

"ing-house desk. No, he has kept whole "and long night vigils, and those not a few, "with scribblers, compilers and printers' "devils." The first article in the paper, the salutation to its readers, is in some respects a quaint production. In the commencement of the present century, it is tolerably evident, the popular impression that everybody could edit a paper much better than the man who was trained to and charged with the performance of that duty, was about as prevalent as it is to-day. Thus Mr. Cary, expressing his thanks for the encouragement he had received and the suggestions which had been offered to him, said:—

"Though by their coming from opposite and various characters and interests, they are so multifarious, and some of them so contradictory, in their natures, that he is placed in a far worse predicament than the old man, his son and his ass in the fable. If ever an apology was realized, this most assuredly is in the case of an editor of an open periodical paper, in a small society, peculiarly constituted like ours, and that in an aggravated degree. Strange to tell! even lawyers and doctors administer advice *gratis*. All are anxious to see themselves in print. The Parliament man, in his debates; the lawyer in reports of his arguments; the soldier in the list of promotions; the merchant in details of his exports and imports. The European wishes to be informed of the marriages, births, deaths, and all that relates to his friends at home. To him his acquaintance is the whole world. One says 'let your paper be a prop to the Government'; another cries, 'We do not want a Government paper; we must have a free paper.' Every man is desirous of being gratified in his own way. All which is very natural. Gentlemen, as far as it is here practicable, to the best of the editors' abilities, your wishes shall all be done. But have candour, have mercy, have indulgence."

And with these convictions of his difficulties, Mr. Cary sent his paper out to the public. How news was to be obtained in a locality where happenings were so few and far between was of course a difficulty, but the editor met the difficulty thus:—

"The want of a minister to bait; of a party to support or asperse; of local revolutions, insurrections, frequent earthquakes, hurricanes, inundations, hangings, drownings, horrid murders and such accidents is, to be sure, matter of much lamentation and regret to an editor who wishes to interest his readers. To fabricate both them and political events might, perhaps, be a very arduous task; but it is to be apprehended that in such case Quebec currency might sink in value, even below New York currency. However, if we cannot have them on the spot, nor fabricate them without hazarding our reputation, we must be content with purloining them wherever they are to be found."

The latest news from abroad in this number of the *Mercury* is of date 18th October, or about eleven weeks old. There are extracts

from two manuscripts written by the Jesuits, which had come into the hands of the editor, giving the origin of the names Canada and Quebec, the first having been given by the Spaniards to the country which they "had "already visited, if they are to be believed, "and which they despised, saying that there "was nothing to be done or to be got for "them, in so sad a climate. Hence the word "Canada, which in Spanish signifies nothing "here;" and the other from the contraction of the river at that point "from whence the "inhabitants of the country called it Quebec, "which means contraction or *retrecissement*."

The Speech from the Throne at the opening of the Legislature on the 9th January, 1805, contains but one paragraph of directly local interest, apart from the recommendation of measures in view of the disturbed condition of affairs in Europe, and the possibility of danger to the British provinces in America. That paragraph was as follows:—

"I have received and shall order to be laid before you, representations relating to the insufficiency of the gaol at Montreal, which tend to prove the immediate necessity of your taking this subject into your most serious consideration; and which, I trust, will lead, without further delay, to the completion of an object, alike interesting to the feelings of humanity, and important to the public security."

The improvement of the city gaol accommodation as the chief feature in a vice-regal utterance, is rather suggestive alike of the paucity of practical questions and the early development of a criminal class in the population. There is

#### MUCH WIT AND HUMOR

in this first volume of the *Mercury*, but one instance of which I have time to give. It is a notice headed "Female Promotion," and it is in the following terms:—

"The *Breret* for old maids will appear in our next. It is therefore requested that all ladies, of the age of 30 and upwards, will send in their names, post paid, to Mr. Thompson, hairdresser, in order to their promotion from the disconsolate rank of *Miss* to that of *Mistress*."

"Note.—This is the last time of asking."

In subsequent numbers follow amusing letters in response to this notice, signed "Elvina," "Tabitha Bramble," "Jemima Fondlechild," "Lucretia," "Sarah Sappless," and a number of other equally suggestive names; the trick of the trade, which is sometimes resorted to even yet, of provoking correspondence upon some interesting or amusing topic of local concern, being evidently of very old date. Quack medicines were in those days constructed apparently