure. Had they been to any material extent different from what they were, we could not be what we now are. A little more superstition or a little less moral earnestness in the last generation and my friend Hardtack himself would not have had the creditable zeal for science that now characterizes him. The wildest fable in the heathen mythology was that which told how Pallas had sprung full-armed from the brow of Zeus, but to hear some of our most enlightened neighbours talk, one would think they were the victims of a wilder fable still, the fable of the XIXth century having sprung, full of science, full of philosophy, full of everything good and great and admirable—from NOWHERE! We are all, and the dead whose accumulated experiences form the basis of everything we have done, whose thoughts we are thinking over again, whose verbal combinations serve us at every turn as the most precious of intellectual implements, whose affections are still warm at our heart's core—they are nothing. We, standing on their shoulders, see ever so much farther than they did, and, forsooth, we pity their feeble vision and laugh at their narrow horizons.

Many able men unfortunately have lent the weight of their authority to systems of education tending to confine the thoughts and sympathies of youth almost wholly to the pre-

sent time. One of these is the Home Secretary in the present English Cabinet, Mr. Lowe. This gentleman, an elegant classical scholar himself, devoted an elaborate address on education a couple of years ago to little else than a disparagement of classical studies, and indeed of all studies that do not directly tend to the useful in the most material sense of the word. The late Mr. Cobden was of opinion that there was more wisdom to be found in a single number of the *London Times* than in "all the works of Thucydides." Some carping critics at the time suggested that to refer to Thucydides as a voluminous writer did not argue a very competent acquaintance with the one work he has left behind him, and that possibly the eminent economist was better able to do justice to the *London Times* than to the History of the Peloponnesian War; but this was of course a frivolous objection. A man who can negotiate a commercial treaty need not stand on ceremony with writers who lived ever so many ages ago, who knew nothing of free-trade, nothing of the steam-engine, and had hardly any conception of the modern idea of progress.

Must it not be confessed, however, that many of us, who do not share Mr. Cobden's opinion, seem compelled to act very much as if we did. We read the daily and weekly journals, gallop through a vast amount of criticism on works we can never undertake to peruse, and now and there perhaps seize upon some work in particular that is making a little more noise than usual, the most popular novel, the most picturesque book of travels or the most diverting essay in amateur theology. And so days pass into months and months into years and silently the dust is forming upon our standard Shakspereans and Spensers and Miltons, adding a point that Horace never foresaw to his epitaph on human greatness—"pulvis et umbræ sumus." Horace himself begins to be a strange book to some who in years gone by thumbed and annotated him through and through; the old pencil-marks still remain perhaps in the favourite Oxford edition, but many a passage here and there gives the quondam "honour-man" an impression that he would not like to be examined even in Horace without a little time for preparation.

It is impossible not to regret that such should be the case. The literature of the day, as has been wisely remarked, however freighted it may be with valuable thought, is not to us, in the true sense literature at all. It produces none of the moral effects of true literature, any more than an appalling accident produces the effect of a tragic drama. Tragedy, according to the oft-quoted dictum of Aristotle, purifies the affections through pity and terror; a calamity in real life has no such effect; upon those who witness it, its effect is not purifying or chastening, but painful, confusing and, if I may so speak, disorganizing. To enjoy the charm of literature the mind must not be in eager pursuit either of knowledge or of ideas; it must not be struggling with doubts on fighting the battle of a party or a sect: it must have gained some high and tranquil position above the storms and mists of this present time, and be able to look with a benignly impartial eye upon all for us of thought and opinion. In the true literary region error has lost its sting, the victor no longer exults over the vanquished, but those who in their lifetime were enemies now join in teaching a mild and lofty wisdom to all who seek their society and conversation.

These Elysian fields are not to be found by us in what is called the literature of the day. We may be "well up" in that and yet never have experienced one throb of that pleasure which pure literature imparts; for the simple reason already hinted at that all contemporary writing of a vigorous or natural kind breathes of the struggles of the hour, tells of the clash of hostile opinions or still worse of hostile interests. Where questions are not stated and discussed they are suggested, and the mind is kept all the time more or less in a condition of turmoil and debate. It must be so: only through much tribulation does humanity achieve its triumphs over error, and our labours and wanderings of to-day mark a stage in the progress of the race to its predestined goal. Let us then recognize the fact that all this boundless production of the press in these days is not to us—unless in quite exceptional cases—literature; it is simply one aspect, one expression of the work and struggle of our generation. To know what literature is we must look back, we must wander among absolute and half-forgotten controversies, we must revive the wit, the humour, the fancies, the illusions that gave a character to existence in by-gone days, we must feel the fresh breezes that moved over the face of nature in "the world's great dawn," or gaze with pensive emotion after the light of suns whose setting was long ago. Once away from the present and from all that is to us of immediate personal interest, we begin to breathe freely; it is like being transported suddenly from the stifling atmosphere and dizzying sounds of some pent-up town to the fresh expanse and glorious calm of the mountains, the moors or the seashore.

Let those of us then who have the opportunity, and who wish to keep our minds healthy and pure and fresh, see to it that we spare a little time at least for converse with the world's great classics. We may not go to them for instruction; possibly all their thoughts have been incorporated in the thought of the present day; but still they can impart to us much that our minds will be the richer and, in every way, the better for receiving. They, who worked out many of the ideas now in common use, can make us feel the force of those ideas, and all that they involve, better, perhaps, than contemporary writers. They revive for us suppressed links in the association of ideas and make us more completely master of our own mental possessions. John Stuart Mill in his "Autobiography" says that much of his intellectual activity, at the period of his early manhood, consisted in "re-discovering things known to all the world which I had previously disbelieved or disregarded." "But re-discovery was to me a discovery, giving me plenary possession of the truths, not as traditional platitudes, but 'fresh from their source.'" So it is with all thoughtful minds and probably there is no greater aid to this vivid apprehension of truths than the perusal of authors to whom they had not become the platitudes they are to the world of to-day; authors who perhaps were directly concerned in working them out, and who, therefore, felt them as we only feel our own special discoveries.

By way of conclusion a practical caution may not be amiss. Whenever you hear a man uttering what seems a common-place truth with real earnestness and warmth, be sure it is not commonplace to him. Like John Stuart Mill, he may have re-discovered it, and, if so, he probably feels its force and understands its applications much more fully than those who imagine they have always known all about it. There is more to be gained by following such a man's example than by smiling at his simplicity.