

At this period, however, two poets stand out from all others—Joseph Quesnel and Joseph Mermet. Although they were of French origin, they so deeply impressed Canadians of their time, and exercised such an influence upon later writers of verse and men of letters, that we cannot but take account of them in a history of the beginnings of French-Canadian poetry.

Quesnel was born at St Malo in 1749, and died at Montreal in 1809. He came to Canada from France in 1779. He was a village merchant at Boucherville, and afterwards lived in Montreal. He employed much of his leisure in writing verses and music. His principal work consists of a large number of poems, epistles, hymns, epigrams and songs. He also left a dialogue in verse, *Le Rimeur dépité*; a comedy in verse, *L'Anglomanie*; and two prose comedies—*Colas et Colinette*, the text of which is embellished with ariettas, and *Les Républicains français*.

Quesnel's poetry was for the most part light and playful. His muse never tires of pleasantry, in which he often indulges with delicacy and grace. To fine badinage he readily adds a piquant irony. In his epistle to M. Généreux Labadie he pokes fun playfully both at the public, for not sufficiently encouraging literature, and at Labadie himself. *Le Rimeur dépité* is another example of this raillery, at once light and biting. In these two pieces, however, there is a lack of care in regard to form and of scholarly dignity.

Quesnel concerns himself more with the quality of his verse and the trueness of its tone when he writes idyllic poetry and sings of nature. He had a keen appreciation of that beauty of nature which the descriptive poets of the eighteenth century made popular. He was probably the first French-Canadian poet to sing in praise of running brooks and blossoming flowers.

Quesnel's two most important works, however, are *Colas et Colinette*, the text of which is preserved in *Le Répertoire national*, and *l'Anglomanie*, a little comedy in verse which has not been published, but has been included by Jacques Viger in his *Saberdache*.

*Colas et Colinette* is a comedy, and is French rather than