

# THE INSTRUCTOR,

FOR NOVA SCOTIA, NEW BRUNSWICK, AND PRINCE  
EDWARD ISLAND.

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## Modern Literature and Elementary Instruction in the Middle Ages.—No. 3.

In the two preceding articles on this subject, we attempted, briefly, to show the state of society, so far as literature and elementary knowledge is concerned, down to the end of the sixteenth century of the Christian era. Our object is not to show in detail, the nature and number of discoveries and improvements made, during the various periods of the world's history, for such a task would occupy volumes, but simply, to show, in a summary manner, the leading features in the march of intellect. And it is only as we descend the stream of time and arrive close at our own day—the region of a more full and authentic history, that the clear day-light of historic truth begins to enliven the picture.

Many are the gradations through which the mind of man must necessarily pass, in advancing from that state of barbarism and ignorance, in which the great mass of society once was, to that high degree of civilization and intellectual refinement, which many countries have subsequently attained.

Having at length passed through the mists of tradition and the dreary waste, which occupied so long a space in the intellectual chart, and reached the confines of a region characterised by an extraordinary degree of intellectual progress, we feel as if standing on sacred ground; the invention of paper and printing, and the practical use of the compass, was about to cause a revolution in the state of the world, by the spread of knowledge. After this long period of darkness had passed, like a mighty incubus over society, education became a prominent part of State deliberations. England, France, Prussia, Germany, and other nations, laid plans for the spread of knowledge; but the education given, was principally confined to the higher classes—the common people still ignorant. Shortly previous to this time many of the nobility of England and France could not sign their names. Macaulay, the historian of England, speaking of an English equine of the 17th century, says, that it was "un-