

dependent states. Thus it has been in every land of which history contains a record, in ancient Greece and Rome, in modern Europe and America, in the United States yesterday and in the Canadian Confederation today. The intelligent reader will experience no difficulty in possessing himself of the suggestive moral to be gleaned from such a formidable tissue of facts.

Our century is called the Press Age, and properly so when we consider the almost unlimited influence now exercised by that great engine of human enlightenment, the printing press. The newspaper press of Canada, viewed solely as a portion of our literature, deserves a high place in the public estimation. The gentlemen by whom it is conducted are among our most gifted and most intellectual. The periodical press monopolize almost all our best English-speaking Canadian writers.

Not a few of our leading journalists are Catholics, and if some of those latter sometimes forget themselves so far as to sell their birth-right for a mess of pottage, the majority are conscientious scholars ever zealous in the cause of human liberty and progress. Allusion is had here to Catholics employed on organs owned and conducted by gentlemen of other religious beliefs. Of the Catholic press proper, we shall briefly speak in another place. Authorship is pretty generally a very unremunerative calling, but, in this country, it could scarcely fail to lead direct to starvation. So, our men of letters use literature more as a cane than as a crutch, to use the strong figure of Scott. The multitude are too much engaged in amassing wealth to spend their money in purchasing books, or their precious time in reading them. The functions of the present generation seem to be to cultivate the land, to build the homesteads, and to crowd "the proud ways of men" in the cities and towns, as merchants, artisans, and mechanics. They leave to their descendants, if they so will, the glorious privilege of indulging in literary luxuries. But every man who would keep abreast of his times must necessarily read the newspapers. The periodical press is, therefore, the most generously supported division of our literature. It is also, and perhaps for the same reason, practically the only institution wherein a livelihood may be secured through the instrumentality of the pen. Now, our men of intellect, in common with all other classes of the community, have natural wants; and they may be pardoned if for the nonce they barter their talents for bread and butter instead of bestowing them gratuitously on an unappreciative public.

We are practically destitute of monthly magazines, although *The Century*, *Scribner's*, *The Catholic World*, *The Month*, and scores of other foreign publications, are welcome visitors to thousands of Canadian homes. Our essayists are, consequently, forced to bring their wares to the literary markets of the United States or of Europe. The monthly magazine in other countries, as everybody knows, appeals to the most intelligent circles of the community, and is supported by a corps of erudite writers, who wield flexible pens, and the leading feature of whose productions is their surpassing agreeableness. The absence of the magazine from our literature produces an unseemly hiatus, which time and the general progress with its attendant enlightenment can alone remove. A time there was, however, when Canada could boast of an interesting magazine. Among its most notable contributors were many Catholics, almost all of whom, we are sorry to observe, have been as silent as the Sphinx since their favourite periodical shared the fate of poor *Tray*. But those Catholic essayists performed enough to prove that they exist, and that their talents are second to none, and this must suffice until a national publication is called into being whose general excellence may tempt them to again forsake their learned seclusion.

The condition of our more pretentious literature is not as flourishing as true patriotism might wish to behold it. Very few books in the English language, and from the pens of Canadians, it must be candidly confessed, will repay a second perusal. The four or five which we except in this judgment are so characterized by varied excellencies that they go far to obliterate the dismal memories which the mass engender. One or two histories, which tell the story of Canada from its discovery down to the

present time, are invaluable for purposes of reference. A few masterly biographies might be allotted a prominent place in any library. We might enumerate three novels that give tolerably accurate pictures of Canadian life, or illustrate some thrilling incident in our historical drama. The Canadian muse is cultivated with an assiduity which is certain to eventually add some brilliant plumes to the wings of the northern Pegasus. We possess a couple of lengthy poems of which Longfellow or Whittier need not be ashamed. Our literature is also enriched by a number of minor poems, so redolent of the forests and the lakes that they bid fair to linger long in the memories of the people.

This enumeration is, in our humble judgment, a faithful though a necessarily brief estimate of the contributions already made to our literature by English-speaking Canadians. What share have Catholics taken in the contribution? It must be honestly confessed the share produced by English-speaking Catholics is not important. We cannot boast of a Haliburton, a Cramazie, a Garneau, a Frechette, or even a Mair. Nor have we yet produced a single superior historian, novelist, poet, or essayist. Readable stories and musical verses have, it is true, been produced by English-speaking Catholics, but the best of them are of mediocre value only, while some of them are of no value. But this is not the most distressing feature of the situation. Did the future appear full of promise we might tolerate the present and excuse the past. The future, however, does not give much promise. Indeed the outlook for Catholic literature is gloomy, and unless our people develop unparalleled mental energy within the next decade, the prospect can hardly improve.

M. W. CASEY.

OLD LAMPS AND NEW.

A REVIEW OF MR. MORISON'S "SERVICE OF MAN."

II.

Of all questions which occupy the human mind, the Theistic question is encompassed with the gravest difficulties. Of all these difficulties the most terrible is the ethical. It is hard to conceive how Absolute Perfection, in whose unmoved and immovable calm all ideals are realized, could have become an active cause. It is infinitely harder to conciliate the existence of a Perfect Creator, or First Cause, with the existence of such a world as this; which, if not the worst of all conceivable worlds, as the Pessimists teach, certainly must, if viewed by any one who has not closed the eyes of his understanding, appear, at first sight, the work of a very narrowly-restricted, or of a very imperfect goodness. Nor can it be doubtful that upon some of the noblest minds of the age this difficulty has weighed with great severity. There are those whom it has driven well nigh, or quite, mad. Others have been impelled by it to embrace the philosophy of Leopardi or Schopenhauer, of von Hartmann or Bohnsen. The greatest of living poets has pictured one

Who trusted God was love indeed,
And love creation's final law,
Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
With rapine, shrieked against his creed.

Nor, in truth, is there any more excellent way. A theodicy which solves all questions is impossible for us, who are not omniscient, who know only in part. We cannot transport ourselves from the earth. We are limited by the terrestrial atmosphere. The last word of philosophy, as of religion, is resignation; to submit patiently to the conditions of the twilight in which we are placed, "until the day dawn;" to know ourselves as "children crying in the dark;" to make, in short, an act of faith. *Unde malum?* We do not know. That the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, is an absolutely certain fact brought home to us by daily experience.

That God—the Supreme Good—exists we have been in the habit of regarding as the equally sure conclusion of reason.