

# NEW DOMINION MONTHLY.

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## THE PRESS OF ONTARIO.

BY A MEMBER OF THE FOURTH ESTATE.

It need hardly be urged that those who compare the press of Great Britain or of the United States with that of Canada will not be just in their conclusions if they leave out of the calculation the circumstances of each country. Felling forests and burning brush heaps were the first duties in Canada, as they are the first duties in most new countries. The struggle at the beginning was for the necessaries of life. Little time was left for literature, even if the population was sufficiently numerous for its support. Journalism in Great Britain is the fruit of centuries of culture and the outcome of a constituency of wealthy readers and advertisers. The American Republic has a population of 40,000,000; Ontario has less than 2,000,000; the Dominion of Canada but 4,000,000. When the relative circumstances of the several countries are dispassionately considered, Canada has no reason to dread the ordeal of comparison.

Fifty years ago the greater portion of Ontario was densely covered with "the forest primeval." The adventurous settler enters "the bush" with bright axe and brave heart—usurping the former home of the Indian, and driving farther back the wolf and the bear, the fox and the deer. He soon hews out a "clearing" and erects his log house. Ere long a blacksmith shop makes its appearance at "the corner" where two roads intersect; then a store, with post-office attachment; then the school-house, with its preaching service on the Sabbath; after a while a church;

very likely a tavern also. Such are the nuclei from which have expanded flourishing towns and cities like those which dot Ontario. Hitherto the intellectual food of the little but ambitious village has been the common school, and the occasional or regular "preaching service." A new project is now mooted, though with fear and trembling—nothing less than the establishment of a local newspaper. Perhaps a sum of money is subscribed as a bonus by the leading residents; and some young man, usually a practical printer, induced to assume the responsibility. Our "later Franklin" of necessity begins humbly. He is his own book-keeper; his own canvasser; his own pressman; his own compositor; his own reporter; often his own "devil;" generally his own editor. Under circumstances like the foregoing, who can blame him if he installs as first assistant—his scissors! The usefulness of the local newspaper cannot be overestimated. From the day of its appearance it stimulates and encourages enterprise in the locality in which it is published, and contributes more largely than is always realized or acknowledged to the progress of its place of birth. The strength of the local journal lies in fully chronicling local occurrences—in other words, supplying what can be obtained nowhere else. As the village expands into a town, the unassuming hebdomadal grows into a firm and enterprising weekly journal, of which class the Stratford *Beacon* may be named as a notable example. Some of these towns—Guelph and