

mental independence; by the conscientious exercise of the critical faculties, as well as by the zeal of the inquirer.

"Patience, friend, we are building our city!" With all my heart—build away. God speed the trowel and the plumb-line, as well as the loom, the plow and the anvil. But dream not, my dear neighbour, that great cities are built chiefly by stone masons. Let me give you an illustration of the contrary fact. Take Boston and Montreal, for example, in their actual relations. Boston has some advantages in size and wealth, but it has another and a nobler sort of superiority: it is the vicinage of native poets like Longfellow and Lowell; of orators like Wendell Phillips; of a sort of Leipsic commerce in books, if not the largest in quantity, the most valuable in quality, of any carried on in the New World. Take a thousand of the most intelligent of our citizens, and you will find that Boston books and Boston utterances sway the minds of one-half of them; while Montreal is, I fear, absolutely unknown and unfelt, as an intellectual community in Boston and elsewhere. Far be it from me to disparage our own city: I cordially concur in the honest pride of every inhabitant, in the strong masonry and fine style of our new edifices; but if "stone walls do not a prison make," still less do they make a capital—a ruling city—a seat of light and guidance, and authority, to a nation or a generation. When the Parliamentary buildings were finished at Ottawa, one of the first problems was to regulate the heating apparatus, in short, to make them habitable for half the year; and this precisely is the problem with us in relation to another and equally necessary kind of plenishing and furnishing, for town and country. It remains for us to learn whether we have the internal heat and light, to stand alone, and go alone—as go we must, either alone or with a master, leading us by the hand.

Our next census—in 1870—will find us over 4,000,000 of souls; educationally, as far as rudimental learning goes, as well advanced as "the most favoured nations" in that respect.

I am indebted to Mr. Griffin, Deputy-Postmaster General, for valuable evidence, not only of the quantity of reading and writing matter distributed by post in Ontario and Quebec during the present year, but also during the last few years. Mr. Griffin sends me these figures as to the letters and newspapers circulated through the former Upper and Lower Canada offices from 1863 to 1867, inclusive:

	Letters.	Newspapers.
1863.....	11,000,000	12,500,000
1864.....	11,500,000	12,500,000
1865.....	12,200,000	11,800,000
1866.....	13,000,000	12,800,000
1867.....	14,200,000	14,000,000*

As to 1865-6, "I think it probable," says Mr. Griffin, "that the Postmasters were not as accurate in their returns, as they should have

been." The same gentleman adds that "of the fourteen millions of papers circulating this year about eight millions are Canadian, going direct to subscribers from the offices of publication, and the other six millions are made up of United States and European papers coming into the country. Of the letters there were above ten millions domestic and four millions foreign." We are by this showing, or ought to be, a reading people; and if a reading, why not also a reflective people? Do we master what we read? Or does our reading master us? Questions surely, not untimely to be asked, and so far as possible by one man to be answered.

Our reading supplies are, as you know, drawn chiefly from two sources; first, books, which are imported from the United States, England, and France—a foreign supply likely long to continue foreign. The second source is our newspaper literature, chiefly supplied, as we have seen, from among ourselves, but largely supplemented by American and English journals.

I shall not be accused of flattering any one when I say that I consider our press tolerably free from the license which too often degrades and enfeebles the authority of the free press of the United States. Ours is chiefly to blame for the provincial narrowness of its views; for its localism and egotism; for the absence of a large and generous catholicity of spirit, both in the selection of its subjects and their treatment; for a rather servile dependence for its opinions of foreign affairs, on the leading newspapers of New York and London. Moreover there is sometimes an exaggerated pretentiousness of shop superiority, with which the public are troubled more than enough; for it is a truth, however able editors may overlook it, that the much-enduring reader does not, in nine cases out of ten, care one jack-straw for what this editor thinks about that one, or whether our contemporary round the corner has or has not resorted to this or t'other sharp practice in order to obtain a paragraph of exclusive intelligence. The reading public cordially wish all able editors better subjects than each others faults or foibles; and the fewer professional personalities one finds in his newspaper, the better he likes it, in the long run.

This newspaper literature forms by much the largest part of all our reading. There are in the four United Provinces about one hundred and thirty journals, of which thirty at least are published daily. Of the total number of habitual readers it is not possible to form a close estimate, but they are probably represented by one-half of the male adults of the population—say 400,000 souls. However ephemeral the form of the literature read by so many may be, the effect must be lasting; and men of one newspaper, especially, are pretty much what their favourite editors make them. The responsibility of the editor is, therefore, in the precise proportion to the number and confidence of

* The close approximation of the two sets of figures is very remarkable.