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LEAVES THEY HAVE TOUCHED:

BEING A REVIEW OF SOME HISTORICAL AUTOGRAPHS.*

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I find in my portfolios and other receptacles of loose miscellaneous matter a considerable accumulation of manuscript documents of more or less public interest. Some of them are throughout in the handwriting of men of eminence, while others bear their signatures only, having been composed, or transcribed, or filled up, by a secretary or other functionary. I have thought that I might in some degree utilize these papers by citing pages from them, as nearly as may be in chronological order, and exhibiting the originals whenever the intrinsic interest of the document or other circumstances seemed to make it worth while to do so. In this way, I suppose, I may make my collections help forward the study among us of civil and literary history.

Autograph documents sometimes enable us to realize to ourselves a historical character in a curious manner. The statesman, the business man, the literary man, each reveals himself with an extra clearness in his manuscripts. Should the paper before us chance to be a first sketch or rough draft, we discover which were the writer's first thoughts and which were his second, what he deemed it politic to add under the circumstances, and what to suppress; while in the handwriting itself we have not only a clue to general character and

* The first of these papers was read before the Canadian Institute, January 10, 1874, as the President's Address for the Session of 1873-4.