

MAN IS A RECORDING ANIMAL; and this indeed is the best definition of him. Inferior animals communicate, by voice and by signal, over space; but, through time, have no medium of intelligence, and from generation to generation remain the same. They are indeed the beasts that perish; but man is the aspirant to excellence and the candidate for immortality. His spirit, though cradled in weakness and surrounded with difficulty, is destined to gain the ascendant and to triumph over every ill,—to enjoy a rational millenium on earth and at last to hold converse with Heaven.

Such has been my fate, during the last twenty-one years, that I should not even know myself, but for records;—should not distinctly remember where I have been, how employed, who with, and of what thinking;—should never be able to maintain my rights and manage my affairs;—should never be able to correct my errors or accomplish my undertakings. Persuaded of this, I began, many years ago, to preserve my papers; and, in 1826, to print them, regularly classed, lettered and numbered, for after reference. What is contained within this cover, is a continuation; and should I live to have peace and freedom, these documents, however worthless by themselves, and disjointed as at present, may enable me to mature, projects of mightiest moment to humanity.

Even at present my records are consolatory. They are the clue to reflection on past life; and this reflection gives assurance that the chain of causes and effects proceeds from Almighty power;—gives assurance that there is a Providence—a Disposer of Events—a Superior Intelligence, whose ways are not as our ways;—who can guide us through darkness into light, and over rugged paths to tranquility.

It is nearly twenty-nine years since I engaged in the service of laborers. For this, I was maltreated at home: for this, I went to England and was persecuted there: this kindled my zeal in Canada; and for this, I was banished: in the gloomiest stage of existence, this was ever in view; and this made years of imprisonment pass swiftly away: this has deprived me of all property, separated me from children, and left me alone in the world, but, my records give assurance, that every misfortune has been only a step towards good; and, that up to the present moment, all is for the best. I believe, indeed, that no other train of events could have prepared me to assert, with growing confidence, what no other man has thought of or dared to do, that, “without altering a single statute, changing a single institution, or interfering with property, the whole system of the Poor laws and rates may be dispensed with in twenty years, while the National debt may be paid off, within fifty years, from sales of colonial lands.”

ROBT. GOURLAY.

2, BRIDGE STREET, LEITH, Nov. 26, 1829.