

# The Gleaner:

AND

## NORTHUMBERLAND SCHEDIASMA.

VOLUME III.]

"Nec araneorum sane texus ideo melior, quia ex se fila gignunt nec noster vilior quia ex alienis libamus ut apes."

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### THE GLEANER.

The following are extracts from an Introductory ADDRESS, delivered by MR. JOSEPH HOWE, Editor of the *Novascotian*, at the opening of the *Mechanic's Institute*, lately established at Halifax: an Institution which has deservedly met with every encouragement, and support:—

Perhaps I ought to apologise for having undertaken a task, that would have been so much better performed by older and abler members of this society—but having been called upon by the President, I was averse to setting an example, that, however it might savour of an amiable modesty, would strike at the root of those important objects for which we are assembled. My ready compliance was also induced by the reflection, that, as my knowledge of any one branch of Science was neither so accurate, nor so extensive, as to enable me to lecture upon it—it would be less laborious, as well as less presumptive, to endeavour to throw together a few of those crude ideas of the pleasures and advantages of all Science, with which most men, however limited their attainments, are sufficiently familiar. In doing so, I assume no higher character, than that of a porter, who stands at the gate of the temple of knowledge, inviting the multitude to enter; but who leaves to her inspired and favored sons, the task of winning their love by a display of her wondrous power, and more attractive mysteries.

It is proper, that, at the opening of this Institute, some general outline should be sketched of the objects which led to its foundation. These resolve themselves into a narrow focus, and may be thus defined:—A due appreciation of the pleasures and advantages of science; and a desire to participate, as far as comes within the compass of our means—and to excite among friends and neighbours a taste that must result in permanent advantage to themselves; and may be of the highest importance to their country.

That the pursuit of Science, in any or all of its multifarious divisions, is attended with pleasure—nay, that it is accompanied by delights more elevated and intense, than are to be gathered from the mere gratification of the senses, the experience of every day, and the examples of hundreds of gifted minds, are sufficient to convince us. If we look round, and compare those who are sedulously improving their intellectual powers, by pursuing knowledge into its farthest retreats, with those who are merely seeking the gratification of their animal propensities, we shall gather evidence to cheer us along the path we have chosen, and to warn us from that which leads in a downward course to the level of the brute creation.

It would cost me but little labour to show, that the refined pleasures—the intense delight, and overpowering excitement, which are supposed to be the peculiar gifts of luxury, ambition, or gold, belong in a yet higher degree to Science. The pleasures which she holds out to her followers, while they are as boundless, are at the same time more pure, beneficial and enduring. He who devotes his days and nights to her service, feels that every draft he quaffs from the stream of knowledge, increases his fondness for what he delights to find can never be exhausted. Every time he stoops at the fountain, he finds his energies strengthened, and his spirit refreshed; and what cares he for the wasting pleasures and hollow friendships of the table, whose daily companions are the gifted, the noble, and the wise?

If it be said, that although they are more blameless, the pursuits and pleasures of Science are less overpowering and intense, than those of ambition—I would ask—what conqueror, at the close of the most decisive battle on record, ever felt a joy so rapturous and compelling, as that which convulsed the frame of NEWTON, when he had discovered the laws by which the Almighty's hand sustained the worlds he had created in an illimitable void where they revolve? Had GALILEO no delight when he discovered the regular oscillation of the pendulum? or, when raising his telescope, found that his own ingenuity and perseverance, had diminished his distance from the heavenly bodies?

Had ARKWRIGHT no overpowering feeling, when he saw he had completed a machine capable of multiplying, to an almost infinite extent, the wealth and resources of his country? Was FRANKLIN urged by no strong passion, when, at the risk of his life he lured the electric fluid from its cloud? and had he no reward when it quivered by his hand? Where, among all the votaries of avarice and ambition have ever claimed, shall we find an instance of more untiring patience—of more steady and persevering devotion—of more unflinching endurance of privation, fatigue and danger, than are to be found in the character of COLUMBUS? Not the contempt and scorn of the ignorant fools who despised him—not the raging of the elements he dared—nor the menaces of the ruffians who threatened his life, could deter him following out one of the grandest ideas that ever Science engendered in the mind of man. And what must have been his sensations, when he demonstrated the correctness of his views, and stood confessed the discoverer of a world? But the pleasures of Science are not confined to its great masters:—and while we name them as prominent illustrations, we do not by any means lend encouragement to the supposition, that the humbler searchers after knowledge have had no enjoyment to sweeten their toils. The lovers of knowledge have always participated in its pleasures in a degree fully equal to their love. The delights which Science holds out to her followers are as certain as the facts she discloses. The best evidence of this assertion is to be found in her history—from a careful perusal of which we shall discover, that they are sufficient to wean and purify the mind from the influence of grosser propensities—to strengthen and elevate it under every difficulty, and to deaden, if not entirely counteract, the asperity of all the trials and perplexities of life.

We meet together then, to search after knowledge, because it is pleasant so to do—we cheer each other on in a path, the attractions of which as numerous as they are seductive.

But all sufficient as this inducement might be considered, the members of this Institute have a higher aim. They do not propose to gather facts as children gather flowers, because they are beautiful, and afford a momentary gratification. They know that Science has its advantages as well as its pleasures. That its successful cultivation has an important effect, not only on the character, influence and fortune of individuals—but upon the advancement, resources and happiness of nations. With this view, the selfishness inherent in our natures, urges us to snatch from its stores whatever may be productive of individual benefit.

We seek to be wiser—that we may challenge that good report which wisdom confers on its possessor. We believe in the Baconian adage that "Knowledge is power," and, from a source so legitimate, aim at a more extended influence among our fellow men. We know that on the accuracy and extent of our information, will depend much of our success in the various employments in which we are engaged, and to which we look for the preservation of our mental independence, and the comfort and establishment of our families—and therefore we seek knowledge for its practical utility in advancing our individual interests. But, while allowing personal considerations their full scope in stimulating us to exertion, we have not been unmindful of the important bearing which all Science, and particularly mechanical Science, has on the character and progress of every country; and I am satisfied, I do not err, when I claim for this Institute a patriotic desire to elevate the name and develop the resources of the Province.

In every prosperous country the benefits of Science may be easily traced, and the influence it has exercised is not to be mistaken. Over its Legislation, it will have diffused an enlarged and liberal spirit—justly appreciating its wants and resources, and faithfully appropriating the funds of the national compact to fostering individual enterprise and industry. In its Laws, by a clear definition of the rights and obligations of the whole people, and by the protection of property in each of its various modifications and transmutations. In agriculture, commerce, and manufactures, by a saving of labour—a diminution of risk, and a multiplication of products.

As the benefits derivable to a country from mechanical science, force themselves more exclusively upon us on this occasion, I shall pass lightly over the obligations manufactures owe to agriculture and commerce, to show how much these great pillars of national wealth depend upon manufactures; or, what may be termed the results and exemplification of an improved state of mechanical science.

As regards Agriculture, there is scarcely one of its simple operations that may not be either facilitated or retarded in proportion to the ignorance or ingenuity of the mechanic. The shape of the common axe may make half a day's difference in the work of a week, to the settler who is commencing a clearing. On the structure of the plough, to say nothing of the wear and tear of strength in the husbandman and his cattle, may depend the quantity of land turned up; and consequently the amount of crop for the support of his family, or the market. If machinery assist him to scatter his seed, little if any will be wasted. If it aid him to thrash and winnow the sheaf, an important diminution of labour will be the consequence;—and his progress towards a place of sale may be materially affected by the strength of a chain, or the formation of a wheel.

Commerce may be said to depend, even more than Agriculture, upon the state of mechanical science, until the rude shallop is formed, a feeble coasting trade, the germ of a prosperous commerce, cannot exist; and it has invariably been found, that in the same proportion as the art of ship-building improves, Commerce is extended, and a people rise on the scale of maritime powers. The reasons are numerous why this should be so. However rich the prizes which foreign commerce offers to the adventurer, they fail to influence his cupidity, while the wreck of his substance, and the loss of his life, are the almost certain penalties of his enterprise. As mechanical science shows that by an improvement in the form, and increase of the strength of a ship, it may better resist the violence of the waves, and the pressure of heavy bodies—as it supplies the windlass, the cable and the chain, for safe mooring in bays and harbors; as it teaches how spar may be added to spar, and rope to rope, until the elements are brought under controul, and until danger be lessened to a point that loses its effect upon the imagination—then the cupidity of the adventurer, finding that science has multiplied the chances in his favor, leads him to launch upon the ocean—to dare the dangers that exist but in a diminished degree; and to explore every coast where the elements of a successful traffic may be found.

In following up the objects which the Institute has in view, we may perhaps be assailed by the sneer of the ignorant, and the ridicule of the idle; and while our society is in its infancy—and before it has proceeded far on its path of usefulness, these may be productive of momentary annoyance. But when they, who now deride its character and objects, find it slowly but surely operating upon the great mass of the community—rectifying its pursuits and elevating its tone—when we find the mechanic repairing to the Lecture Room instead of the Tavern—passing his evenings in scientific conversation and enquiries, in preference to enjoying the boisterous hilarity of the pot house—when they find him in all cases substituting rapid calculation for the tedious process of measurement; and bringing the theory and practice of the mathematics, and a right understanding of mechanical powers, to bear on his daily business, when they see evidence of these valuable acquisitions in the style of our Buildings—in the improvement and extension of manufactures—in the added beauty, wealth, and resources of the Town; and above all, when they see hundreds of respectable and independent men, imparting to their children the knowledge on which their own success was founded; and with it, impressing upon their minds a love for the past history of this Institution and the importance of its continuance and support—then, perhaps the trifler who now views our efforts with indifference, may be shamed into the confession that our labors have not been in vain.

A bashful man is like a tiger: he makes but one effort, and if that fails, slinks away to his jungle, and essays no more.