

HONOURS TO LITERARY MEN.

FOR mere titular honours we have no fancy, believing them to be emphatically out of place in, and alien to the democratic sentiment of, the New World. We cannot, therefore, regard with complacency the multiplication of artificial titles in Canada, nor do we look with favour upon the proposal of His Excellency the Governor-General, to establish a Canadian Academy of Letters, if the design be to confer a forced distinction upon our *littérateurs* and public writers by admitting them into a select circle and labelling them with certificates of honour, which their merits have neither won for them nor the public estimate of their worth spontaneously accords to them. It is not in this way that Canadian literature and literary men are to be helped, nor will projects of the kind accomplish much in developing the intellectual life of the country. Much more, we incline to think, would be gained by our public men making occasional recognition, in some noticeable way, of honest effort and meritorious performance, and by giving a cue to the Press in singling out passages for commendation or for critical appraisal, and thus bringing the work commended into public notice and aiding it in exerting its influence on literary taste. With regard to some of the best work our literary men have produced, it is not so much from want of appreciation as from want of a market informed of its existence and character, that it and Canadian literature suffers. Had we more competent reviewing in our public journals, and were criticism more kindly and painstaking than it is, our native literature would lift up its head and flourish. Newspapers like the *Globe* have ever been a wet blanket on literary effort, and no journal has been more shamelessly untrue to Canada than that newspaper, or has carried its jealousy and selfishness to further lengths in dealing with the native and general literature of the time. By our compatriots in the Quebec Province we understand that His Excellency's project is enthusiastically commended. This, however, is not surprising, as the French-Can-

dian *littérateur* retains the Gallic love for Orders of Merit and the ribbon distinctions of Old France, which the recent crowning by the French Academy of their countryman, Mr. L. H. Fréchette, has no doubt fanned into greater flame. In the English-speaking provinces, we have little doubt, that the more sensible view of the matter prevails, and that official distinctions conferred upon our literary men and the awarding of titles and the trappings of knighthood for political services, will be held by the people, as well as by those who are the recipients of the honour, as of less value than the respect and affection of their countrymen—the true and genuine tribute to honest worth. So long, however, as the State officers in England are under the impression that in the Colonies, as in the Mother Country, a love for titles prevails, and so long as the proper men are named for distinction by the State, we are bound to respect the honour which Royalty desires to confer. Holding these views, we gladly acknowledge the compliment paid on the 24th of May last to Mr. Alpheus Todd, Librarian of Parliament, Ottawa, and to Principal Dawson, of McGill University, Montreal, and heartily congratulate these gentlemen upon the honour conferred upon them, of being installed "Companions of the Most Noble Order of the Bath." At the same time we cannot help thinking that it would be more complimentary to the nation, and should be equally gratifying to the gentlemen honoured, did these acknowledgments of merit emanate from a native source and be of a somewhat different character. Parliamentary grants, as a rule, are not always to be encouraged, but in the case of Mr. Todd particularly, recognition in this form would be a less objectionable, and certainly a more substantial, mode of acknowledging public services. The Academic honours paid by Queen's University to this gentleman, and similar compliments coming from other institutions, ought to be as acceptable, if not preferable, to the recipient. Could we have, in connection with our Universities, funds set aside for the Endowment of Research, this would be an excellent and helpful