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# INTIMACIES IN CANADIAN LIFE AND LETTERS

BY

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*With a Letter from the late Benjamin Sulte, LL.D.  
Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada*

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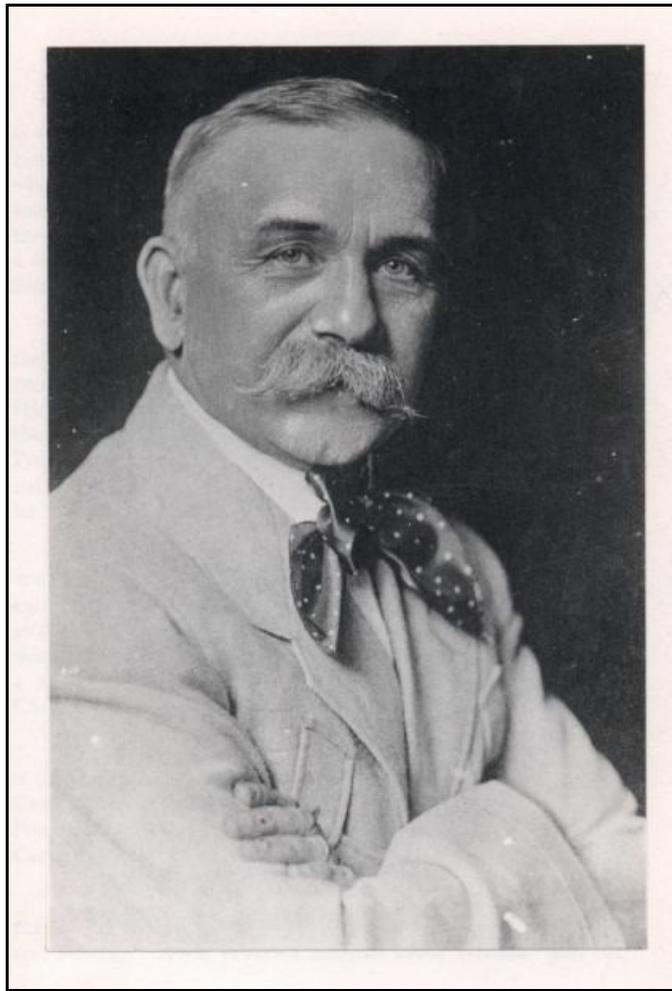
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BY THOMAS O'HAGAN

*To*

JOHN SQUAIR, M.A.

PROFESSOR EMERITUS IN FRENCH  
*of*  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
BROAD AND SYMPATHETIC SCHOLAR  
THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED



**Thomas O'Hagan**

For permission to publish in the original and in translation the poems *Le Canada, Mes Petits Amis, François Xavier Garneau, Reproches au Mois de Mai* and *Aux Arbres* our thanks are due respectively to the Librairie Beauchemin, Granger Frères, Gérard Malcheloss, Joseph Ferland and Blanche Lamontagne Beaugard, all of Montreal.

As to the use of the other poems discussed in our volume, we regret being unable to reach their respective publishers.

## **PREFACE**

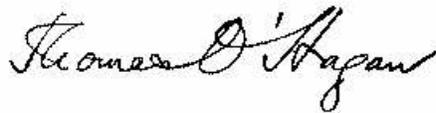
In presenting to our readers this volume, our chief motive is to witness to the intellectual growth of our Canadian people but more especially to the intellectual advancement of those who, settled upon the banks of the St. Lawrence for three hundred years, have not only preserved in its integrity, here in the New World, the idiom of their forebears, but have developed a literature not unworthy of the land of Molière, Lamartine, Sainte Beuve and Victor Hugo.

It will be remembered that Lord Dufferin, Governor-General of Canada, on the eve of bidding adieu to the Canadian people in June, 1878, when replying to an address presented to His Excellency by the Legislative Assembly of Quebec, used these significant words: "My warmest aspiration for this Province has always been to see its French inhabitants executing for Canada the functions which France herself performs for Europe."

Is it not then fortunate for us as Canadians that we have within our Dominion a people who represent the idealism and culture of France? For will not the very diversity of race-gifts which marks our Canadian people aid us, not only in working out our institutions of Government, but in lending a many-sided splendour to the intellectual achievement of Canada within the domain of science, art and letters.

We would therefore desire that the English-speaking people of Canada might learn something of the contribution of French Canada to Canadian literature, as we would desire that all French Canadians might know and appreciate what English Canadians have done, and are doing, for Canadian letters.

The six papers in this volume have appeared during the past few years in various publications—"French-Canadian Poets and Poetry," "Some French-Canadian Prose Writers" and "A Canadian Dialect Poet" in the *Catholic World* of New York; "Is the French Spoken in Quebec a Patois?" in the *American Catholic Quarterly Review* of Philadelphia; and "The Patriotic Note in Canadian Poetry" and "A Canadian Humourist in Parliament" in *The Statesman* of Toronto, and to these periodicals we express our thanks for permission to publish them in book form.



LETTER FROM DR. BENJAMIN SULTE, F.R.S.C.

Mon cher Dr. O'Hagan:

Vous pouvez dire aux lecteurs de langue anglaise d'Ontario que la littérature des Canadiens-Français n'est pas du tout une copie ou imitation des livres de France, mais que c'est du pur Canadien; et, quant à la langue c'est un français aussi pur que celui des écrivains de la France.

Une dizaine d'ouvrages de la province de Québec ont été couronnés par l'Académie Française, mais il y en a beaucoup plus également recommandables, qui n'ont pas été soumis au jugement de cette académie.

Nous avons donc une littérature vraiment nationale et copieuse, qui mérite l'attention des lecteurs de toutes les provinces du Canada. C'est pour nous un titre de gloire. Voilà la vérité!

BENJAMIN SULTE.

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# FRENCH-CANADIAN POETS AND POETRY

## CHAPTER I.

### FRENCH-CANADIAN POETS AND POETRY

In the land through which flows the St. Lawrence, in which is enshrined the memory of a Frontenac, a Champlain and a Bishop Laval, there has taken root and blossomed a distinctive Canadian literature which, during the interval of years since the Bourbon lilies were snatched from the brow of New France, has developed in beauty and strength with a flavour and form all its own. This literature is, indeed, of the household of France speaking to the soul with the accent and grace of the Motherland, but enriched by the breath and spirit of an heroic people whose gift of toil has turned forests into smiling gardens, and filled temples with the splendour of strong and heroic faith.

French-Canadian literature and especially its poetry is a mirror of the people. It is replete with joy and beauty and the fine optimism of consecrated hearts. The French-Canadian poet since the days of Michael Bibaud has woven into his verse the finest of idealism. His muse, too, is aflame with patriotism. He owes no double allegiance. For him is the St. Lawrence with all its historic memories and not the Thames. His heart follows the *voyageur* and the *coureur de bois*.

The question arises here: When did French-Canadian poetry with its individual note and form begin? From the fall of Quebec in 1760 to the year 1850—that is, for nearly a hundred years—the genius of French Canada was groping towards the light in dimness and with unsteady step.

Imagine, if you will, seventy thousand people subjected to conquerors, aliens in race and sympathy, and completely out of touch with the life, yearnings and ideals of New France—conquerors who sought to build a new horizon around every French Canadian that would limit alike his vision and his thinking.

These hundred years were, indeed, for the French Canadians, truly years of struggle, during which they fought for freedom and the conservation and integrity of their race.

Then it was that the French Canadian found his soul, and finding it in the lists of victory, turned his mind to the higher things of the spirit. French-Canadian poetry really dates from about the year 1850. Benjamin Sulte, perhaps the best authority we have on the intellectual development of French Canada, tells us that not until 1850 or 1860 do we find much individuality in the poetic work of the French Canadian. Till then the French Canadian had lived on the literary traditions of the end of the reign of Louis XIV, and the first half of that of Louis XV.

The first poet of note in French Canada was unquestionably Octave Crémazie, who was born in the city of Quebec, April, 1827, and pursued his studies in the Seminary of Quebec. Crémazie had a rich and cultivated mind, and the lofty and ardent note of Canadianism in his work entitles him to a first place among the patriotic poets of Canada. His knowledge of literature was very extensive, being thoroughly familiar with the great poets of England, Germany, Spain and Italy. He is said to have quoted with equal facility Sophocles, the great Sanscrit Epic, Ramayana, the Latin satirist, Juvenal and the Arab and Scandinavian poets.

Strength, fire and energy mark Crémazie's lines. His love for his native land was a very passion, and when a financial catastrophe removed him from its shores, he yearned and mourned for his beloved Canada, homesick and sad unto death. From 1852 to 1862—and these are the years that verily mark the beginning of French-Canadian poetry—Crémazie wrote and published *Le Drapeau de Carillon*, *Le Canada*, *Un Soldat de l'Empire*, *Aux Canadiens-Français*, *Le Vieux Soldat Canadien*, *L'Alouette* and *Promenade des Trois Morts*. From 1862 to 1878 he spent in Paris in enforced exile, and his diary, written during the siege of Paris by the Germans, is full of interest and the wise judgments and observations of a poet and scholar. The "Morning Star" of French-Canadian poetry lies buried in the cemetery of Le Havre in the land of his ancestors, but far from the shores he loved to chant in song.

We reproduce here in the original and in translation his patriotic poem *Le Canada*, not that it presents Crémazie at his best, but because it strikes the dominant note in his work—patriotism:

### LE CANADA

Il est sous le soleil une terre bénie,  
Où le ciel a versé ses dons les plus brillants,  
Où répandant ses biens la nature agrandie,  
A ses vastes forêts mêle ses lacs géants.

Sur ces bords enchantés notre mère la France  
A laissé de sa gloire un immortel sillon,  
Précipitant ses flots vers l'océan immense  
Le noble Saint-Laurent redit encore son nom.

Heureux qui la connaît, plus heureux qui l'habite  
Et ne quittant jamais pour chercher d'autres cieux  
Les rives du grand fleuve où le bonheur l'invite,  
Sait vivre et sait mourir où dorment ses aïeux.

### CANADA

There is a land of matchless worth,  
Where heaven its gifts has cast,  
And nature prodigal and rich,  
Sown lakes mid forests vast.

Along these enchanted shores, where France  
Has left her heritage of fame,  
The broad St. Lawrence rolls its tide,  
Proclaiming loud her glorious name.

Oh, happy he who seeks no skies  
Where strangers toil and weep,  
But finds felicity and joy  
Where his forefathers sleep.

—T. O'H.

There are several French-Canadian writers whose work both in prose and verse is full of distinction, but who are not known as poets. The late Abbé Casgrain has written several poems of merit and has made an admirable translation into French verse of Byron's *Prisoner of Chillon*; but it is rather as a prose writer, historian, critic and chronicler, that Abbé Casgrain will be known. He has been termed the foster-father of French-Canadian literature, and sixty years ago gathered around him in the very shadow of the Quebec Cathedral a number of ardent literary souls such as Dr. La Rue, Joseph Charles Taché, Antoine Gerin-Lajoie and the aged Philip Aubert de Gaspé. Again the late Sir Adolphe Routhier, one of the sanest and most cultured critics in Canada, the author of our Canadian national song, *O Canada*, has done some good work in verse, but his place among French-Canadian writers must assuredly be that of the essayist, accomplished critic and novelist.

Napoléon Legendre, who was born in Nicolet in 1841, is also both prose writer and poet. This gifted French Canadian, who received the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters from Laval University in 1890, reveals much delicacy

and sensibility in his poetic work. In translating *Le Soir* from his volume *Les Perce-Neige*, published in 1886, we have endeavoured to preserve the poetic mould of the original.

### LE SOIR

La brise doucement caresse le feuillage,  
L'air est limpide et pur;  
La mer frappe sans bruit le sable du rivage  
De sa vague d'azur.

Les rayons du soleil par de là les collines  
Ont incliné leur feu,  
Et leurs derniers reflets enteintes purpurines  
S'étendent dans les cieux.

Le ruisseau près de nous promène son murmure  
Sur un lit de gazon;  
Le rossignol caché dans son nid de verdure  
Commence sa chanson.

Chante, poète ailé; ta voix sonore  
Est un écho du ciel;  
Pour publier le Dieu que tout mortel adore,  
La branche est ton autel.

### EVENING

The breeze touches lightly the foliage,  
The air is pure as a tear;  
The sea beats noiselessly its pebbly shore  
With its blue wave so clear.

The rays of the sun that lit up the hills  
Are now waning their fire;  
And the purple tint of each fading beam  
Creeps higher and higher.

The brook hard by whispers its secret  
As it murmurs along;  
While the nightingale hid in its green-clad nest  
Trills a passionate song.

Sing, winged poet, O sing! Thy voice  
Is an echo on high  
To proclaim the God we adore  
In rapt notes of the sky.

—T. O'H.

There are several minor poets whose work deserves our notice. A little volume, quite unpretentious, bearing the title *Au Foyer de Mon Presbytère*, from the pen of M. l'Abbé Apollinarie Gingras, contains some charming little lyrics

full of simplicity and feeling. The *Avant Propos*, or Introduction, to the modest volume, is so full of quaint humour and clever allusions as to justify a presentation of the following tender memory-laden lines, *Souvenir du Foyer*, in the original and in translation:

### SOUVENIR DU FOYER

Au sein des plaisirs de la ville  
Mon âme est comme un grand tombeau,  
Je rêve un bonheur plus tranquille,  
Et je regrette le hameau.  
Du fond du cœur à ma paupière  
Je sens des pleurs souvent monter:  
Je me rappelle la chaumière—  
Et j'entends mes oiseaux chanter.

Quand l'impitoyable tristesse  
Jette à mon front son voile noir;  
Quand l'amitié surtout me blesse!  
Quand dans mon âme il se fait soir;  
Du fond du cœur à ma paupière  
Je sens encore des pleurs monter:  
Je me rappelle la chaumière—  
J'entends mes sœurs gaimant causer!

Quand sur la ville étincelante  
La lune au ciel vogue sans bruit;  
Quand sur la neige éblouissante  
Rayonne doucement la nuit:  
Encore une larme importune  
Du fond du cœur monte toujours:—  
Reverrai-je tes clairs de lune  
O ma chaumière, O mes amours?

### A FIRESIDE MEMORY

Amid the pleasures of the town  
My soul is void of mirth,  
For I dream of the quiet happiness  
In the village of my birth:  
And tears oft stir my heart  
As memory beats its wing;  
And I see again a cottage bright  
And hear the young birds sing.

When the gloom of pitiless sorrow  
Shades my brow with its dark veil;  
When friendship, too, lies wounded  
And my soul is tossed by gale;  
Then tears will stir my heart,  
As I dream where once I sat,  
In the old loved cottage by the lane,

And heard my sisters chat.

When o'er the radiant town  
The moon in peace sails low;  
And night has softly shrouded  
The white and dazzling snow;  
Again the unbidden tear  
Bears its message like a dove—  
Shall I see again thy moonlights  
O my cottage, O my love?

—T. O'H.

Perhaps no French-Canadian poet was as much the poet as the late Pamphile Lemay. He not only was dowered with exceptional poetic gifts, but he looked the poet as well. Born at Lotbinière, Quebec, the memorable year of 1837, his first studies were pursued at the Christian Brothers' School. After spending a brief period in the United States, young Lemay returned and was for some time at the Seminary in Ottawa. Later he took up the study of law, and when the Hon. Mr. Chauveau became Prime Minister of Quebec, he received the appointment of Provincial Librarian, which position he held till within a few years of his death.

Lemay had a very high artistic sense and a great spiritual endowment as a poet. His poetry is marked by a fine wedding of thought and diction, and his sonnets have a rare finish. They are decidedly the best that have come from a French-Canadian pen. Laval University, which does not lightly set its approval upon literary work, bestowed upon Lemay two gold medals—one for his fine poem, *The Discovery of Canada*, written in 1867, and the other for his *National Hymn*, written in 1869. In 1870 he translated into French alexandrines Longfellow's beautiful idyll, *Evangeline*. So well did he accomplish his task that Longfellow wrote him that his translation had added to the worth of the poem.

Lemay is the author of a long list of works in both prose and poetry, among the latter two volumes bearing the titles *Les Vengeances* and *Une Gerbe*. In the last named may be found a poem, *Aux Expatriés*, which we present here in the original and in translation:

### AUX EXPATRIÉS

Venez, vous tous que la Patrie  
Pleure, hélas! depuis de longs jours!  
Vous traînez une âme flétrie  
Sur des bords froids et sans amours.  
Venez, amis, avant que l'âge  
Enchaîne vos pas à jamais.  
Ah! Vous cherchez en vain la paix  
Loin du ciel de notre village.  
Venez! le soleil luit encore!  
Sur nos grandes prairies  
Tout fleuries,  
Dorment au loin ses reflets d'or.  
Venez! la gentille hirondelle,  
Quand renaît la saison nouvelle,  
Prend toujours vers son nid fidèle  
Son essor.

Revenez aux rives natales,

Au toit qui vous est toujours cher!  
Ah! si nos tables sont frugales,  
Le pain de l'exil est amer!  
Hélas! que de places sont vides  
A nos foyer toujours en deuil!  
On dirait que sur chaque seuil  
Ont passé des tombeaux livides.  
Venez! le soleil luit encore!  
Sur nos grandes prairies  
Tout fleuries,  
Dorment au loin ses reflets d'or.  
Venez! la gentille hirondelle,  
Quand renaît la saison nouvelle,  
Prend toujours vers son nid fidèle  
Son essor.

Heureux ceux qui jamais ne laissent  
Pour d'autres bords leur doux hameau,  
Comme les feuillages qui naissent  
Et qui meurent sur le rameau!  
Venez! pour que votre poussière  
Avec les cendres des aîeux,  
Repose à l'ombre des saints lieux,  
Sous l'humble croix du cimetière.  
Venez! l'e soleil luit encore!  
Sur nos grandes prairies  
Tout fleuries,  
Dorment au loin ses reflets d'or,  
Venez! la gentille hirondelle,  
Quand renaît la saison nouvelle,  
Prend toujours vers son nid fidèle  
Son essor.

### TO THE EXPATRIATED

Return all whom your native land  
Has mourned alas! with many a tear;  
On shores bereft of warmth and love  
You drag out lives from year to year:  
Far from the skies of your natal shore  
You seek in vain content.  
Return before your steps are stayed  
And the fires of life are spent.  
Return! the sun is shining bright  
O'er our broad meadows  
All in blossom,  
Reposing 'neath its golden light.  
Return! the graceful swallow,  
When spring its season doth renew,  
Takes ever towards its faithful nest  
Its flight.

Return to your native shores,

To that roof which is ever dear,  
For though our tables are always frugal,  
Our bread tastes not of a bitter tear,  
Alas! how many seats are empty  
In each home now stripped of a living leaf;  
One might say that across each doorstep  
Has passed cruel death with plumes of grief.  
Return! the sun is shining bright  
O'er our broad meadows  
All in blossom,  
Reposing 'neath its golden light.  
Return! the graceful swallow,  
When spring its season doth renew,  
Takes ever towards its faithful nest  
Its flight.

Happy those who never leave  
For other shores their native vale,  
Like leaves that clothe the summer wold  
Yet fade on bough despite each gale.  
Return that your dust may mingle  
With the ashes of our dead,  
To rest in the shade of holy ground  
With the humble cross above each head.  
Return! the sun is shining bright  
O'er our broad meadows,  
All in blossom,  
Reposing 'neath its golden light.  
Return! the graceful swallow,  
When spring its season doth renew,  
Takes ever towards its faithful nest  
Its flight.

—T. O'H.

It is worth noting that four French-Canadian poets—Lemay, Legendre, Fréchette and Sulte—were born within a few years of each other—that is, about the year 1840. It is a common thing for genius to reveal itself in cluster. Note, for instance, the great men who were born in both Europe and America about the year 1809. The greatest group of English-speaking Canadian poets were born almost the same year—1860—namely, Roberts, Carman, Campbell, Lampman and Duncan Campbell Scott.

When Louis Fréchette's volume, *Les Fleurs Boréales*, was crowned by the French Academy in 1880, it was recognized that a French-Canadian poet of more than ordinary promise was added to the choir of Canadian singers. Fréchette, who was born in Lévis, Quebec, and obtained his early education at Nicolet College, studied law with Pamphile Lemay in the office of Lemieux and Remillard, Quebec. After a few years spent in journalism in Chicago, Fréchette returned to Canada, and abandoning Justinian and Blackstone, gave himself up entirely to letters. His most ambitious poetic work is his *La Légende d'un Peuple*, a kind of oratorical epic, while his poem on *St. Jean Baptiste de la Salle* is generally regarded as his most perfect one. *La Légende d'un Peuple* the author dedicated to France. Jules Claretie, of the French Academy, wrote its Foreword. Dr. Fréchette's other chief poetic works in order of publication are: *Mes Loisirs* (1863), *Pêle-Mêle* (1877), *Les Fleurs Boréales* and *Les Oiseaux de Neige* (1879), *La Légende d'un Peuple* (1887), *Les Feuilles Volantes* (1890), *Les Epaves Poétiques* (1908).

Dr. Louis Honoré Fréchette has been called the Lamartine of Canada. We find in his work something of both Lamartine and Hugo. The poetry of memory filled his soul. Writing once to his friend, Alphonse Lusignan, he said:

"Memory is all—it is the soul of life." Fréchette resembles Hugo at times, too, in mistaking fine rhetoric for true poetry. On the occasion of Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1897, he was made a Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George. Several of the Canadian universities honoured him with degrees, and together with Sulte, Casgrain and Lemay, he was elected one of the First Fellows of the Royal Society of Canada.

*Mes Petits Amis*, taken from his volume bearing the title *Pêle-Mêle*, is fairly representative of the poetic work of Fréchette. We give it here in the original and in translation.

### MES PETITS AMIS

Blonds enfants aux voix argentines,  
Frais comme un bouquet d'églantines,  
Joyeux comme des chérubins  
    Si beaux sous vos robes oranges,  
    Que l'on dirait un groupe d'anges  
Nes sous le pinceau de Rubens!

J'aime à vous voir, sur la pelouse,  
Aux yeux d'une mère jalouse,  
Jouer comme des papillons  
    Dansant sur leurs ailes de soie,  
    Peu soucieux, dans votre joie,  
Du monde et de ses tourbillons!

Oh! quand on voit vos fronts sans rides,  
Vos teints rosés, vos yeux limpides,  
Que n'ont jamais ternis les pleurs,  
    On pense à ses jeunes années,  
    A tant de pauvres fleurs fanées  
Hélas! sous le vent des douleurs.

Courez, sautez, troupe joyeuse!  
Sur l'herbette souple et soyeuse,  
Sans fin reprenez vos ébats;  
    Mais quand votre joie étincelle,  
    N'oubliez pas qu'on vous appelle  
Les petits anges d'ici-bas!

Oh! gardez votre foi si vive,  
Et votre innocence naïve,  
    Coupe d'ambrosie et de miel!  
Fuyez toute ombre dangereuse;  
Et si votre mère est heureuse,  
    Vous aurez votre place au ciel!

### MY LITTLE FRIENDS

Fair children dowered with silvery voice,  
Fresh as flowers of rarest choice,  
    Cherubs in your joy so gay;  
In your pretty dresses bright

Like to angels clad in light—  
Ruben's dream in pencill'd ray.

I love to see you on the green  
By your mothers guarded—seen;  
Playing like bright butterflies  
Dancing on their silken wings,  
Heedless what the future brings,  
Or the great world with its sighs.

Ah! when one sees your smooth white brows,  
Your rosy cheeks, your eyes like vows  
Ne'er stained as yet by life's sad tears,  
How return the days long shaded,  
And the flowers of youth long faded,  
Alas! 'neath griefs of many years!

Run and leap, O joyous throng!  
Ceaseless with your games and song—  
O'er the greensward skipping go;  
But when your joy doth sparkle bright,  
You'll ne'er forget, one deems you right  
Little angels here below.

Oh, keep your trust forever strong,  
Your childlike innocence of wrong;  
These twain to you are given.  
In danger's shadow find no rest;  
And, if your mother's heart is blest,  
You'll find your place in heaven.

—T. O'H.

William Chapman, who, as his name indicates, is of English origin on his father's side, was born at St. François de Beauce, Quebec, in 1850. His first volume of poems, *Les Québecquoises*, appeared in 1876. This was followed by *Les Feuilles d'Erables* in 1890. In 1904 appeared *Les Aspirations* and in 1910 *Les Rayons du Nord*. The two latter gained for their author the highest prize of the French Academy.

The beautiful poem, *Les Peupliers*, full of rhythmic swing and sentiment, taken from *Les Feuilles d'Erables*, is ample testimony to the fine poetic gifts of Chapman. We present it here in the original and in translation:

### LES PEUPLIERS

Salut grands peupliers qui penchez sur la route  
Votre feuillage lourd d'enivrantes senteurs,  
Qui bercez sur ma tête une ondoyante voûte  
Tout pleine d'oiseaux chanteurs!

J'aime à vous contempler à l'époque charmante  
Où le soleil vient tout rajeunir et friser,  
Où la brise de mai mystérieuse amante  
Vous fait frémir sous son baiser.

Car dans le doux babil de la feuille qui tremble,  
    Dans la chanson du nid sur la branche bercée,  
En extase je crois ouïr chanter ensemble  
    Tes voix suaves du passé.

Un soir du mois de juin à la brise jalouse  
    Dénouant les anneaux de ses cheveux de jais  
Elle m'avait suivi sur la molle pelouse  
    Qu'ombrage votre immense dais.

De vos cimes montaient des chants et des murmures:  
    L'oiseau s'y querellait avec l'écho moqueur;  
Nous vînmes nous asseoir tous deux sous vos ramures,  
    Avec le printemps dans le cœur.

Nous causâmes longtemps dans votre ombre sonore;  
    Elle avait des propos étranges que j'aimais,  
Dont le souvenir fait que j'en tressaille encore  
    Et que je n'oublierai jamais.

Oui, mes vieux peupliers sous votre vaste dôme,  
    Quand le printemps sourit, j'aime à venir m'asseoir,  
Car je crois voir ici le gracieux fantôme  
    De ce temps envolé qui fut mon plus beau soir.

### THE POPLARS

Hail! tall poplars bending o'er my pathway  
    With richly-laden foliage and perfume sweet and strong;  
You sway above my head like an undulating arbor  
    With your nesting choir of song.

I love to look upon you in that season of delight,  
    When to all the sun brings life and youthful bliss;  
And zephyr-laden May, happy wooer for a day,  
    Thrills in ecstasy the soul with its kiss.

For in the lisp of the leaves that tremble,  
    And the song from the nest swaying low,  
I seem in rapture to hear sweet voices  
    Telling the story of long ago.

One evening in June, when the breeze grew jealous,  
    And had loosen'd her ringlets of jet black hair,  
We stroll'd together o'er the fresh green meadow  
    'Neath the gathering shade of your trustful care.

From your summits there rose sweet songs and murmurs,  
    A bird was chiding the echoes that start;  
We came and sat there under your branches  
    With a gift of love and spring in our heart.

Long, long we chatted in your deep shadow.  
    She spoke strange words that I loved to hear,

Whose memory now stirs my heart with longing,  
In dreams that are linked, from year to year.

Yes, dear old poplars, 'neath your friendly branches,  
When spring comes smiling I love to rest;  
For I seem to find here the spirit departed  
Of that happy eve with its joys so blest!

—T. O'H.

Of that brilliant coterie of French-Canadian writers, born as we have said about 1840, the last survivor, Benjamin Sulte, poet, historian, chronicler and critic, passed away but recently. Sulte was wonderfully versatile. He had a most tenacious memory for historical facts, and is without a question the best authority we have in Canada on the history of the French-Canadian people. As a poet, his lyrics are marked by great simplicity and naturalness, and a felicity of diction which gives a certain charm to whatever he writes. Sulte, too, is perhaps the most national of all the French-Canadian poets.

Our author was born at Three Rivers in 1841, and gave to the public his first volume of poems, *Les Laurentiennes*, in 1870. In 1880 was published his volume, *Les Chants Nouveaux*. His monumental work, *L'Histoire des Canadiens-Français*, a work in eight volumes, occupied him from 1882 to 1885. In 1897, Mr. Sulte read a very scholarly paper before the British Association, which met that year in Toronto, on *The Origin of the French Canadians*. In 1916, Toronto University conferred upon Mr. Sulte the degree of LL.D. *honoris causa*.

In his volume of poems, *Les Laurentiennes*, Mr. Sulte pays a beautiful tribute to the memory of his countryman Francis Xavier Garneau, perhaps the greatest of our Canadian historians. We reproduce it here in the original, using the translation by Miss Mary McIvor.

### FRANCOIS-XAVIER GARNEAU

Un monument du granit pour sa tombe  
O Canada fier de ta liberté!  
L'historien de nos gloires succombe,  
Grave son nom pour la posterite!  
Ouvre en pleurant, Muse de la Patrie  
Le livre d'or où brillent tes héros;  
Il t'a donné les beaux jours de sa vie  
Et tu lui dois tes lauriers les plus beaux.

Assez longtemps son courage docile  
A su plier sous d'étranges mepris!  
L'intelligence a des droits qu'on exile  
Où qu'on mesure à l'esprit des partis!  
La Mort, en fin plus juste moins cruelle  
Va lui marquer sa place au premier rang.  
Hélas! faut-il qu'il ne tienne que d'elle  
L'honneur qu'il verse aux fils du St-Laurent.

Un monument sur sa tombe muette!  
Qu'il dise au peuple où dorment ces vertus  
Et qu'a ses pieds l'artiste, le poète  
Aillent rêver aux jours qui ne sont plus!  
Car sa parole a révélé nos pères

Trop inconnus de leurs propres enfants.  
Epris d'amour pour nos vieilles bannières  
La Gloire et lui sont un couple d'amants!

### FRANCIS XAVIER GARNEAU

A tomb of monumental granite raise,  
O Canada proud of thy liberty,  
To him the chronicler of vanished days,  
That unborn eyes may the record see.  
Muse of our land! open again with tears  
The book of gold where shines each hero's name;  
To thee the offering of his hopeful years  
Was made and what has thou to give but fame?

A weary while he strove with courage mild  
To bend his soul to strangers who despised;  
Yet held he sacred rights altho' exiled  
From those whose party strife he little prized.  
Till Death less cruel but more just than they  
Marked his high place 'mid the immortal throng  
And honors worthless thro' a long delay,  
Now to his mourning countrymen belong.

A monument above that silent mound  
To show a people where his ashes lie;  
To poet and to artist holy ground,  
When musing on the days long since gone by;  
And now for that his words revealed so well  
Those early siers unknown to many a son—  
Who for the love of our old banners fell  
Glory and he are wedded—both are one!

Of the younger band of French-Canadian poets, ranging between the ages of twenty and fifty, may be mentioned Emile Nelligan, Paul Morin, Albert Ferland, Charles Gill, René Chopin, Robert Choquette and Albert Lozeau. These constitute what may be designated as the Montreal School of Poets. The poetic sceptre, with the advent of these singers, passed from the city founded by Champlain to the city of Maisonneuve. With a kind of splendid audacity these young poets turned from a Lamartine and a Victor Hugo—from history and patriotism, the inspiring themes of the Quebec school, to a contemplation of nature, to the subtle probing of life and the deeper mysteries of the soul.

During the closing years of the last century this younger band of French-Canadian poets founded the *Ecole Littéraire* at Montreal with its quarters in the *Château de Ramezay*. Its two leading poetic spirits were Emile Nelligan and Albert Lozeau. The latter is a poet of virility and vision. His muse seeks the trysting place of nature and the soul; and in his inspired moments you know not which to admire the more: the lyrical splendour of his imagination or the subtle questionings of his philosophic thought.

Lozeau, who was born in 1878 and died in 1924, is the author of three volumes of poems: *L'Ame Solitaire* (1907), *Le Miroir des Jours* (1912) and *Lauriers et Feuilles d'Erable* (1916). This little poem bearing the title *Vieil Erable*, taken from his last published volume, represents well the spirit of his work. We present it here in the original and in translation.

## VIEIL ERABLE

La Maison est calme. Je vois,  
Sous le ciel de Mai qui rayonne,  
Un érable gris qui bourgeonne  
Pour la cinquantième fois.

Quand il fit ses feuilles premières  
D'autres yeux que les miens l'ont vu,  
Dont le grand sommeil imprévu  
A clos pour jamais les paupières.

Il ne restera rien de lui,  
Rien de sa vigueur effacée;  
Je laisserai cette pensée,  
Quand au cours du temps j'aurai fui.

Qui sait? Peut-être de ses branches,  
Qui m'ont toujours fait doux accueil,  
Tirera-t-on quatre planches  
Nécessaires à mon cercueil.

## AN OLD MAPLE

The house is quiet. I behold,  
Beneath the radiant skies of May,  
An old grey maple budding forth  
On this its fiftieth natal day.

Other eyes than mine beheld it  
When first in foliage clad so deep;  
Now those eyes are closed forever  
In the great eternal sleep.

Nothing will remain of it,  
Nothing of its strength effaced;  
I shall leave behind this thought  
When my name is but a waste.

Who knows but from its branches  
That always gave me kindly cheer,  
They will form four simple boards  
Needed for my darksome bier?

—T. O'H.

Albert Ferland was twenty-three years of age when the *Ecole Littéraire* was inaugurated in 1895. Already our young author had been elected a corresponding member of the *Académie Littéraire et Biographique* of France. Ferland is both artist and poet. He was born in Montreal in 1872 and is the author of three volumes of poems: *Mémoires Poétiques* (1893), *Femmes Révées*, to which the late Dr. Louis Fréchette, C.M.G., contributed a Foreword, and *Le Canada Chanté*. He is a poet of sincerity and truth and a minute observer of nature as is revealed in his poem *La Pluie*

*de Septembre*. We reproduce here both in the original and in translation his poem *Reproches au Mois de Mai* as witness of his fine gift of observation:

### REPROCHES AU MOIS DE MAI

Mai venteux! Ce soleil avare, ce jour triste!  
Boudeur, ne veux-tu pas faire les champs fleuris?  
Vois-tu combien la nudité des bois persiste,  
Comme l'érable semble ennuyé d'être gris?

Mais, sois bon, car les pins, dans leur sombre colère,  
T'accusent de laisser près d'eux le bouleau nu!  
Si tu n'apportes pas le printemps à la terre,  
Ah! pourquoi, Mai, moins doux qu'Avril, es-tu venu?

Et nul parfum! A naître encor la fleur de mai!  
Et ces neiges! ce bruit des eaux dans les ravines!  
Dis-moi, sont-ils prochains les jours, ou parfumé  
L'air des prés nous viendra dès l'aube en brises fines?

### MAY REPROACHED

Gusty May! This miser sun, this sombre day!  
Sulky one, wilt thou not clothe the fields in flowers' array?  
Seest thou not how long the nakedness of the woods persists,  
And how the maples seem wearied of being grey?

But be kind; for the pine-trees in their dark wrath  
Charge thee with leaving near them the birch, all naked and dumb!  
If thou bringest not springtime to the earth  
Then why, O May, less mild than April, hast thou come?

And still no perfume, and the May flower yet to bloom!  
And this snow! This murmuring of waters among the chasm'd trees!  
Tell me, O May, are the days at hand when perfumed,  
The air from the meadows will greet us, at morn, in gentle breeze?

—T. O'H.

Paul Morin, who was born in Montreal in 1889, is par excellence the most cultured of the younger group of French-Canadian poets. After a brilliant course in arts, science and law, at Laval, he studied in Paris where he received his doctorate. He is the author of two volumes of poems: *Le Paon d'Email* (1912), and *Poèmes de Cendre d'Or* (1923). The latter won for the author the Quebec Poetry Prize (\$2,000) in 1923.

Morin is a poetic artist with almost an Oriental imagination. His imagery is rich and his technique well-nigh faultless. Some of his best poems do not readily lend themselves to translation. A poem for instance such as *Flamme* is so symbolic that it would lose its meaning in translation. Let this brief poem, *Sur un Exemplaire de Shelley*, represent this young devotee of the most ethereal of English poets, Percy Bysshe Shelley:

## SUR UN EXEMPLAIRE DE SHELLEY

Ce que je dois au grand Shelley  
Ne peut être dit en paroles;  
Ses vers divins, ses vers ailés  
Comme un vol de colombes folles,  
Furent les premiers compagnons  
De mon inquiète jeunesse.

Flammes tragiques, clairs rayons,  
Et sanglots d'humaine détresse,  
Il y a, dans ce livre étroit,  
Toute la Beauté, tout le Rêve,  
Et tout l'Amour—et c'est pourquoi  
Je vous le donne, Geneviève.

## WRITTEN ON A COPY OF SHELLEY

What I owe to the great Shelley  
Cannot now be well expressed;  
His verse divine, his wingèd words,  
Like flight of maddened doves,  
Were in truth my first companions  
In the days of restless youth.

Tragic flames, luminous rays,  
And sobs of human woe  
There are in this little book,  
All Beauty, Dream and Love;  
And that is why, Genevieve,  
I give this gift to thee.

—T. O'H.

The youngest of the Montreal group of French-Canadian poets is Robert Choquette, who was born in Manchester, New Hampshire, in 1905. Choquette has lived in Montreal since 1913, and graduated a Bachelor of Arts from Loyola College in that city in June, 1926. His volume of verse *A Travers les Vents* (1925) gained for him the David Annual Prize of \$500 in 1926 offered for the best volume of French-Canadian poetry, and the second prize awarded by *La Revue des Poètes* of Paris, France. This latter was open to all poets speaking French but not of French nationality. The work of this gifted young French Canadian is also represented in the *Anthologie Internationale des Poètes de Langue Française* just published in Paris, France. Our author is a member of both the French and English sections of the Canadian Authors' Association.

We regard young Choquette as a poet of great promise. In his verse beats a Canadian note of prophecy. It is both original and authentic. Well does he say in his Introduction to his volume *A Travers les Vents*: "Ne sentez-vous pas que l'âme du Canada c'est une âme de jeune homme neuve et belle comme son corps? Alors, qu'avons-nous à faire avec les petits vers de salon?"

We present to our readers in both the original and translation his poem, *A la Vierge du Pérugin*. The translation is by Dr. Edward E. Binns.

## A LA VIERGE DU PERUGIN

Vierge du Pérugin, au sourire extatique,  
Qui penchez votre col avec ses cheveux roux,  
Oh! que vous êtes pure en votre âme mystique!  
Oh! que vous êtes belle en vos traits fins et doux!

Vous êtes belle ainsi qu'une tendre colombe  
Qui s'abreuve à la source où les cailloux sont clairs,  
Comme un ciel de midi, quand la lumière tombe,  
Vous êtes blanche, ô Vierge, en votre âme et vos chairs.

Blanche comme le pain qui fait vivre et l'hostie,  
Plus douce qu'une étoile et qu'un rayon de miel,  
Vous êtes belle ô Vierge, en votre modestie,  
Comme un lis entr'ouvert pour contenir le ciel.

Vierge, votre jeunesse a la senteur des vignes!  
Inaccessible fleur des buissons épineux,  
Vos charmes sont pareils à des groupes de cygnes  
Qui sèchent leur duvet sur le bord sablonneux.

Votre front est plus pur que les neiges intactes,  
Le murmure confus de nos cœurs moribonds  
Fait à nos pieds sacrés le bruit des cataractes  
Qui chantent dans la brume et dans les soirs profonds.

Vierge du Pérugin, ô Vierge immaculée,  
Sur les obscurs, sur les tristes, sur les pécheurs,  
Répandez à jamais la lumière étoilée  
Qui filtre entre vos cils, ô reine des blancheurs!

## TO THE VIRGIN OF PERUGINO

Virgin of Perugino, with thy smile of ecstasy,  
Who bend'st thy neck to show thy coils of ruddy gold,  
How pure thou art in thy soul's mystic fantasy,  
What beauty lives in thy clear features' gentle mold!

Thou art as beautiful as is a tender dove  
That comes to drink at spring where clear water'd pebbles gleam;  
As noon-day sky, when light falls straight from heav'n above,  
So white, Virgin, all thy soul and body seem!

White as that bread that giveth life, or Sacred Host,  
Softer than light of star, than honey-comb more sweet;  
Thy modesty, O Virgin, decks thy beauty most,  
Like lily cup half-op'd, that yearns towards God's high seat!

Virgin, thy youth doth hold the fragrance of the vines!  
Thou unapproachable line flower of thorny brake,  
Thy charms are like great swans whose pearly whiteness shines,  
Flocking to dry their down on gravell'd rim of lake.

Thy brow is yet more pure than unpolluted snow,  
The mazed murmur of our hope-reft hearts, half-dead,  
Makes at thine holy feet the cascades rumbling low  
That boom their song through fog by evening's deep shades fed.

Virgin of Perugino, Maiden without a stain,  
Upon the lowly, on the sad, on sinfulness,  
Shed thou forever more such light as stars do rain  
And filters through thy lids, O queen of spotlessness!

Nor are sopranos wanting in the academic groves of French-Canadian song. French-Canadian women have contributed a note of rare delicacy and charm to the poetry of their country. The names of Madame Huguenin, "Madeleine," Adele Bibaud and Pauline Fréchette, youngest daughter of Dr. Louis Fréchette, are well-known in the literary circles of Quebec. The latter, who was born in Montreal in 1889, has to her credit three volumes of verse and a drama. Many of her poems have been set to music in Montreal and Paris and her poetic work has been much praised by so discriminating a critic as Henri d'Arles.

Then there is Blanche Lamontagne, who was born at Escomains in the county of Saguenay in 1899, and educated at Villa Maria in Montreal. A good part of her early life was spent in Lower Quebec not far from Gaspé. Since her marriage to Hector Beauregard she has resided in Montreal and is at present associate editor of *Le Journal d' Agriculture* and *La Revue Nationale*. Her muse is inspired by the customs and legends and memories of the early *habitant* whose toils and virtues she has glorified in sweet and simple song.

Madame Beauregard has four volumes of verse to her credit: *Visions Gaspésiennes; Par Nos Champs et nos Rives; Les Trois Lyres* and *La Vieille Maison*. The following little poem exemplifies well the spirit and method of her work:

### AUX ARBRES

Pour la fraîcheur si douce de votre ombre,  
Pour ces longs ans dont vous êtes doués  
Pour vos bienfaits, pour vos grâces sans nombre,  
Arbres, soyez loués!

Soyez loués! Quand le vent vous effleure  
Vous protégez les oiseaux et les nids;  
Vous qui du froid gardez notre demeure,  
Arbres, soyez bénis!

Soyez bénis, arbres sûrs, paix profonde,  
Troncs reverdis, feuillages embaumés;  
Pour la beauté dont vous baignez le monde,  
Arbres, soyez aimés!

### TO THE TREES

For the grateful coolness of your shade,  
For your gift of years and star-clad days,  
For your kindness and favours never paid  
Accept, O trees, my praise!

Be praised! When the wind sways your branches  
You protect both bird and nest;  
You who guard our home from cold,  
O trees be blest!

Be blest steadfast trees in peace profound,  
Trunks grown green again and fragrant foliage;  
For the beauty with which you bathe the world,  
O trees be loved!

—*T. O'H.*

What the future has in store for French-Canadian poetry we know not. The singers of the dawn, the builders of light and hope have indeed wrought and planned well. May their successors prove worthy of their mantles and their lyre!

# A CANADIAN HUMOURIST IN PARLIAMENT

## CHAPTER II.

### A CANADIAN HUMOURIST IN PARLIAMENT

Legislatures, at times, overflow with wit and humour. Even Westminster, the staid and grave "Mother of Parliaments," bends, at times, and is convulsed with the sparkling witticism and repartee of some Celt—a Richard Brinsley Sheridan, or an O'Connell, or a Tim Healy. A few years ago, the latter, when a member of the English House of Commons, delivered a side-splitting, mock heroic speech scintillating with the keenest of wit and humour, when the question of Uganda in Africa was up for discussion.

Perhaps the most humorous speech ever delivered in the Congress, at Washington, was that of Proctor Knott, on Duluth. It is said, however, that this famous Duluth speech of Knott's had been prepared for him by a clever and witty wag in Washington; and that it was the only witty speech that Proctor Knott, who afterwards became governor of Kentucky, ever made. So that the clever Kentuckian might well be designated a single-barrelled humorous orator.

The Canadian House of Commons, since Confederation, has had many humorous and witty speakers. Amongst these have been Alonzo Wright, known as "The King of the Gatineau;" Nicholas Flood Davin, known as "The Bald Eagle of the Plains," representing as he did for many years the constituency of Assiniboia; and Joe Rymal, of Wentworth, Ontario, known by the sobriquet of "Joking Joe Rymal." But preceding all these were two others, whose cares of state as Cabinet Ministers did not prevent them, at times, from indulging in *bon mots* and repartee. In a keen thrust or play on words, Sir John Macdonald could hit the bull's eye every time.

It will be remembered that, during the Mackenzie Administration, the Hon. Timothy Anglin, who was Speaker of the House and Editor of the *Freeman*, of St. John, New Brunswick, had taken a contract from the Government for printing, and this being a violation of the privileges of Parliament, the matter became one for public discussion.

In the session of Parliament for 1890, some reference was made to this by a member of the Conservative party, when some one interpolated, "Where was Timothy Anglin at this time?" Sir John Macdonald wittily replied, "Why, Timothy was down with the hay fever." Hon. Thomas D'Arcy McGee was not only a poet and orator, but a wit of a high order. Many a time in the Chamber of debate he turned the tables adroitly on an opponent in a sally of wit. In his last speech in the Canadian House of Commons, on the fateful evening of his assassination, McGee humorously referred to a political candidate in Huron County, Ontario, who sought to gain the suffrages of the electorate by distributing freely and gratuitously among them copies of the Bible, adding facetiously that "the people accepted the gospel, but rejected the missionary."

Nicholas Flood Davin was a good deal of a Richard Brinsley Sheridan in that he anticipated interruptions and questions and had the witty replies all ready. At least, a Hansard reporter of the Canadian House of Commons has assured us of the truth of this. In fact, it is said that Davin often asked questions that would lead up to his retort. We once heard Davin fire a shaft in the House of Commons at the late Hon. Edward Blake which must have penetrated into the very marrow of this great Canadian jurist and tribune. Blake was too grave and intellectually massive and serious a man to play at wit and humour; indeed, he was known at times to be a little tart and biting in his rejoinders.

Davin had been descanting on the superior character of his constituents in Assiniboia, adding that it was the cream of Ontario farmers that had settled there; whereupon the late Dalton McCarthy interjected: "We should think so, judging by the character of the representative they send down;" and Blake, following this up, added "We may, therefore, I suppose, consider the representative for Assiniboia as the *crème de la crème*," when Davin retorted like a flash: "I thank the honourable member from Durham for his compliment and will say that, at times, the honourable member is a cream of tartar."

There are some very good stories told of the Canadian House of Commons. Away back in the seventies of the last century, in the days when the Hon. Alexander Mackenzie was Premier of Canada and the Hon. Edward Blake was his chief lieutenant, it is said that once, during a night session, when Sir John Macdonald and a well-marshalled opposition were questioning the Government on its projected Canadian Pacific Railway policy, a funny and highly humorous coincidence marked the debate.

Bret Harte, the poet of the "Heathen Chinees," had been visiting Ottawa at the time, and being the guest of the Press Club of the House, was in the gallery listening to the debate. But everything was very dull, as it very often happens when ordinary routine work is the order of the day. In fact, so dull was it while Mackenzie and Blake were replying to the criticism of the Opposition benches, that the reporters in the galleries concluded that they would enliven things with a game of cards. Mackenzie was speaking, and to the charge made by the opposition, the Premier, raising his voice fraught with indignation, demanded: "Under the circumstances, what would you do?" To which a voice from a card-player in the press gallery was heard to say, "Turn it down." Mackenzie proceeded, and after taking up another point, added: "But I pass from this," whereupon a voice from the press gallery was heard to say, "I pass, too." Bret Harte is said to have declared that the whole thing had beaten anything that he had ever seen in his wide range of experience. Statesmanship and cards were playing into each other's hands.

But decidedly the humorist, rather than the wit, of the Canadian House of Commons was the late Alonzo Wright, who represented for many years the County of Ottawa in Quebec in the Federal Parliament. Wright was of American extraction, his grandfather being Philemon Wright, who came to Canada from Woburn, Mass., in 1797, and founded the village of Hull. Alonzo Wright was educated at the Potsdam Academy, in New York. He identified himself early in life with agriculture and became a lieutenant-colonel of the Ottawa County reserve militia. He was extremely popular with his constituents and with the members of the House, irrespective of political affiliation. Wright did not speak often in the House, but when he did, it was, as a writer says, "to charm the House with the warmth of his eloquence, the extent of his learning and the grace and culture of his style." Whenever it became known that he was to share in a debate, every member was in his place and the galleries crowded.

Few Commoners treated any public question in a larger, more generous and intelligent light. His humour was marked by the very finest brand of bantering. All his speeches had about them the flavour of the library. This genial, generous, judicial and very popular parliamentarian is represented in the pages of Hansard by three unique speeches replete with the very finest touches of humour, and marked by a literary grace scarce ever surpassed in the Federal Parliament of Canada. The first was delivered on March 10, 1884, during a debate in connection with the vote of censure on Major-General Luard, Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian Forces.

It would seem that Major-General Luard had fallen foul, at a military camp at Cobourg, of some of the commanding officers of the Militia and had indulged in some dynamite language. The matter was brought up in Parliament, and Alonzo Wright, referring to this phase of the trouble, struck it off in this light and humorous vein:

"But the brave old soldier (General Luard) could not understand the difference between an irregular force and a regular force, or between the volunteers and the regular troops, and so he clothed himself with curses as with a garment. He swore at everything in the heavens above, in the earth beneath, and in the water under the earth. He made an insulting assault upon an officer. He swore at all sorts and conditions of men. We have been told on good authority that our army swore terribly in Flanders, but we thought that the sweetness and light, the culture and civilization of the nineteenth century had produced their legitimate results. We thought that a service which had given us such men as Havelock and Headley Vicars, men who combined the most earnest and fervent piety with the most dauntless daring, eliminated all such coarse and vulgar elements. When Bret Harte, the American humorist, visited this city, he told us a tale of the early settlement and gold fever in California. Amongst the adventurers who visited this country was a western teamster. From the first he was considered a first-class swearer; but by dint of practice he attained the position of boss blasphemer of the Pacific Coast. One day his team became entangled in a ravine, and he entered upon a protracted course of swearing. Like the Major-General, he swore at everything in the heavens above, the earth beneath, and the waters under the earth. An excellent clergyman, who was passing, ventured to remonstrate with him on this horrid blasphemy. The teamster turned on him, with surprise and indignation. 'So you call that swearing, do you? I never thought you devil-dodgers had any practical ability. If you want to enjoy first-class swearing, you should hear me exhort an impenitent mule!'"

Perhaps the finest speech delivered in the Canadian House of Commons by Wright was in connection with the

debate on the Canadian Pacific Railway, July 2, 1885. The member for Ottawa drew on his extensive reading and adorned his speech with the finest flowers of rhetoric and all the grace and charm which the most brilliant flashes of humour and the breath and aroma of poetic quotation could lend. With the House rocking with laughter, Mr. Wright referred to the incident of the Widow Murphy, down in the constituency of the Hon. Peter Mitchell, in New Brunswick, who had been bereft of a cow on the Intercolonial Railway, and the part which the honourable member for Northumberland, N.B., had played in securing compensation for the widow.

"Who does not remember," said the member for Ottawa, "the fascinating female, who melted the iron heart of the honourable member for Northumberland, the Widow Murphy? Who does not remember the important part played by that estimable lady in the history of the county? Who does not remember the pleasant picture painted with such artistic skill and power by the honourable gentleman? The pleasant cottage in the very heart of the great forest of New Brunswick. 'One knew by the smoke that so gracefully curled that if there is peace to be found in this world the heart that is humble will look for it here.' The Sabbath stillness of the scene, the lovely widow surrounded by her orphans, drawing the lacteal fluid from the patient Brindle, and the warning wail of the banshee, the baying of the bloodhounds, the neigh of the iron horse ravaging for his prey. In the evening everything was peaceful and prosperous; in the morning all was desolation and despair. In the darkness of night the widow's cow had drifted to her doom; but there was balm in Gilead. The knightly member comes to the rescue of his fair constituent. The widow obtained compensation and the honourable member immortality. By this kindly and generous act he won his brevet rank in the nobility of his country. But by the generosity of his acts he was declared noble by an earlier creation, by the imposition of a mightier hand. It is no wonder that all opposition melted away, like a snow-ball before the noon-day sun."

But it was in his speech on "The Abolition of French in the North-West Territories," a bill introduced by Dalton McCarthy, the member for Simcoe, in the session of 1890, that Alonzo Wright revealed his broad sympathies, kindly heart and tolerant mind. It was a crucial moment in the Canadian House of Commons, for McCarthy was endeavouring to set race against race and creed against creed to achieve his political end. Fortunately, Sir John Macdonald had the brain, heart and vision of a true statesman. McCarthy, when the vote was taken, was left with his "Devil's Thirteen," as Sir John designated McCarthy's followers.

In his speech, a highly humorous and patriotic one, Wright related how he had the summer preceding attended a picnic in Western Ontario, and he recounted his experience there with some of the doubting political Thomases. "You come from the land of Loyola, you come from the land of these Jesuits, you come from the priest-ridden Province of Quebec," said one of the picnickers to the member for Ottawa. "Well," they said, "what is going to become of those poor, miserable, oppressed Protestants?" "I said: 'Yes, we may be oppressed, but as you can see,' (Alonzo Wright must have weighed two hundred and fifty pounds), 'they do not starve me at any rate.' 'With regard to the English inhabitants of that Province, those poor slaves who are hunted by Mercier and his congeners, what about them?' I said: 'I think they bear their punishment very patiently: at any rate, they get on very well with their neighbours.' Then they said: 'What of the priesthood?' I said: 'So far as the priests of the Province of Quebec are concerned, not alone the Catholic priests, but the Presbyterian clergy, and the Methodist clergy, and the clergymen of all the denominations, live in peace and harmony together and like each other.' 'What, then,' they said, 'of the superb old sorcerer, who sits securely throned on a thousand wiles in his city of Ottawa? Has he not gone over to the Scarlet Woman who sits on the Seven Hills?' I ventured to say that I was not aware of the state of the honourable gentleman's spiritual harem at the present time.

"I thought I knew that at an early period he was captured by Madame Calvin; then that he had certain coquetries with Madame Wesley; then he had a liaison with a beautiful Baptist lady; but I said, perhaps, inasmuch as he has had an infinite versatility, the Italian beauty, the Scarlet Woman has at last won his heart. But, I said, it is well known that he has had the best of everything in this world, and, if I am not mistaken, he will get the best in the next."

Alonzo Wright possessed that fine element of humour which made everybody laugh with him, not at his victim. He was what might be termed optimism in full flower. His eloquence was an eloquence of the heart; his humour proceeded from the very noblest impulses of the soul. The member for Ottawa deserves truly a large place in the history of our Canadian Parliament.

# IS THE FRENCH SPOKEN IN QUEBEC A PATOIS?

## CHAPTER III.

### IS THE FRENCH SPOKEN IN QUEBEC A PATOIS?

It is astonishing how persistingly the idea has held, in the English-speaking mind of Canada, that the French spoken in Quebec is a *patois*. Like many false and absurd ideas that obtain, this erroneous one has had its origin in ignorance of fact. It has trickled through all classes of the English community in Canada, and we have found it existent even in great centres of learning in the United States. Indeed, it will take years, we fear, to disabuse the public mind of this false and absurd idea and give truth of fact its rightful place.

The question, we hold, should be discussed free from all race or language prejudice and supported, not by mere subtle philological distinctions, but by the common sense facts of the laws of language, and the historical truths that underlie all language development. We must, at the outset, confess that we have never been able to understand why the civilization and development of the French colonist, on the banks of the St. Lawrence, in Canada, should bear fruit in a *patois* of speech, while the English colonists, who first settled in Massachusetts and Virginia, succeeded in preserving the English of Shakespeare or Pope or Addison.

If we make a study of the character of the first French colonists who came to Canada, then called New France, from the beginning of the seventeenth century to the middle of the eighteenth century, there is nothing to warrant us in assuming that the language they spoke was nothing but a synthesis of the dialects that prevailed in their mother country. On the contrary, the intellectual beginnings of New France are coeval with an Old France that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries surpassed, in brilliant literary achievement, in science and in art, all the other countries of Europe.

It is true that many of the French colonists belonged, not to the intellectual *elite*, but to the toiling masses who necessarily emphasized labour and the skill of the hand rather than the skill of the brain. But this can be said as well of the early settlers in Massachusetts and Virginia. You may here ask: Do we know the character of the early French colonists in Canada? Decidedly we do; and what is more, we know the parts of France from which they hailed, and the character or peculiarities of the language or dialects which they spoke; for there is no doubt that some of them came to our Canadian shores with a dialect upon their tongues. However, the French colonizers were not alone in this. Pray make a study of the early New England and Virginia colonizers, and witness to the fact that it was not the approved accent of a Samuel Johnson or some Chesterfieldian Beau Brummel that prevailed on Massachusetts Bay or at Jamestown, Virginia, but a kind of hybrid accent that partook of the mentality of various localized quarters of England, with here and there a bright spangle and dash of the more cultured and elegant Cavalier.

But to return to the French colonizers of Quebec. The first contingent of these, we learn, came chiefly from Perche, Normandy, Picardy and Beauce. We are quite certain of this fact. We are further certain that between 1662 and 1672, Poitou, La Rochelle and Gascony contributed a contingent. Between 1632 and 1672 Touraine and Paris, with its surrounding country, also contributed a certain part to the peopling of the new colony. In the eighteenth century a few colonists came from Dauphiney, Franche-Comté and Burgundy.

Now the fact to remember, in connection with the colonizing forces that came from France at different epochs from 1668 to 1760 and settled in Quebec is, that Normandy took the lead, contributing in all 958 colonists; and the Ile-de-France, where the very best French spoken in France in the seventeenth century obtained, ranked second with 621 colonists. But, you may ask: How do you know these things? We answer: From Msgr. Tanguay's *Genealogical Dictionary of French-Canadian Families*, based upon the baptismal and marriage registers of Quebec, and from Benjamin Sulte's *The French Language in Canada*.

It is interesting to note how a particular dialect in a country prevails over all the other dialects; becoming eventually the accepted language of literature and scholars. This is due sometimes to the political prestige of the people who speak

the dialect. Notice that the West Saxon dialect of Wessex in England became the literary language of England in the ninth century; the Tuscan dialect the literary language of Italy in the thirteenth century; and a few centuries later the dialect of Castile in Spain prevailed over all the other Spanish dialects and became the literary language of all Spain. Pray note, too, that the dialect of the Ile-de-France took precedence of all the other French dialects as early as the twelfth century—first in official acts and then in literature; and by the fifteenth century the sway of this dialect was so complete that henceforth it became the language of the court, of the palace and of literature. We thus see that the French literary language had been establishing itself for at least nearly three centuries in France before the colonists of New France had fixed their homes upon the banks of the St. Lawrence. It is, however, true that French prose writers such as Rabelais and Montaigne show in their works decided traces of the *patois* of their own provinces.

Let us examine, furthermore for a moment, what was the intellectual character of France at the time when its bold and hardy adventurers were founding a New France in the New World. We are now in the age of Louis XIV, the most brilliant century of French genius. Richelieu had founded the French Academy in 1635. It is the age of such scholars as Ducange, Petau, Mabillon; of the painters, Poussin and Le Brun; of such ministers of State as Richelieu, Mazarin and Colbert; of the pulpit orators Bossuet, Bourdaloue and Massillon; of the philosophers Pascal and Descartes; of the dramatists Corneille, Racine and Molière.

Think you, then, that in an age such as this, France sent forth from her bosom a body of colonists, paupers in intellect with naught but dialect—conflicting dialect—upon their lips? Or, is it not more natural to believe that a goodly number of those who sought the shores of Canada were men and women superior in intellect, and possessing the scholarship and culture or at least a goodly share of that scholarship and culture which gave France of the seventeenth century a first place in intellectual rank among the nations of Europe?

Of course, nobody can or would deny but that many of these colonists from France brought with them a dialect; but the further fact is quite likely that they all could understand and converse in French. And what is more likely, too, than that under the leadership of an educated clergy, professors in the colleges, officers in the army, and members of the medical and legal professions, the first colonists soon learned to discard all *patois*, or provincial dialect, and converse in the French language alone.

In fact, we have proof of this in the testimony of La Potherie and Charlevoix, who declared—the first in 1700 and the second in 1720, when writing of the French Canadians—that no provincial accent or dialect was observed among them. Why, we ask, should the French language spoken on the banks of the St. Lawrence, in the seventeenth century, be not as good as the English spoken at the same time in Jamestown, Virginia, or on Massachusetts Bay? Should you answer that the colonists who first settled Virginia and Massachusetts were superior intellectually to those who founded New France, we answer that a large number of the first settlers of Jamestown, Virginia, were convicts; and we do not generally go to convicts for superior intellects or purity of language.

Just look at the early English settlements in America, and see what an *omnium gatherum* you have from the four winds of heaven. Is it probable that the Highland Scotch who settled in the two Carolinas, a part of Georgia and in the Mohawk Valley of New York; the Ulster Irish who settled in Virginia and Pennsylvania; the men and women hailing from Yorkshire and Devonshire and the environs of London, who set up their homes in the New England States; is it probable that they spoke English in accordance with the laws laid down by old Dr. Samuel Johnson, the first of lexicographers? Did these colonists bring to our shores, whether American or Canadian, any perversity of accent, any dialect, any strange obsolete words? If they did, then is the English of Virginia, New York, Massachusetts and Canada as much a *patois* as is the French of Quebec. One of the most amusing charges, if it were not absurd, made against the French spoken in Quebec is that it is "a Breton jargon." Now, of nearly five thousand emigrants, or if you will, colonists, who came from France to Canada between the years 1608 and 1700, only 175 came from Brittany, and surely these could not have imposed their language on the rest.

As a matter of fact, but few Bretons came to Canada, and the greater number of those who did come settled in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, then called Acadia. The Bretons were a sea-faring people, and some of their nautical terms exist to-day in the language spoken by the Acadians. Again, the people of Brittany do not speak a jargon; they speak the Breton tongue, which is Celtic and closely resembles the Cymric tongue of Wales.

But the strongest and most conclusive proof that the French of Quebec to-day do not speak a *patois* is found in the

fact that every book used in the schools, academies and colleges of that province—that is in the French classes—is written in standard French, and could be used in the schools of France. How then, we ask, can French-Canadian boys and girls acquire their education through the medium of the standard French books and still continue to talk a *patois*? Is not this reducing the charge to an absurdity?

A few years ago the writer was travelling by train from Montreal to Quebec, and engaged in French conversation a French-Canadian commercial traveller, or as he is known in Quebec, a *commis voyageur*. After conversing for an hour, we asked him if he had any difficulty in understanding us. "Not at all," he replied. "Well," we rejoined, "we studied French some years ago in France, Belgium and Switzerland, while you have studied it here in the schools of Quebec. Of course you are aware," we added, "that the English say you speak a *patois*. Is not our conversation good proof that you speak, not a *patois*, but the standard French—the literary language of France?" The French-Canadian commercial traveller only smiled at the charge made in ignorance by English-speaking people against his countrymen.

A glaring example of this ignorance of fact, on the part of English-speaking people, was revealed some few years ago, when there was a great reunion at Plattsburg, N.Y., to celebrate the second centenary of the discovery of Lake Champlain by the discoverer whose name it bears. Among the distinguished personages who attended the celebration and spoke was Mr. J. J. Jusserand, the French Ambassador to the United States. After the Ambassador had spoken for some time in English, he added that he would address the French Canadians assembled there in their own tongue, which was interpreted by the Associated Press to mean, in the "Canadian jargon," as something distinct from the French language.

On the point as to what His Excellency the French Ambassador meant, a dispute arose, that was finally only settled by a letter from the Ambassador, which we here reproduce in translation: "As to the misunderstanding which you point out, permit me to dispose of it in a word. The language of the French Canadians and that of the French is the same language, being French. I could never have believed that anybody could have been mistaken in the sense of my words, since, when I said to the French Canadians that I was going to speak their language, I immediately spoke my own, which is theirs. No; no doubt is possible; and I have had too many opportunities to hear their speeches and to talk with them not to be convinced of this: the cradles of Quebec and Montreal and the cradles of Paris, Lyons or Orleans hear fall from maternal lips the same accents, the same language, French, of which those who speak it have a right to be proud for a thousand years."

Now a word here as to the character of the French spoken by the *habitant* in Quebec. Let us say that it is quite as good as the English spoken in the country places in Ontario, Vermont or Indiana, for example. It is much better than the French spoken by the country people, or, if you will, *les paysans*, in many parts of France.

No doubt, among the country people in Quebec there are many words and phrases still used that belong to seventeenth century French, or that have grown out of new conditions in Canada. But is this not equally true of the English that is spoken in Canada and the United States? We will wager that a little study would reveal the fact that many English words and phrases, now no longer in use in educated centres, but current in the American colonies two hundred years ago, are still current verbal coin in local corners of Virginia, Vermont, Nova Scotia and Maine.

Take, for instance, the French-Canadian expression heard among the habitants, *il fait fret* for *il fait froid*—"it is cold." This expression was commended and defended by the French grammarians of the seventeenth century. It is simply then a survival in Canada of seventeenth century French.

It reminds one of the attacks made upon the English pronunciation that obtains in Ireland, which is incorrectly designated a *brogue*. As a matter of fact, the Irish pronounce English as it was pronounced in the days of Shakespeare; and this pronunciation in England continued even to the time of Alexander Pope, as any one may discover if he will but make a study of Pope's rhymes. Need we here supplement our defense of the French spoken in Quebec by citing the list of French-Canadian writers in both prose and poetry, whose works have been crowned by the French Academy? Assuredly, the "Forty Immortals" would not lightly give their *imprimatur* to any work not written in the best and purest French. Furthermore, we do not know of any body of scholars, academic or literary, who are doing more to purify their language than *La Société du Parler Français* of Quebec. Not alone through their official organ, but in the columns of the French-Canadian daily press, they are casting out all intruding Anglicized words, or words of doubtful French signification. Again, it will be noticed that the French spoken in Quebec is a very copious language, possessing many

words that have had origin in the life and conditions of the country and people and of which the French Academy can necessarily know nothing.

But, in fine, what adds to the absurdity of the criticism leveled in ignorance, by English-speaking people in Canada and the United States, against the French spoken in Quebec, is the fact that, generally speaking, those who glibly pass judgment on the French of Quebec have often not even an elementary knowledge of the language.

# THE PATRIOTIC NOTE IN CANADIAN POETRY

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE PATRIOTIC NOTE IN CANADIAN POETRY

Love of country is one of the most inspiring themes of song. "For Faith and Fatherland!" has been the battle cry in every century. It has nerved the warrior to deeds of heroism and high emprise. Even the legionary soldiers of Caesar bore before them into battle their household gods.

When Christianity breathed upon the face of civilization, giving thereby a new meaning to the virtues of home, ennobling and sanctifying it with the beatitudes of faith, the altar and the fireside became united as a symbol of devotion in every Christian heart—reflecting the highest character of true patriotism—love of God and country.

It is of this true patriotism that the poet has sung during the Christian eras of the past. Indeed, the poet has been a virtual law-giver in every age. Stronger than breastplate or armour; stronger than the serried ranks of a veteran soldiery; stronger than walled battlement or parapet—nay, stronger, than the brazen lip of gun, is the note of patriotism stirred in the heart and burning upon the lips of the singer.

Canadian poetry is not without its patriotic note, albeit that it does not bulk very large. There has been too much divided allegiance—too much worshipping at strange altars, here in Canada, for the creation of a great Canadian patriotic poetry. Now and again, however, the soul has higher visions than those of Empire—it kneels in homage at the altar of home—it inhales the incense of native hills and vales—it enters the temple builded by Canadian hearts and hands—it hearkens to voices that hold kinship with the destiny of a great people.

It is said that the guns, at Fort Sumter, that heralded the deadly strife of Federal and Confederate, in 1861, proclaimed the literary independence of the American nation. But the literary proclamation of Canada was one of peace. It came with the charter of our Dominion Confederation. Canadian poetry had veritable birth with our Dominion, on July 1, 1867. Before this date, it is true, Canada, both French and English, had singers, but they lacked not only the native note, but that originality and independence, without which all art is but a copy—a mere imitation. Nor was this less true of English Canada than it was of French Canada. Though Lord Durham, as early as 1840, had written, "The French Canadians are not a people for they have no literature," he could as easily and as justly have said the same of the English Canadians. If, at the time of Canadian Confederation, English Canada had its Sangster, its MacLachlan, its Heavysege, and its McGee, three of whom were not Canadians by birth, French Canada had its Bibaud and its Crémazie. Considering her struggles to maintain her racial and religious integrity for the hundred years following the cession of New France to Great Britain, the wonder is that French Canada stood, among her sister provinces, in 1867, intellectually equipped as she was.

Mr. H. D. C. Lee, in his thesis for the Doctorate, in the University of Rennes, France, published in 1912, in dealing with the poetic work of Bliss Carman, is entirely astray in his criticism of the beginnings of literary life in Quebec, and magnifies in contrast the work of the early Puritan in the New England States. Does Mr. Lee not know that the beginnings of Laval University antedate the foundation of Harvard? And the work of the Ursulines in Quebec that of any Puritan academy for the education of women in the New England States? The Anglo-Saxon of the New England States, whom Mr. Lee so generously eulogizes, for his intellectual devotion, has little to offer in letters to the reading public, as the sum of his literary activities, during the first two centuries of colonial New England, save it be the mystic Calvinism of a Jonathan Edwards or the poetic doggerel of an Anna Bradstreet and a Michael Wigglesworth. As to the alleged fetters of ecclesiasticism that prevented the French-Canadian mind in Quebec from developing in the early colonial days, it never in any event degenerated into the narrow gloom of witch-baiting and witch-burning that marked the early life of New England. The Church in Quebec was a kind mother caring both spiritually and intellectually for the souls committed to her keeping.

It was, then, the proclamation of the Canadian Dominion some sixty years ago that stirred the heart of the Canadian poet and gave him vision. But even before this patriotic note had been struck by Canadian writers, reflecting the beauty of our fields and forests and the magic splendour of hill and stream, there were Canadians mindful of the land of their birth who tuned their harps at the firesides of the early settlers and glorified the heroic deeds of their fathers.

Soon there passed into the heart of Canada something of the patriotic fire and fervour which inspired Gray to write *The Bard*; Burns *My Heart's in the Highlands*; Campbell *The Exile of Erin*; Tennyson *Hands All Around*; Scott *Breathes There a Man with Soul so Dead*; Longfellow *The Building of the Ship*; Moore *The Harp that Once Thro' Tara's Halls*; Byron *The Isles of Greece*; and Rouget de Lisle *The Marseillaise*.

One of the first to strike the patriotic note in Canadian poetry was a Nova Scotian—the Canadian orator, statesman and publicist, Joseph Howe. While Howe's poetry has more of oratory than poetic inspiration in it, his poem, *Our Fathers*, which was read at the Centenary Celebration of Halifax in 1849, possesses some very noble lines. Like Tennyson's *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, there is, at least, fine and lofty rhetoric in the following two stanzas:

"Room for the Dead! Your living hands may pile  
Treasures of Art the stately tents within;  
Beauty may grace them with her richest smile  
And Genius there spontaneous plaudits win.  
But yet amidst the tumult and the din  
Of gathering thousands let me audience crave:—  
Place claim I for the dead—'twere mortal sin  
When banners o'er our Country's treasures wave  
Unmarked to leave the wealth safe-garner'd in the grave.

Not here! O yes our hearts their presence feel;  
Viewless, not voiceless, from the distant shells  
On Memory's shore harmonious echoes steal,  
And names which in the days gone by were spells,  
Are blent with that soft music;  
If there dwells the spirit here our Country's fame to spread  
While every breast with joy and triumph swells,  
And earth reverberates to our measured tread,  
Banner and wreath should own our reverence for the Dead!"

But the supreme note in Canadian patriotic poetry was struck, more than forty years ago, by Charles G. D. Roberts, in his fine poem, *Canada*. Roberts, in the flush of his poetic youth, stirred by the fire and ardour of Canadian patriotism, has given us, in this noble poem, lines surpassing in exalted fervour those of Longfellow, in his apostrophe to the Union, in his poem, *The Building of the Ship*. There is no double allegiance—no "my liege lord and the Duke my father" in the following opening stanzas of Roberts' splendid poem:

O Child of Nations, giant-limbed,  
Who stand'st among the nations now  
Unheeded, unadorned, unhymned,  
With unanointed brow.

How long the ignoble sloth, how long  
The trust in greatness not thine own?  
Surely the lion's brood is strong  
To front the world alone!

How long the indolence, ere thou dare

Achieve thy destiny, seize thy fame—  
Ere our proud eyes behold thee bear  
A nation's franchise, nation's name?

Nor should we forget to refer here to the work of another Canadian poet, who preceded Roberts, the dominant note in whose poetry is distinctly patriotic. We refer to Charles Sangster, who is regarded by some as the national poet of Canada. But while Sangster found inspiration and theme in the beautiful form and face of his native land, his Canadian patriotic note is less vital and concrete than that of Roberts. The following lines, from his *Song for Canada*, reveals well both Sangster's spirit and method as a Canadian patriotic poet:

Sons of the race whose sires  
Aroused the martial flame  
That filled with smiles  
The triune Isles  
Through all their heights of flame!  
With hearts as brave as theirs,  
With hopes as strong and high,  
We'll ne'er disgrace  
The honoured race,  
Whose deeds can never die.  
Let but the rash intruder dare  
To touch our darling strand,  
The martial fires  
That thrilled our sires  
Would flame throughout the land.

John Reade, literary editor, for many years, of the *Montreal Gazette*, who recently passed away, is the author of a patriotic poem, bearing the title *Dominion Day*. It was written on the occasion of our first Dominion Day Celebration, in 1867, and contains many exalted and truly poetic lines. Like McGee, Reade had been nurtured in Erin, and his sonnets and lyrics possess all the sweetness and melody of the Celtic lyre. We reproduce these lines from *Dominion Day* to illustrate Reade's Canadian patriotic verse:

Canada, Canada, land of the maple,  
Queen of the forest and lake;  
Open thy soul to the voice of thy people,  
Close not thy heart to the music they make.  
Bells chime out merrily,  
Trumpets call cheerily,  
Silence is vocal and sleep is awake!

Canada, Canada, land of the fairest,  
Daughters of snow that is kissed by the sun,  
Binding the charms of all lands that are rarest,  
Like the bright Cestus of Venus in one!  
Bells, chime out merrily,  
Trumpets call cheerily  
A new reign of beauty on earth is begun!

A very high note, in Canadian patriotic poetry, was struck, some years ago, by the late Robert K. Kernighan (The

Khan), a writer of plain and homely themes. In the wedding of truth and simplicity, Kernighan at times, in his poetic work, achieves a distinct success. We must confess that we find more true poetry—"human and red-ripe at the heart"—in much of the poetic work of "The Khan" than we do in some of the more pretentious and strained efforts of Canadian versifiers who fill our magazines and journals with their dark and incoherent abstractions. We, at least, know what the "Khan" means, when he writes, and this cannot always be said of many of our other poetizers. It is true, great poetry is often expressed under the form of a symbol; but the symbolized meaning is clear, while the dark enigmatic abstraction is not.

Kernighan's poem, *Men of the Northern Zone*, which, by the way, the late Sir John Macdonald was said to have been fond of quoting, has a fine ring and swing to it. Here is one of its representative stanzas:

Oh we are the men of the Northern Zone;  
    Shall a bit be placed in our mouth?  
If ever a Northman lost his throne  
    Did the conqueror come from the South?  
    Nay, nay—and the answer blent  
    In chorus is Southland sent:  
Since when has a Southerner's conquering steel  
    Hewed out in the North a throne?  
Since when has a Southerner placed his heel  
    On the men of the Northern Zone?

Another Canadian, whose poetic gift, like that of Kernighan, is associated with simple and homely themes, is the late Rev. William Wye Smith. His *Second Concession of Deer* is quite unique, and in simple ballad form pays tribute to the early pioneer in our land who blazed the trees and turned a wilderness into smiling gardens.

Mr. Smith has struck a fine note of Canadian patriotism in his poem, *Here's to the Land*, of which the following lines embody well the spirit of the whole poem:

Here's to the Land of the rock and the pine:  
    Here's to the Land of the raft and the river;  
Here's to the Land where the sunbeams shine  
    And the night that is bright with the North-light's quiver!

Here's to the Land of the axe and the hoe!  
    Here's to the hearties that give them their glory;  
With stroke upon stroke and with blow upon blow,  
    The might of the forest has passed into story!

The French Canadian has sung sweetly, too, of his native land. He has glorified the days of Champlain and Laval, and set to heroic measure the stirring deeds of his fathers. Crémazie's brief little poem, *Canada*, pulses with patriotism of the finest quality. With the French Canadian there is no divided allegiance. Canada is truly his native land to which is due his deepest devotion; and in this devotion he has but a single purpose—the development and upbuilding of a Canadian nation.

Out of an epic life of toil and struggle sustained by a heroism of faith, the French Canadian has emerged with an idealism that has marked the expression of his life in letters. Because of this, his patriotism is devoid of all egoism and the grossness of selfish materialism. His will be the task in Canadian letters to strike the patriotic note of national consciousness, and give to Canada the true ideals and vision of a nation.

The development and creation of a great Canadian poetry does not depend upon words of flattery or words of depreciation. Like all art, it must spring from the life of the people. At its best, it will be truly Canadian—a flower

nurtured on the banks of the St. Lawrence, or where the great Arctic streams mingle their accents with the whispering breezes of the West. Neither clique nor fashion will mould its form nor give it rules nor laws of life and beauty. It will be part of the universal truth of all art, speaking to the world through Canadian lips. Nor will it heed the judgments of other men and other lands that neither know nor recognize the genius of the Canadian people.

Not yet has come, it is true, our Canadian Browning, our Canadian Tennyson, or our Canadian Longfellow. When he does come, he shall come dowered with the fullest gift of song, and shall catch up in that song something of the sublimity of our mountains, the light and glow of our northern star; something of the sweep and dash of our mighty rivers; the music and murmurings of our blossoming prairies; the honest manhood of our marts and farms; the strong virtues of our homes and firesides; the tenderness of our mothers' prayers; the sweetness and purity of our maidens' hearts!

# SOME FRENCH CANADIAN PROSE WRITERS

## CHAPTER V.

### SOME FRENCH-CANADIAN PROSE WRITERS

The most distinctive characteristic of French letters is the wealth and wisdom of its criticism. Whatever opinions may be held as to the place of French poets in the world's Valhalla of poetry, the very first place is readily conceded to French criticism for its breadth and sanity, its universal judgments, its fine canons of taste, its clearness and beauty, and its always just proportion of analysis and synthesis.

Nothing, indeed, can be finer than the French schools of criticism, from Montaigne to Sainte Beuve, and from Boileau to Brunetière. To-day, in France, we have representatives of the two schools of criticism—the objective and subjective. The late Ferdinand Brunetière occupied for years the leadership of the objective or scientific method of criticism; while at the head of the subjective we have Anatole France and Jules Lemaitre.

This gift and instinct for criticism, a very tradition and inheritance of France, was borne across the sea by its sons and daughters, when they settled, early in the seventeenth century, upon the banks of the St. Lawrence. It has developed and ripened with the centuries; nor has this breadth of intellectual vision that marks the scholar in France been wanting to his kinsman in Quebec, whose literary horizon is necessarily more limited.

There is but one department of letters, in which English genius has surpassed French genius in Canada, and that is fiction. We think it will be conceded by any one who has made an adequate and sympathetic study of the whole field of Canadian poetry, that the poetic work of Crémazie, Lemay, Fréchette and Chapman is quite the equal of that of any four English-speaking poets in Canada; though a fairer comparison would be with any four English-speaking poets in any province of Canada.

In the department of history, Quebec will never be obliged to take a second place while it has on its roll of historical writers the worthy and brilliant names of Francis Xavier Garneau and Abbé Ferland. Until Kingsford appeared, there was really no historian in Canada to match with Garneau; and considering the conditions under which the latter wrote his history of Canada, it must be conceded that Garneau's is the greater performance. "As an historian," says a well-known Canadian writer, "Garneau stands pre-eminent in our republic of letters; he is at once our Macaulay, Hume, Guizot and Thiers, and we may conscientiously say that he has written the best history of Canada ever printed."

Referring to Garneau's style, the late Abbé Casgrain, in his essay *Un Contemporain*, writes: "His style is commensurate with the loftiness of his thought and reveals him as a choice writer. He has amplitude, precision and brightness. His style is especially remarkable for its strength and energy." Garneau was occupied in writing his great history from 1840 to 1848—years of stress and strain in Canadian political life, when racial animosity was being accentuated by the growing predominance of an English majority in the Canadian Parliament.

In 1861 appeared the first part of the *Cours d'Histoire du Canada* by Abbé Ferland, who was professor of Canadian History at Laval University, and in 1865 part second. His work is carefully documented, the result of research in Paris and London. Benjamin Sulte has laid all Canada under obligation for the monumental work he has done as an historian and chronicler. Many a dark corner in Canadian history has been made clear by his industry and erudition.

In fiction, Quebec has yielded us nothing of the first order, though it has supplied Sir Gilbert Parker and Mrs. Catherwood with subjects that have lent themselves readily to two meritorious and popular historical romances—*The Seats of the Mighty* and *The Dollards*. French-Canadian fiction is not, however, without value; and we will indicate here a few of its representative works. When the late Abbé Casgrain, in 1860, gathered around him, in the very shadow of the Basilica of Quebec, a group of writers who created *Les Soirees Canadiennes* and *Le Foyer Canadien* and who were known as "The Pleiades of Quebec," the aged Philippe Aubert de Gaspé, who formed one of the group, gave to

French-Canadian letters its first work of fiction, under the title of *Les Anciens Canadiens* (The Canadians of Old). As Abbé Camille Roy says: "This novel is in truth a first series of memories which constitute the first confidences of the author with the public, one of the chief heroes of the story being none other than Mr. d'Haberville, the grandfather of Mr. de Gaspé, who did his duty as a soldier in the war of the conquest of Quebec, and whose manoir was burned by the English."

Then we have the novel, *Jacques et Marie*, based on the story of the deportation of the Acadians which gave Longfellow his theme for the beautiful idyll of *Evangeline*, and, as its sub-title states, is a souvenir of a dispersed people. The author of this touching story is Napoleon Bourassa, architect and painter, who was born in 1827 and educated at the *Petit Séminaire de St. Sulpice*.

Born almost contemporaneously with the author of *Jacques et Marie* and one of "The Pleiades of Quebec," Mr. Gerin-Lajoie will be remembered for his unique novel, *Jean Rivard*, which deals in an interesting manner with the story of the colonists in Quebec. Abbé Roy calls *Jean Rivard* a rustic book, all impregnated with the aroma of the forest. We have nothing just like it in the English fiction of Canada, save it be Mrs. Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush*, which, however, lacks unity and plot.

It remained for a French-Canadian writer to seek the subject for a novel outside of Canada, in order to reveal the gifts and qualities that go to the making and creating of genuine fiction. The late Sir Adolphe Routhier of Quebec, author of the stirring Canadian National Song, *O Canada!* in his novel, *The Centurion*, a tale of the time of Christ, gives us a real novel of worth, "the most substantial," as Abbé Roy holds, "that has yet appeared in French-Canadian literature." Continuing, Abbé Camille Roy writes: "This novel of Judge Routhier's contains more history, more geography, more ideas, I will not say more love, than all the others that have, up to the present, appeared in our French Province. And this advancement should be noted, seeing that the novel is a species of writing that develops slowly and with difficulty amongst us; and seeing especially that this kind of writing supposes or implies that the author possesses a very rich and supple mind; and seeing, in fine, that this complexity of the novel could be one of the reasons why but few have undertaken to write fiction here." Quebec has produced many writers whose contributions have not been so much creative as valuable compilations of historical data and annals precious to *litterati* who seek setting and background of fact wherein to cradle the offspring of their imagination. Amongst these a first place must be given to the late Sir James Lemoine, whose *Legends and Chronicles of the St. Lawrence* has been a very mine for Canadian writers.

To Lemoine Sir Gilbert Parker is indebted for the data which made possible the creation of perhaps his most popular novel, *The Seats of the Mighty*. At his quaint manorial home, Spencer Grange, hard by Quebec, Sir James often entertained many of the most distinguished writers of the day. That must, indeed, have been a delightful fête at Spencer Grange in September, 1864, when George Augustus Sala of the London *Telegraph* met Francis X. Garneau, the historian of Canada, old Abbé Ferland, historiographer, Professor La Rue of Laval University, Dr. J. C. Taché, the well-known essayist on Confederation, and the Honourable Joseph Cauchon, the editor of *Le Journal de Quebec*. It may be here added that Sir James Lemoine was an intimate friend of the American historian, Parkman, and frequently entertained him at his home.

On the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897, when Sir James Lemoine was the recipient of knighthood, his gifted confrère in Canadian letters, Dr. Louis Fréchette, addressed to him a beautiful sonnet of which the following is a translation of the opening lines: "You have saved from oblivion many a legend, Venerable Toiler, laden with glorious booty; you have entwined for our literary knights many a garland and snatched from forgetfulness more than one remote secret."

Dr. Charles Joseph Taché, brother of the late Archbishop Taché of Winnipeg, was born at Kamouraska, Quebec, in 1820. Taché was related to the first three settlers in Quebec, Hébert, Couillard and Martin, who lived in Quebec in the time of Champlain; and on his father's side he was a descendant of Louis Joliet, the explorer of the Mississippi. In many respects Taché is one of the most remarkable men that French Canada has produced. He was a brilliant polemist and a man of prodigious erudition. His work on the Confederation of the Canadian Provinces is a masterpiece. His *Forestiers et Voyageurs* makes also delightful reading. In this work there is a most interesting chapter, entitled "La Rentrée au Camp," from which we would like to quote if space permitted. For his distinguished services to French-Canadian literature, the French Government created Dr. Taché a Knight of the Legion of Honour.

Contemporary with Napoléon Bourassa, Gerin-Lajoie and Dr. Taché, lived Dr. Chauveau, novelist, poet and politician. Dr. Chauveau was placed at the head of the department of Public Instruction for Quebec in 1876. His two chief works are *L'Ancien Chapitre de Québec* and *François-Xavier Garneau: sa vie et ses œuvres*. We have reserved for consideration and appraisal three other French-Canadian writers of notable gifts—Abbé Casgrain, Sir Adolphe Routhier and Abbé Camille Roy, only one of whom survives, Abbé Casgrain having died some twelve years ago and Sir Adolphe but recently.

Rev. Henri Raymond Casgrain, who was born in 1831, at Rivière Ouelle, P.Q., equally distinguished as an historian and critic, was educated at the College of Ste. Anne and the Quebec Seminary, and made three extended visits to Europe in 1858, 1867, and 1873 in quest of historical material, obtaining the journal and papers of Marechal de Lévis, as well as the personal papers of General Montcalm. He received the degree of Doctor of Letters from Laval University in 1877, and was elected President of the Royal Society of Canada in 1889.

The Abbé is justly regarded as the chief of French-Canadian biographers. In 1861 appeared his first work, *Les Légendes Canadiennes*; in 1864 *L'Histoire de la Mère Marie de L'Incarnation*; in 1885 *Biographies Canadiennes*; in 1888 *Un Pèlerinage au pays d'Evangeline*, which was crowned by the French Academy; and in 1891 his work on Montcalm and Lévis, which historically speaking is probably his *magnum opus*. It should be added that to the complete edition of Crémazie's poems Abbé Casgrain contributed also a most scholarly and appreciative introduction.

Foremost of French-Canadian prose writers may be regarded the late Sir Adolphe Routhier, who recently passed away at the ripe age of eighty-one. Judge Routhier was born at St. Placide, P.Q., in 1839, and received his education at the College of Ste. Therese and Laval University. It is worth noting that in his boarding quarters at Laval, Sir Adolphe had, as neighbouring room-mate, the poet, Dr. Fréchette. Judge Routhier was essentially a critic and *conférencier*. In all his works he reveals a breadth of scholarship, a supreme literary taste and a poise of judgment surpassing, we think, that of any other Canadian writer, either English or French. No other Canadian writer is so little swayed in the predilections of his judgments by mere personal or racial prepossessions as Judge Routhier. He had the unerring instinct of the French mind to discern in the literature of the world what is truly a masterpiece; and he struck off with chaste pen in epigram and antithesis the literary values and virtues, the salient qualities of every writer he appraised.

Take, for instance, the following contrast which he institutes between the great romanticist, Chateaubriand, and the eminent French apologist and critic, De Maistre: "Chateaubriand reacts against literary paganism, De Maistre against impious mockery. One could say that Chateaubriand made a tour of the Catholic temple to admire its form, but he did not enter it; while De Maistre passed through the interior of the edifice and even sounded it to its foundation to show the world the unshakable stone upon which it is seated."

Again, speaking of Victor Hugo and contrasting him with Lamartine, Judge Routhier writes: "Hugo's imagination was equally a marvel. We know but two men who can be compared to him in this respect: Shakespeare and Lopez de Vega.... As a lyric poet, Hugo rises higher than all his contemporaries, but he descends also lower. Several critics prefer Lamartine to him, and in a certain respect they are right. Lamartine is more equal, and if he astonishes less, he charms more. Both are, indeed, poets of the soul, but in Lamartine it is the sentimental which dominates, while in Hugo it is the intellectual."

The author's massive work, *Les Grands Drames*, is an able and searching study of the work of Sophocles, Æschylus, Shakespeare, Goethe, Corneille, Racine and Victor Hugo. Referring to the great Elizabethan dramatist, Routhier writes: "The theatre of Shakespeare is far superior, considered on the moral side, to the French contemporary theatre. It does not destroy the respect for authority, the traditions of the father of the family, the marital bond. It preaches neither free love nor illicit love." Judge Routhier's chief works are: *Causeries du Dimanche; Portraits et Pastels Littéraires; A Travers L'Europe; En Canot; Les Echos; A Travers L'Espagne; Les Grands Drames; Le Centurion* (a Romance); and *Conferences et Discours*. It was the last which established his reputation as a literary critic.

Rev. Joseph Camille Roy was born at Berthier, P.Q., in 1870. There are several brothers of the Roys, of whom one was the late Archbishop of Quebec, and all of them seem to have been born to the literary purple. Abbé Camille Roy was educated at the Quebec Seminary, Laval University, L'Institut Catholique, and the Sorbonne, Paris. He is the founder of *La Société du Parler Français du Canada*, and was elected a member of the Royal Society of Canada in 1904. His chief works are: *Nos Origines Littéraires* and *Nouveaux Essais sur la Littérature Canadienne*. The latter is a very

scholarly and discriminating study of the work of some of the most prominent French-Canadian writers, such as De Gaspé, Gerin-Lajoie, Louis Fréchette, Judge Routhier and Thomas Chapais.

Two other names of notable merit should be here added to the list of French-Canadian critics: that of Victor Morin and Rev. Father Beaudé (Henri d'Arles). Victor Morin, LL.D., who is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and has contributed many valuable papers to its yearly Transactions, is the associate editor in the French section of *Makers of Canadian Literature* of which Dr. Lorne Pierce is the editor-in-chief. He has prepared the volume: *Literary Backgrounds: French-Canadian* for this series.

Father Beaudé is one of the most brilliant and versatile of the younger writers of Quebec. He studied in the colleges of Quebec and later in New York, Paris and Jerusalem. His first book *Propos d'Art* appeared in New York in 1903. His researches in the history of Acadia, published in three volumes, was crowned by the French Academy, and won for the author the Richelieu Gold Medal.

Then we should add here also the name of perhaps our greatest living French-Canadian historian, Hon. Thomas Chapais, who occupies a place in our Canadian Senate. The late Senator David is also the author of several historical epochal works, as is the late Mr. A. D. DeCelles, for many years the scholarly librarian of the Federal Parliament. Let us not forget to mention here, too, the name of a gifted French-Canadian woman, Miss Félicité Angers (Laure Conan), whose work in fiction was crowned by the French Academy.

There still remain two French-Canadian publicists and journalists whose work has been a force in moulding public opinion in every quarter of French Canada: Jules Paul Tardivel, founder and director, for many years, of *La Vérité of Quebec*, and Henri Bourassa, founder and director of *Le Devoir*, unquestionably the most ably edited French journal in Canada. Mr. Tardivel, who was known as "the Louis Veillot of Canada," filled a unique place in French-Canadian journalism. He was, without a doubt, a *chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*, and made of his little weekly journal, *La Vérité*, a tremendous force in the Catholic life of Quebec. Though dead since 1905, the traditions of this fearless journalistic crusader still survive, and give strength and inspiration to those who battle for knightly honour and truth. Mr. Tardivel's published works are: *Vie du Pape Pie IX: Ses Œuvres et ses Douleurs*; *Notes de Voyage, 1890*; and *La Situation Religieuse aux Etats-Unis*.

Henri Bourassa, the director of *Le Devoir*, is much more than a Canadian figure; he is a continental figure. He is, too, probably one of the best informed journalists in America, and writes and speaks with equal facility both French and English. He maintains a thesis with a force of logic, at once both cumulative and convincing. His style is like to a mountain stream gathering force as it frets the narrow channel of a valley. Mr. Bourassa has published in all some twenty books, many of them being in brochure form. His most widely read volumes are: *Hier, Aujourd'hui, Demain*; *Que Devons-nous à L'Angleterre*; *Le Canada Apostolique*; and *Le Pape Arbitre de la Paix*.

It would be impossible here to touch upon all the French-Canadian prose writers. There are, indeed, many others worthy of notice, such as Oscar Dunn, Arthur Buies, Faucher de St. Maurice, Adolphe Gagnon, the two Abbés Gosselin and Abbé Groulx, whose works, *La Vie de Monseigneur Laval*, *L'Instruction au Canada sous le Régime français* and *Lendemain de Conquête* and *La Naissance d'une Race*, are valuable contributions to Canadian literature. Nor should we omit here to speak of the group of French-Canadian writers who created and contributed to *Les Soirées du Château Ramezay* in Montreal. French-Canadian prose writers inherit the taste and traditions of their *mère patrie*; and with singular devotion have cultivated, upon the banks of the St. Lawrence, a prose literature worthy of the genius of their gifted forebears in the land of Montaigne, Boileau, Sainte Beuve and Brunetière.

# A CANADIAN DIALECT POET

## CHAPTER VI.

### A CANADIAN DIALECT POET

Canada has produced its nest of songsters—bassos, tenors, sopranos and contraltos. But Canadian poetry is chiefly objective. The note of subjectivity or introspection in it is not large. A few Canadian poets have entered the inner temple of song and laid the flower and fruitage of their inspiration upon its altar.

In the domain of humorous and dialect poetry, Canadian genius, too, has not been very fruitful. Perhaps good reasons could be adduced for this. The world of contrast and sharp differentiation does not meet in Canada as it does in the Republic to the South of us. Canada is not subject to the seismic changes—commercial, political and social—that characterize the life of the American people. It is extreme contrasts and extravagances that form the basis of humour, and no dialect can grow save in a soil where life, thought, customs, manners and language are marked off by a clear and well-defined individuality.

Dialect poetry has indeed blossomed on American soil. Perhaps it has been overdone under the starry skies of the Republic. We think that as a vogue in poetry it has sometimes been carried to an extreme, and true poets like the late James Whitcomb Riley have, we think, at times clipped their wings in an endeavour to sing in notes not born of the heart and life of the people. No person, however, can study the beginnings of American life, with its variety and contrasts, its sharply defined characteristics, racial and geographical, without realizing that from such soil and such conditions dialect poetry must as naturally blossom as the purple grape from the vine trained by the hand of the husbandman.

So we have had, as a logical outcome of these conditions in America, Irwin Russell, the darkey-dialect poet of the South, whose *Christmas Night in Quarters* is a most admirable piece of work; Bret Harte on the Pacific Coast; John Hay of *Pike County Ballads*, Ohio; Whitcomb Riley of Indiana; Eugene Field of the *Kingdom of Childhood*; Will Carleton of Michigan; James Russell Lowell of the *Biglow Papers*; Charles Follen Adams, "Yawcob Strauss"; Charles Leland, "Hans Breitman", whose characterizations in German dialect verse are excellent; and Tom Daly of Philadelphia, whose Italian dialect verse has given him a unique place among American dialect poets.

There is one quarter, one corner of Canada, that has yielded rich and promising soil for the Canadian dialect poet—Quebec, the home of "Bateese", the French-Canadian *habitant*. Nova Scotia is differentiated but little from British Columbia; while the people of Manitoba are largely a facsimile of the people of Ontario, plus the wider vision and stronger ozone of the Western prairie. But Quebec stands alone—unique, the heir in its traditions, life, character and customs of France, under the *Old Monarchy*, untouched by the torch, tremor or trumpet of the French Revolution, and maintaining its supremacy of faith and virtue amid every vicissitude of political life and fortune.

Naturally, French-Canadian life, fashioned for nearly three centuries under such conditions, and with such environment, has produced character, individual, indigenous, picturesque. Nay more; the descendants of the Norman, Touraine and Perche colonists, who settled early in the seventeenth century in the land discovered and explored by their fellow-countrymen, Cartier and Champlain; living for nearly two centuries in seigniorial relationship with their manorial masters; holding to the teachings of the Church, to the word of the *Curé*, with the fidelity of primitive Christians, could not but evolve a type of character not only unique, but highly and truly ideal.

It is with this type of character of the French-Canadian *habitant* that the late Dr. William Henry Drummond, of Montreal, has dealt in his four admirable volumes of dialect poetry: *The Habitant*, *Johnnie Courteau*, *The Voyageur* and *The Great Fight*; and it is not too much to say that our author has written himself immortally into these French-Canadian poems. It requires but little talent to set the foibles of a people to metre, but it calls for genius in touch with the lowly and divine to gather up the spiritual facts in a people's lives and give these facts such artistic setting that both people and poems will live forever. This certainly Dr. Drummond has done.

But let us not here be misunderstood, in our appreciation and praise of Dr. Drummond's dialect work. The reader, who would consider the dialect spoken by the French-Canadian characters delineated in the work of Dr. Drummond as typical or representative of the English spoken in Quebec, even by the great mass of the *habitants*, would be gravely mistaken. Dr. Drummond himself never, we are quite certain, intended that his dialect should be taken as such. Like the dialect used in much of our characterization, it is based upon exaggeration; and art permits this exaggeration provided it has something of truth as its basis. So the literary creator of types and dialects will always find his ground disputed. The Creoles of Louisiana would never accept George Cable's creations, nor the dialect which he placed upon their lips. In this connection, readers will remember how severely Cable was criticized by the late Prof. Fortier of Tulane University, New Orleans—a Creole himself by birth, and, perhaps, one of the finest French scholars of his time in America.

Again take the Irish dialect as used in the delineation of Irish character. Does any one imagine for a moment that the people of Cork, or Limerick, or Galway, express themselves in the dialect found in most of the works of fiction dealing with Irish character? In our day W. B. Yeats and Dr. Douglas Hyde, and notably the late John Millington Synge, have given us in their works an Irish dialect of splendid flavour and truly moulded in the Irish soul, and fashioned by Irish lips.

But, while we offer this explanation and caution to our readers, we hold that there is no caricature in the work of Dr. Drummond. Drummond went among the peasantry of Quebec with an honest, open and sympathetic mind, ready to find the fragrance of virtue wherever the flower grew. He saw, too, all things with a spiritual rather than an intellectual eye, and so his judgments have about them something of the accuracy of heaven.

It is not likely that the late Dr. Fréchette, the French-Canadian poet, ever proud of his race, would have contributed a *Foreword* to Dr. Drummond's first volume, *The Habitant*, had there been in it any caricature of his people. In the course of his graceful *Introduction* Dr. Fréchette writes:

"Dans son étude des Canadiens-français, M. Drummond a trouvé le moyen d'éviter un écueil qui aurait semblé inévitable pour tout autre que pour lui. Il est resté vrai, sans tomber dans la vulgarité, et piquant sans verser dans le grotesque.

"Qu'il mette en scène le gros fermier fier de son bien ou de ses filles à marier, le vieux médecin de campagne ne comptant plus ses états de service, le jeune amoureux qui rêve au clair de la lune, le vieillard qui repasse en sa mémoire la longue suite des jours révolus, le conteur de légendes, l'aventurier des 'pays d'en haut' et même le Canadien exilé—le *Canadien errant*, comme dit la chanson populaire—qui croit toujours entendre résonner à son oreille le vague tintement des cloches de son village; que le récit soit plaisant ou pathétique, jamais la note ne sonne faux, jamais la bizarrerie ne dégénère en puérilité burlesque."

So, whether the reader be an English Canadian or a French Canadian, we think he can acquit the "Poet of the Habitant" of any motive or purpose of caricaturing the French Canadians. In truth, in our first visit to Dr. Drummond, in the summer of 1897, while discussing with him his portrayal of the French Canadian character, the Doctor said to us, with great earnestness: "I would rather cut off my right arm than speak disparagingly of the French-Canadian people."

The two dominant qualities in the work of Dr. Drummond are human-heartedness and sincerity; and these two in a supreme degree marked also the character of the author. Born near Mohill, County Leitrim, Ireland, on April 13, 1854, Drummond came, when a little boy, with his parents, to Canada. To his infinite credit—and this revealed the sincerity of the man—Dr. Drummond remained forever true to his race and to his early life setting. As Neil Munro, the Scottish writer says, in his introductory sketch of the "Poet of the Habitant," which appears in the complete edition of Dr. Drummond's poems, "Drummond was a Celt in every artery of his being." Indeed, not a few of his poems could not have been written but by a Celt. Nor were Drummond's gifts confined alone to French-Canadian characterization, as any one may learn who reads his "Dublin Fusilier."

The precious friendship of many years, which existed between Dr. Drummond and the writer, was a most intimate one, and we can, therefore, emphasize with surety, not alone his loyalty to his race, but also his fine Canadianism. As regards the land of his birth, he had no place for those who would set North against South, or creed against creed. If we are not mistaken, the last poem that Dr. Drummond wrote was read by him at the banquet of the St. Patrick's Society, in Montreal, on the 17th of March, 1907, and bore the title, *We're Irish Yet*. Drummond's Canadianism was known to all

men. There was nothing narrow or provincial in his mental make-up. He spent no time in either shouting for or knocking the Empire, or, indeed, knocking any race within the Empire. He was simply first, last and always a Canadian; and with a breadth of mind and fine sympathy, he held every Canadian, no matter of what race origin, to be his brother.

In any appreciation or estimate of Dr. Drummond and his work, we should never forget that Dr. Drummond the Man was greater than his work. It will be remembered that in the realm of art sometimes the man is greater than his work, personality counting for more than mere gift of achievement. This is certainly true of Dante and Michaelangelo; for while the magnificent vision of the great Florentine exile has never been surpassed in the domain of the epic; nor has ever dream in marble bodied forth anything more sublime than the masterpieces of Michaelangelo which adorn the Churches of Rome and Florence; yet the man, Dante, in exile, eating at Verona and Ravenna the bread of a stranger, and the man, Michaelangelo, with vision in his soul of a St. Peter's Dome or a Last Judgment, stand far above the very noblest creations of their genius.

We will not spend time here discussing how much of a poet Dr. Drummond was, or what he lacked. A critic has recently written that "Dr. Drummond was neither a Canadian nor a poet." Was Heavyside a Canadian? Was D'Arcy McGee a Canadian? Was McLachlan a Canadian?—by birth. And yet we justly honour them among Canadian writers. As to whether Drummond was a true poet or not, we would say that within his special field and range he certainly was. Dr. Drummond was not, indeed, of the company of him who wrote *The Cloud*, nor of him who wrote *The Passing of Arthur*, nor of him who wrote *The Hound of Heaven*; but he possessed, nevertheless, many of the qualities of a true poet, such as creative force, imagination, sensibility and spiritual vision. The two latter he owed largely to his Celtic origin. It is perhaps worth noting here that the three best dialect poets in America have been of Celtic origin: James Whitcomb Riley, Tom Daly and Dr. William Henry Drummond. When you analyze Dr. Drummond's work, you find it difficult to say whether he has greater command of humour or pathos, both of which, to the Celt, are ever ready; so that, like twins in a cradle, you cannot wake the one without disturbing the other.

Neither is Dr. Drummond's humour mere coarse, vulgar buffoonery; nor is his pathos maudlin. He always touches the minor chord of life with great surety and deftness, and passes from humour to pathos and from pathos to humour with that ease of transition so characteristic of true genius.

We have spoken of the human-heartedness and sincerity of Drummond's work. Yet it possesses something of even greater value than these. It is the spiritual touch which gives his work immortal value. In vain will you build even in poetry, if the Infinite, the source of all Beauty and Truth, does not lay the foundation.

Dr. Drummond was linked to the spiritual world, and though he did not kneel at a Catholic Altar, being an Anglican in his faith, he has not in his work struck a single false note in his poetic treatment and characterization of the French-Canadian people. A man of no faith, a materialist, a scoffing doubter, could never have found, as Drummond did, themes of poetic inspiration in the beautiful and idyllic lives of these French-Canadian people; or, if he did find a theme, he would in his treatment have stripped it of that which makes all art valuable—the great touch of the spiritual.

As to his themes and method, we will not dwell upon them at great length here. Dr. Drummond has created both a type and a dialect in literature. Of course the veritable French-Canadian *habitant* does not conform to Dr. Drummond's creation; nor yet is the dialect created by the "Poet of the Habitant" the language found upon the lips of the many French Canadians who speak the English language. In all the large cities and towns of Quebec there are thousands of French Canadians who speak the English language with a correctness and beauty of accent unsurpassed by the best educated of English Canadians. We have for proof of this only to recall to our readers a memory of the speeches in English of the late Sir Wilfrid Laurier, or the fine addresses of the Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux and Henri Bourassa, still with us. If there is any resemblance—and there certainly is a resemblance—between the language spoken by the *habitant* of Quebec, when essaying to speak English, and the dialect created by Dr. Drummond for literary purposes, it will be found to reside largely in the language used by the French-Canadian lumberman in the days of the river "drives" on the St. Lawrence and the St. Maurice, with whom Drummond became well acquainted in his early years.

Drummond's themes came to him from observation and experience. In truth, our author could make literature out of anything. With an eye to observe and a heart to feel, incidents and idiosyncrasies, little situations of humour, touching scenes of pathos, heroic love, every-day dramas of life, and, above all, the innumerable concrete examples of the beauty of spiritual life among the French-Canadian *habitants*—all these inspired his pen and kindled in his soul the fashioning

flame that makes true art possible.

The first French-Canadian dialect poem from the pen of Dr. Drummond to give promise of and shadow forth the genius of its author, was *The Wreck of the Julie Plante: A Legend of Lake St. Peter*. The tourist or traveller will remember the expansion of the St. Lawrence below Montreal known as Lake St. Peter. Here is the scene of this ballad-legend so cleverly told in French-Canadian dialect verse by Dr. Drummond—a poem which, while by no means among the author's best, has gained favour everywhere as a recital—in the lumber shanties of Wisconsin and Michigan, in the drawing-rooms of New Orleans, among the cowboys out on the Western plains, and among the most exclusive club men of our great metropolitan cities.

It will be observed that much of the humour in the poem is derived from pitching the story in such a high dramatic key. Never, indeed, did ocean liner go down to her grave amid such footlights of tragedy as sank the wood scow, *Julie Plante*, in the historic waters of Lac St. Pierre.

A curious thing in connection with this poem is the fact that its authorship was claimed for some time by a well-known Canadian actor, who was wont to recite it in a play which he for many years presented, entitled "The Canuck." Like King George III, who used to fancy he had fought at the Battle of Waterloo, and, as a proof of it, was accustomed to show the armour that he wore, so the Canadian actor was finally led from reciting the poem to believe that he had written it. In fact, Dr. Drummond was obliged to make good his claim to the paternity of his literary offspring through the public press.

Of all Drummond's poems, perhaps the one which represents him at his best is *Le Vieux Temps*. This embodies in a marked degree his gift of happy narration, his keen insight into French-Canadian character, his sense of acute observation, his wonderful command of humour and pathos, and the ease and facility which marks his transition from one to the other.

*Pelang*, so dramatic in its treatment, is most artistically worked out. It is perhaps the highest poetic conception to be found in his four volumes, and is full of tenderness and the most delicate imagery. For a piece of individual characterization, there is not in our opinion anything better in all his works than *The Curé of Calumette*. This poem is a marvellous tribute to the self-sacrificing life of the French-Canadian *curé* in his divine mission among his people as an ambassador of the Master.

Then who would not admire that unique poem so popular with readers, *Little Bateese*? This reveals Drummond the lover and observer of children. Nay, it reveals something more than this. We get in this simple poem something of the secret of Drummond's power and gifts—his kinship with the heart of childhood. But the poem which Drummond has transfigured with the very light and love of his soul bears the title, *The Last Portage*. This is a personal poem. A short time before his death Dr. Drummond lost a beautiful little boy. It was a sorrow from which his great heart never fully recovered. This little boy had a beauty which reminded you of Murillo's painting of St. John and the Lamb. His lost child appears to Drummond in a dream beckoning him to the Camp beyond "The Last Portage":

Lak de young Jesu w'en he's here below,  
De face of ma leetle son look jus' so—  
Den off beyon' on de bush I see  
De wite dress fadin' among de tree.

Dr. William Henry Drummond has bequeathed to his family, his friends and his country the heritage of a noble life, the heritage of a noble name. He has done much more than enrich with his genius the wealth of Canadian letters. Dr. Drummond has made goodly contribution to the life, spirit and upbuilding of a Canadian Nation.

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## A NOTE ON THE TYPE IN WHICH THIS BOOK IS SET

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