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*Nec araneum sane textus ideo melior, quia ex se fila gignit, nec noster vitior quia ex alienis libamus ut apes.*

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## THE PRESS.

[We are indebted to the Saint John Courier for the following extracts from a Lecture delivered by Dr. Hart, of Fredericton, on the Press, at the Mechanics Institute, St. John, on the 19th January.]

That it may be truly said that darkness, intellectual and moral, overspread the earth. Knowledge was shut out from the people, and rigorously imprisoned in Universities and Cloisters. The Press appeared! With gigantic strength it seized the bars—it burst the gates—and forth issued a flood of light! On, on, with a cataract's speed, went that impetuous flood! On, on, from palace to hamlet, from village to village, from country to country—Tyranny trembled at the sight, and from its strongholds sent out the imperious mandate, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further'—still in proud defiance of it went. Then Science and Literature awoke from the slumber of ages, and began afresh their splendid career; and Religion cast off with indignation her rusty shackles, and resumed her long-forgotten mission to bless the human race. A new era burst upon the world! The discoveries of philosophy, the treasures of history, the beauties of poetry, the doctrine of human rights, the principles of political economy, and the sacred truths of Scripture were at last brought home to the rich and the poor. What would Galileo and Newton, and Bacon, and Locke, and Grotius, and Klopstock, and Milton, and Spenser, and Rollin, and Robertson, and Addison, and Johnson, and Smith, and Beattie, and all their mighty compeers, have accomplished, had it not been for this wonderful invention? Their lofty intellects, overpowered by the universal death shade of ignorance, would probably have lain dormant, or wasted their energies upon the perillous of a false philosophy, a corrupted tradition, or a miserable superstition; or if they had been able to burst through the awful gloom, and reach the light of truth, their productions, engraved on costly parchment, and consigned to the shelves of a few costly libraries, would have served only to gratify the curiosity of the wealthy schoolman, or the haughty priest. And what would the heroic champions of pure Christianity have done? With resistless energy they might have assailed the citadel of error, and won a temporary triumph; but how soon would their opponents have returned with unnumbered squadrons—hurled them from their proud positions, and re-established themselves upon their ancient towers?

When we look abroad upon the earth, we are struck with astonishment at the signs of advanced civilization which meet our view: the days of ignorance, and dolence, and stagnation, are fast passing away. This is the age of Literature, the age of Books, and Schools, and Colleges; the Schoolmaster is indeed abroad, exerting a power greater than that of the statesman, or the warrior: a power which shall determine the temporal, aye, and in some measure, the spiritual destiny of nations. There never was a time when the minds of men were so thoroughly awakened to the importance of knowledge; the great truth is beginning to command universal belief, that the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong; that it is not by bones and muscles that the work of human advancement is to be carried on; that individual and national prosperity, in a high degree, can only be secured by pressing intellect into the service, as the great and principal instrumentality.

Even in this Province, though slow to waken, have at length yielded our assent; and a general inspection of schools, an elaborate report, a new bill, and the introduction of the Normal system, have followed as the immediate result. There is one thing, however, which we still need, and to which I trust I may be permitted to allude, and that is, the adoption of the principle of taxation, without which I am persuaded, we may never expect an efficient system of Education. But this is a digression: I was speaking of the literary character of the age. To what, then, may we ascribe this literary character?—most obviously, to the Press.

This is also a practical age; the age of invention, of glorious progress! The old order of things is rapidly yielding to another and a better system. No longer are we satisfied with former methods, and antiquated appliances. Our watchword is, Onward! and on we go, searching through all the chambers of nature for new forces, new elements, that we may yoke them to the car of improvement, and make them subserve the interests and enjoyments of man. And behold the proofs of our success! Whether we survey the land or the ocean; whether we contemplate the wonders of art in the great city, or roam with curious eye over the fields of the husbandman, everywhere we perceive, as if written with a sunbeam, the evidences of the influence of a new dispensation.

Whence came that wondrous ship, which, like a great leviathan, spouting fire, goes dash-

ing on o'er mountain wave and billow, defying alike the fury of the storm, and the more deceitful dangers of the quicksand and the breakers? And this, its earthly image, whence came it?—this rattling car, which, swifter than the race horse, and waiting, whirling along, carrying its cumbersome load. And yonder wires which, from country to country, like the lightning's flash, convey tidings of joy or sorrow: whence came they? And whence those dingy structures which hold in their bosoms the machinery that supplies with manufactures the whole habitable earth? And whence the rich harvest home, so far surpassing in abundance, all that was known of yore? You tell me it is science! 'tis all the march of science! But why, I ask, did not science accomplish this hundreds of years ago? Nature has not changed; she was not more niggardly to past generations than to us; she held in her vast storehouse then the same magnificent materials, the same engines of gigantic strength. She gave also to the men of those times the same powers of mind, curiosity as prying, ingenuity as inventive, genius as profound. What, then, has made us to differ? I answer—the Press! The Press—yes, 'tis the general diffusion of Knowledge which develops intellect, and gives it a practical tone; which stimulates enquiry, causes the action of mind upon mind, furnishes to each succeeding age the full benefit of the acquisitions of the past, and thus induces perpetual advancement.

This too, is a Religious age. I know that there are some who differ with me upon this point—who think that the Church is degenerating, and is likely very soon to be given over exclusively to vanity and sin.

One looks back with fond regret to the zeal of the Fathers; another, to the stern severity of the Puritans; for myself, with all due deference to the piety of past ages, my own decided conviction is, that in no period of the history of the world has there been so much true charity (which I take to be the essence of all religion) as at the present time. At any rate there is one fact which will not be disputed, viz: That we possess greater facilities for the attainment of religious knowledge than was ever enjoyed by the most favored of our ancestors. The depths of divinity have been explored, and the Press has poured forth works upon every branch of the subject in rich profusion.

And there is one task in connection with this matter in which this great agent has been engaged for years, and which above all other considerations, entitles it to the undying gratitude of mankind. I refer to the noble project of presenting to every man, whether Jew or Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, Bond, or Free, every man who will receive it, a copy of the Sacred Scriptures.

This is the age of Liberty: her sacred voice is on the wind; it comes to us from every quarter. From the land of Britain, our own loved land, her favorite home, it comes, in a loud, glad, heartfelt song of joy, thanksgiving and praise.

From the neighbouring States it comes like a merry shout, yet mingled now and then with a licentious laugh, and ever and anon there is a pause, and we hear the deep, deep groan of the Southern Slave.

From the old haunts of European despotism it comes like volleys of thunder, in harsh, terrific tones of complaint, defiance, and desperate determination.

Even from the seven-hilled city it comes with an occasional whisper of hope and ultimate triumph.

What then has given to liberty this mighty impulse, this unparalleled energy? The agencies are numerous, but chief and foremost stands the Press; the Press which has ever been the irreconcilable foe of tyranny; the Press which has ever been the palladium of Liberty! Knowledge is incompatible with oppression. The people who understand their rights, never, never will be slaves! no matter how strong the chain that binds them; no matter how long they may have groaned beneath its weight; the moment they learn the essential dignity and inalienable inheritance of man that moment they are free! The history of the past is pregnant with this truth. Take one example—contemplate the French Revolution of 1790. The State and the Church had both grown grey in tyranny: the people were sunk in profound degradation; uneducated, uncared for, unaided; receiving no recognition from the Government, except in the way of interminable taxation. This was their miserable lot! Universal bankruptcy and famine prevailed.—In this dark hour Philanthropy arose.

I may not call it a sun, nor yet a star; still it was a light; it served to expose corruption and error—to lay bare the hideous detestments of oppression, and to reveal in some degree, the inextinguishable claims and privileges of humanity:—and this was enough!—From the deaths of their wretchedness, the masses arose like the heaving of a mighty earthquake—with their brawny arms they seized the pillars

of despotism, and the huge fabric, with terrific crash, fell crumbling to the earth! Yes, 'twas the writings of Voltaire and his brother Philosophers, forming though they did, so strange a compound of truth and error, light and darkness; the golden head, with the clay foot of the image—I say it was those writings, sent forth by a shackled Press, which gave the first impulse to that tremendous movement, which evoked the first notes of that frightful war cry that startled the King upon his throne, and the Nobles in their palaces—which marshalled the millions of the French population in deadly hostility against the established order of intolerable abuses—which guided by retributive justice, was heard anon, with dismay, upon the degenerate plains of Italy—these froze with terror the heart of the Mahomedan oppressor beside the Pyramids of Egypt, and for almost twenty years, like a continuous and appalling thunder peal, reverberated throughout the continent of Europe, shaking the foundations of ancient Empires, and filling the souls of men with consternation and dread.

But not only is the Press opposed to tyranny—tyranny is equally opposed to the Press—the antipathy is perfectly mutual. As I have already intimated, in the early stages of its operations it was assailed with violence, and even until very recently, there were not more than two or three States in the world which did not impose upon it the most galling restrictions. The account which has been published of the state of the Press under the reign of Louis Philippe, at the time of his dethronement, strikingly illustrates the flagrant abuses of his government, and goes far to prevent the sympathy which one would otherwise naturally feel for his misfortunes.

I shall now proceed to make a few observations upon the Press of this Province.

Like the country itself it is of course only in its infancy. It cannot as yet boast of having issued many valuable works. Its labors have been principally confined to the publication of Newspapers.

But this I consider to be an office of great importance. I am aware that there is a certain class who profess a different opinion—who affect to despise the papers. They point to the Editors, and say, what right have these men to lay down the law to the country—to expect that their *ipsi dixit* shall have weight with Governors and Counsellors, and all the great men of the earth. If the press complain they immediately exclaim, O! 'tis only a trivial commotion amongst those restless, factious, turbulent morials that preside over it, and the little cliques that surround. Whenever you hear a man talk in this way, whatever his situation in the world may be, be assured that he fears the papers—he may not take them—but he reads them—he knows that the press is the exponent of public opinion—therefore he hates the press.

What gives the Editor his importance? not his talents or his acquirements alone, or chiefly; no, but his office—the fact that he is known to have principles, and sentiments, and feelings in common with a large body of the people—that he sympathizes with them, and is in a certain sense their representative. It is true, that owing to superior intelligence, and from having devoted greater attention to certain subjects, he may sometimes be in advance of the multitude; but after all, he only holds opinions which they would hold, did they possess equal advantages, and which sooner or later they will most assuredly entertain. I hope I am not encroaching upon forbidden ground—if I am, I trust that in consideration of my ignorance and inexperience in this department, your generosity will save me from severe reproach.

But you know, according to certain portions of the Press, there are no political controversies now, and never shall be more! They say, that this is the reign of harmony! They say, that the Spiritual watchman may sometimes cry peace, peace, when there is no peace, but the Political watchman, never. They say, that the new system, so far from proving the odious monster it was feared, pushing rebellion with one hand, and dragging anarchy with the other—appears amongst us as the angel of love and peace, destroying even the natural antipathies of instinct, causing the lion and the lamb to lie down together, and the child to play in safety by the cookatrice's den. It does not become me, standing here, to express an opinion on this subject—but I may be allowed to say, that if this doctrine be correct, there is reason to regret that this change had not occurred before—that this new order of things had not come upon us in the days of our prosperity—that this loving combination had not been formed when we had money in our coffers and lumber in our forests, and England held out to us a generous hand—for then, perchance, the evil day had been altogether averted, and the Press would have had before it an easier task. But now a sad reverse has indeed befallen us. Our trade is prostrated, our treasury empty, our Government in debt. The

shades of universal bankruptcy are gathering around us, and in this deplorable dilemma we are cast upon our own resources.

Nevertheless we should not despair. We have still a fine country—with a rich soil—magnificent rivers—vast stores of mineral wealth—accessible harbours—and one of the healthiest climates in the world.

The freshness of youth too is upon it: it has been debilitated by early excesses—but it will rally: we shall see it come forth again in strength and vigor enlightened and sobered by experience, to run an honorable and a prosperous career—to take its place beside the other countries of the earth—to compete with them in all that is good, in all that his wise, in all that is great.

In the meantime I call upon the Press to discharge its duty faithfully—to assume new energy—to take a wider range. The paramount objects which claim immediate attention are evidently our commercial relations—our Provincial resources, and increased facilities for internal communications. I call upon the press then to enter in right earnest into the field of Political Economy—to discuss in all their bearings the doctrines of Free trade, and Protection—to examine the records of other countries, and furnish us with all the light that experience sheds upon this difficult problem.

There are one or two points in connection with this subject which have been separately referred to; and which demand particular notice. The first is:—The proposition for 'free trade throughout the British dominions,' and 'reciprocity with other nations.' Of course this is neither the time nor the place to go into the merits of the question. My object is merely to invite the attention of the press thereto; and to say that it should not be deterred from the discussion, by the consideration which has been often urged, viz:—That Great Britain is permanently committed to an opposite policy. *Magna est veritas et arovabit.*—If the present commercial policy of Great Britain be erroneous—if it be wholly incompatible with the prosperity of her Colonial empire—then I say, we should not sit down in despondency, and regard the idea of a change as a hopeless project. The difficulty of the task should only awaken proportionate energy—We should summon up all our powers, and by addresses, by delegations, and by the press, we should bring the matter in its true light before the Imperial Government and the British people.

If this course should prove to be necessary, I, for one, would not despair of the result.

I can never forget the case of West India Slavery. I happened to be in England during the discussion of that great question. I witnessed the fierce conflict when an interested monopoly, a terrible monster of avarice and oppression, met the genius of liberty on its own bright plains, and fought a deadly battle for the bones and sinews of the wretched slave. I need not tell you that liberty triumphed—I need not tell you that when the truth was fully made known, when a faithful picture of slavery was laid before the British people—when they saw the poor African in his deplorable condition, with his mental blindness enforced and rendered permanent by legal enactment—when they beheld his privations, his tortures, and his tears; when his heavy groan and the clanking of his chain, and his wild cry for freedom came over the wild waste of waters, and thrilled their listening ears,—then, justice and humanity prevailed—a universal agitation arose, and the Legislature was besieged with an irresistible demand from a united nation, for immediate and total emancipation. And a compensation of £20,000,000 was given to the West India proprietors.

In this case Great Britain had long been committed to a certain policy; the people who were aggrieved thereby had not the power to employ an advocate. A few generous philanthropists espoused their cause; they challenged the policy—the whole West India interest, with all its riches and its influence, astonished at their presumption, indignantly rose, and prepared for the contest.

It sent forth its hired Advocates—it employed a corrupted Press—it resorted to the arts of slander.

But all in vain! The friends of justice and humanity triumphed. The British Government not only abandoned its policy, but actually gave a sum of money as an atonement for its adoption. The cases of course in many respects bear no analogy—but I ask you, do you think that we should receive less consideration from the hands of British justice than the Negro slave, or that truth would be less powerful with the British people when advocating our interests and their own, when contending for the integrity of the Empire, and the perpetuation of its greatness, than when it lifted its voice in behalf of a few hundred bondmen in the islands of the West?

Another project is, 'Free trade with the United States.' I call upon the press to consider this measure—to describe its advantages,