

# THE CANADIAN JOURNAL.

## INTRODUCTION.

"In the infancy of a state arms do flourish, in the middle-age thereof letters, in the decline and fall commerce," a true saying of the sage of Verulam, is this which we have chosen for a motto, and *arms*,—the arms, namely, that swing the axe and guide the plough—have flourished, and long may they flourish in Canada; nor has the middle-age of mental vigour, and intellectual exertion been tardy in succeeding to that first stage of advancement. It would even be well if no premature signs of undue prominence in the last of the three, already portended, like early grey hairs, the decay of a ripe and vigorous manhood. Canada has made a progress so surprising in all that promotes, and in all that indicates, the well-being of a people: the dream of yesterday has become so often the reality of to-day, that did we not know how genial is the soil in which this prosperity is rooted, how healthy the growth which no Pactolus fosters but withers, with its golden streams; no perpetual summer forces but withers; we might doubt whether it could long endure without those checks which in other communities have usually occurred, to throw them back in the race after wealth, and fallow as it were the ground which over-production has exhausted. It is not our intention then to dwell on a theme familiar to most of our readers; they need not be reminded by us that the generation has not yet passed away which found in Upper Canada a wilderness, where it leaves a garden; before whose steps, as by an enchanter's wand, roads have opened out, and stately edifices arisen, and abodes of elegance and comfort scattered themselves far and wide. Nor need they be told that the benignant Fairy whose gifts these are, yet dwells among us, and by her names of Industry and Order, and Peace, may yet be invoked for other gifts, and won to carry her blessings to regions beyond their present boundary. Material prosperity never fails to develop in a community, and indeed requires for its creation a high degree of intellectual exercise. Commercial enterprise, political rivalry, the daily business of the advocate, the daily duty of the physician, all task faculties which in the quiet paths of learning or philosophy, might rear a monument of human wisdom, or win new planets from the abyss. They task, but they do not satisfy them; that they exist, is a fact to which we appeal as a proof that the *middle-age* of our state has arrived; that they do more than exist, that they absorb so greatly those faculties whose aim should be higher than the material interests of a day, or a generation, is another fact to which we appeal, in proof that the time has come when letters must urge their claim to a better representation, on peril of the place which is their birthright.

When Europe awoke from its long sleep in the thirteenth century, and in Italy and in France, in England and in Spain, gave the first tokens of dawning civilization, by the foundation

of those universities and colleges, which to the number of sixteen or seventeen, date their origin from that iron-clad age, the truth that association is the guardian of literature, that the concentration of knowledge is the best preservative of its influence, and the best stimulus to its extension, appears to have been first readmitted, after ages of oblivion, to its due place in the framework of human society. It is impossible not to recognize at once a proof of the possession which that discovery took of the minds of men, and of the wide diffusion of a desire to cultivate learning, in the fact that Europe, thinly peopled as she was, could boast of nearly sixty universities before the close of the fifteenth century. Those were the days, however, when society, still in its infancy, was under tutors and governors; before the veil of blind reliance, or implicit faith, in the wisdom of one or two great minds had been raised from those of their fellow men. Reason then neglected the principal field of modern science, those facts of which we can take cognizance by our senses, and the relations we can establish by experience between them, to build upon foundations as unstable as a quicksand, and to waste prodigious strength upon subtilities which vanished like a film of gossamer in the grasp. The consequence was a long delay in that acquaintance with the bounteous and varied resources of the material world, which is the reward of subsequent study of its laws and phenomena. Men were not wanting who, like our own Roger Bacon, were prematurely enlightened, but debarred from sympathy, and too divided for co-operation, while they have indeed left to posterity the shadow of a great name; to their own generation and those which immediately succeeded, they were but as light to one who is without organs of vision, or wings to one who is chained to the earth. It was in Italy, and in the latter half of the sixteenth century, that the truth which had been so long practically recognized in respect to literature, was first applied to matters of science; and if association were indeed the guardian of the one, it has ever since been the very life of the other. The Academy of the "Secrets of Nature" founded, (how are the mighty fallen!) at Naples, the present seat of all intolerance and restriction, in the year 1560, was the forerunner of those numerous enlightened bodies, which in every country of Europe were about to be drawn together by kindred impulses, and by a common want; and which were destined by the spirit of free enquiry which animated them to aid that emancipation from the bondage of tradition, which was dawning in philosophy, as it had already dawned in religion. There was a boundless field before them. If long afterwards, the greatest of philosophers could liken himself to a child gathering a few bright pebbles by the shore of the ocean, who can exaggerate the exhaustless novelty, the wonder, of nature's works, to ardent minds in which love for her beauties