

## LITERARY NOTICES.

## HISTORY OF THE SETTLEMENT OF UPPER

CANADA (Ontario), with special reference to the Bay of Quinté; by Wm. Canniff, M.D., M.R.C.S. E., Professor of Surgery University Victoria College, Author of the "Principles of Surgery." Toronto: A. Dredge & Co., Publishers.

BY REV. WM. STEPHENSON, TORONTO.

It has been the complaint of historians that the early history of nations is too often enveloped in obscurity—mere legends forming the basis of ponderous volumes, in which the development and progress of ideas and peoples are delineated. Accepting the legends as facts, it has sometimes occurred that the characteristics of a nation have been accounted for in this way; and yet a fuller examination has served to explode the legendary theory, and the speculator has been left in the dark, or made to pursue some different line of investigation in order to account for an existing state of things. How charming would have been the task of writing the early history of Rome, or Greece, if in the national archives could have been found an authentic document touching the incipient history of those nations, similar to this furnished by Dr. Canniff regarding the settlement of Ontario. The fact that the author belongs to a profession rather unimaginative and severe in investigation, will not, we think, be found, in after times, to detract from the merit of the volume before us. When the time shall have come for writing the history of the Dominion, we venture the assertion that nothing will please the Herodotus of that day, or afford him more solid satisfaction, than Dr. Canniff's present contribution to our historic literature.

The publication of certain histories, such as biographical ones have frequently been deferred lest parties still surviving should be aggrieved by the historian's revelations of the early struggles and plebeian condition of their forefathers. There may be reasonableness in this course, yet there are, unquestionably, hazards. The original facts may be lost—they may be tampered with, and veracious history lose by the delay. To our mind this book of Dr. Canniff's has peculiar interest. A few, only a few, of the original settlers are yet alive; their children and grand-children have grown up vigorous branches of a hardy and essentially vital stock; and this book unfolds with historic fidelity the condition of a people who, in no distant future, will be regarded as the fathers of a wide and far-branching Dominion. One thing we know: in those parts of the country of which our author gives the fullest details, that is, in and around the ten central townships of the old Midland District, this book is sought and read with an eager and deep-felt gratification. Well-educated, intelligent, influential, and worthy persons, are not ashamed to be reminded of their origin; of the hard-fought, oft-foiled, finally-successful struggles of their ancestors. In fact, no one interested in what is noble in daring, and chivalrous in endeavor, and grand in achievement, but must welcome this opportune volume. "The Pilgrim Fathers" of this Dominion are men of demonstrative loyalty; and when, in the land of their adoption, they could no longer shelter beneath

the loved shadow of the "Old Lion," nor behold, waving over them as wont, the rare "Old Flag," rendered precious by all that was thrilling in association and sacred in long-nursed and cherished feeling, they preferred to sacrifice, and risk, and encounter all that might be involved in a migration to Canada. It would indeed be difficult for us, even by the aid of Dr. Canniff's vivid pictures, fully to realize what was then implied in a settlement in this country. The climate, the seasons, the want and the wilderness, and that, too, all unsubdued and seemingly unconquerable, were in the lists against them.

It certainly was no drawing-room treaty, no holiday engagement with those men, when they fixed the resolve to grasp the triple-bolted fastnesses of our Canadian territories, and thus become the pioneers in the march of freedom and empire in North America. The struggles into which they entered, the difficulties they surmounted, and the success which crowned their determined efforts—transforming the rugged wilderness into a wide area of fertility—have all been set forth by Dr. Canniff with equal feeling and perspicacity. Being himself a descendant of a "United Empire Loyalist," he evinces much sympathy with the whole class, alike in their motives for abandoning the Republic, and their heroic endurance on this side the lines. Their daily avocations, their manfulness in suffering, their generosity in famine, their weary journeyings, their unpretentious hospitalities, their quaint nuptial festivities, and the melting simplicity of their solemn scenes and funeral sadnesses, are all fully depicted on these pages. To some it may seem that the Doctor is a little severe in some of his strictures on the colossal institutions of the neighboring nation; but it must be borne in mind that he only adopts a canon of criticism which many American writers, when Britain or the British Colonies may have been the theme, have adopted before him. He is evidently satisfied, we had almost said intensely pleased, with that form of Government under which he lives; and being from his cradle accustomed to the recital of the horrors and atrocities of the American revolutionary war he knows, and seems to feel, whereof he affirms. We have no doubt but that this portion of the work, touching the U.E. Loyalists, will be scanned with deepest interest by thousands throughout the Dominion.

Our author has not failed to award a full meed of attention to the aboriginal tribes of Ontario, and he has presented us with many thrilling and affecting reminiscences of a people who are fast waning before the spread of civilization and a higher national life. This book will also be found to constitute a depository of facts connected with the origin of our schools, the rise and progress of our periodical literature, the establishment of our various denominational Churches, a remarkable race of evangelizing clergymen—together with sketches of the governing, political and leading military men of those times. It would be pleasing to transcribe a few of Dr. Canniff's lucid pages for the columns of your excellent magazine; but fearing to encroach on your space, and feeling certain that the work itself must be read as a whole to be appreciated commensurate with its high merit, we refrain from doing so. The style of the Doctor is manly, vigorous and succinct. His industry is beyond praise, and he