

FELIX POUTRE.

AN AMUSING AND HISTORICAL INCIDENT
OF THE CANADIAN REBELLION OF
1837-38.

(By the Editor.)

A few weeks ago a number of Montreal's leading citizens met at the last resting place of the late lamented Premier Mercier, to honor the memory of a truly patriotic Canadian. Of the hundreds then gathered in front of the imposing vault, in Cote des Neiges Cemetery, perhaps there was not one who was unacquainted with the story of that old "patriot" of 1837, Felix Poutre! Yet I doubt if there was one there present who was aware of the fact that in Section "P."—about half an acre away from them—the ashes of the famous rebel reposed in an almost unknown grave. Rambling through the "City of the Dead," I came across an old, weather-beaten, half rotten, and miserably inscribed wooden board, which stood over a grave that had become level with the soil, and from which, in a short time, the remains—if any—will be dug up to make room for some new-comer. In the centre of the board is a hole covered with glass, and containing the photograph of an aged man. Around this faded picture, in black paint, is the following: "Ici repose le corps de Felix Poutre (Patriote), decede le 22 Decembre, 1884, a l'age de 70 ans. Parents et amis priez pour lui.—R.I.P." "*Here lies the body of Felix Poutre (Patriot), died 22nd December, 1884, aged 70 years. Relatives and friends, pray for him. R.I.P.*"

As I stood over the temporary and neglected grave, I recalled the story of those young and enthusiastic leaders who had been arrested in 1838, after the rebellion, and condemned to death. I thought how few of the hundreds who pass, all unheeding, this lonely grave, are aware that it contains the dust of one whose name figures on the pages of Canadian history. Who was he? What did he do? questions that it may interest many to have answered.

Felix Poutre was the son of a farmer and rebel leader. Young Poutre was conspicuous for more reasons than one. That he left his home in Chambly County and donned the "red bonnet" and shouldered the musket would have sufficed, in the eye of martial justice, to entail a prompt condemnation. But Poutre had personally sworn in over three thousand of his fellow countrymen, and helped in other ways to swell the ranks of

the insurgents. Besides he was a man of more than ordinary acquirements, both intellectual and physical. Although of a quiet and most unassuming disposition, Poutre was one whose anger was to be feared. He stood six feet one inch in height, was as nimble as a deer, and possessed the strength of a Sampson. So modest was he, however, that few, if any, of his companions really realized his wonderful physical power; often, when working in his father's fields, he would amuse himself by holding the plough so firmly that the horses could not stir it in the furrow; or in grasping the handles and keeping the plough suspended, at arm's length, for a fraction of a minute. These feats taught him his own strength, but he never boasted of it, nor made any display in presence of others. Little did he dream that one day his phenomenal corporal power would save his neck and cheat the hangman.

In the winter of 1837-38, Poutre, with other leaders, was arrested and placed in the old Montreal prison to await trial—and an almost certain condemnation. It was then that he conceived the idea of playing the madman, and so perfectly did he carry out his plan, that he was eventually expelled by force from the prison. In 1882, with the winters of nearly three score and ten years on his head, the venerable old "patriot" made a tour of the country, delivering a series of lectures upon the events of the rebellion. Perhaps the most graphic, as well as the most interesting, of those able conferences was that in which he related the story of his own escape from the scaffold. Even at that advanced age, Poutre looked the very incarnation of physical strength. His powerful form stood erect, like a pine of the forest that had weathered the tempests for half a century or more. When memory conjured up the scenes of the past, the aged eye sparkled with the fire of youth, the voice grew stronger, and the whole man became transformed; the enthusiasm he felt so keenly became contagious, and for an hour his audience would sit and listen, now convulsed with laughter, anon melted to tears.

It would be impossible to tell the story of Felix Poutre's escape more eloquently than in his own simple and graphic language. It may lose much of its force in the process of translation; but none of the incidents which he relates, and all of which are historically authentic, need be sacrificed, even for the sake of brevity.

(Continued in our next.)

WANLOCK.

(A POEM THAT WILL LIVE.)

The name of Robert Reid (Rob Wanlock), author of "Moorland Rhymes" and other beautiful productions, deserves a two-fold place in the hearts of patriotic lovers of genuine poetry. Scotland, the land of his birth, and Canada, the land of his adoption, join hands in showering honors upon the head of the kindly,

noble-souled poet, who has sung in such touching and perfect songs the glories of the former and the greatness of the latter. Since Mr. Reid's "Kirkbride" won for him the palm of triumph, it may not be out of place—it certainly is never out of time—to present our readers with a sample of his work in another strain. Perhaps no poem from his gifted pen expresses more truly and more touchingly the sentiment of deep-rooted affection which links the Scotch-Canadian to the "Land of brown heath and shaggy wood," certainly not one of all his brilliant effusions tends more to make the reader participate in the poet's feelings and love the man for the soul and heart that speak through his verses, than the one addressed to his mother, after the death of his father. We take the liberty of reproducing it, both to show how deeply we appreciate the author's merits, and how much our Canadian literature has gained in the fact that Rob Wanlock has made this Dominion his home.

How blythe it was in Wanlock, when summer skies were fair!
How sweet to roam the Wanlock hills when those we lov'd were there!
Now skies are cold, and hills are bare, and those we lov'd are gone;
And, oh, 'tis sad in Wanlock, for those that sit alone.

To sit alone in Wanlock, when all its charm has fled,
To think upon the happy days that all too swiftly sped;
Hath life a sadder thought than this—borne in on heart and brain—
That things have been in Wanlock, that ne'er will be again!

Oh! ne'er again in Wanlock, beneath the old roof-tree,
Can such a season come to us, so full of life and glee;
No more, in undiminish'd strength we'll gather proudly there—
That joyous board in Wanlock has now a vacant chair.

A vacant chair in Wanlock, that never can be fill'd,
A noble presence gone for aye, a life forever still'd;
Death's dismal shadow lies across the threshold of that door
That stood so wide in Wanlock, to welcome us of yore.

To welcome us in Wanlock, how eager were those eyes—
That now are closed to earthly things, and open but in the skies!
How kind the manly voice of him that bade the wanderers come
Back to his hearth in Wanlock, their childhood's happy home!

That wappy home in Wanlock—where are its inmates now!
In other lands they're wandering, with sadness on each brow;
The gloom that shrouds that homestead o'er is in each heart as well,
And far away from Wanlock, it is their lot to dwell.

But far away from Wanlock, and parted though we be,
There's still a tie that binds us to the home of infancy;
Though something of the charm hath pass'd that grac'd each stream and hill,
Oh, lonely glen of Wanlock, our hearts are with you still!

And, Mother, dear, in Wanlock thy presence is the spell
That draws our hearts to those old hills we long have known so well;
The memories of the vanish'd days, the dreams of those to be,
And all that hallows Wanlock, are centred now in thee.

The spring will come to Wanlock as in the years gone by,
And smiling summer clothe in beauty moor and mountain high,
The heather's bursting bloom will ting their fragrance on the air—
But what were these, or Wanlock, if thou wert wanting there?

Be strong! sad heart in Wanlock, thou mour'n'st the happy past;
Be happy! knowing Love will tend thee fondly to the last;
God send His peace to comfort thee and cheer thee with our love,
Till that dark day for Wanlock, when thou art call'd above!

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