

AN ACADIAN MINSTREL.



THE Basin of Minas has been the home of some of Canada's finest writers of prose and verse. Landscape, legend and learning account for this—dyke and meadows, mist wreathed Blomidon, grove embowered towns and villas, and picturesque valleys; the romance that gathers around the names of Glooscap and Evangeline, the red men and the French peasants; the colleges of Acadia and Windsor. Acadia has known such names as Bishop and Young, statisticians; Hartt, scientist; Cramp, historian; De Mille, novelist; and Rand, ethnologist;—Windsor such names as Haliburton, novelist; Gallenga, journalist; Hind, scientist; Bliss, economist; and Hill, historian. Among poets are Roberts, Hamilton, Herbin, B. W. Lockhart, A. J. Lockhart, Mrs. Morton, Parss, Chipman and Blackadder.

Arthur John Lockhart (Pastor Felix) was born on May 5th, 1850, in a small village, about two-and-a-half miles from Hantsport, on the uplands overlooking the Avon and the Basin. His father was a master mariner, as was his grandfather, Nathan Lockhart, one of the earliest settlers of that part of the country, and from whom its name of Lockhartville was derived. His mother was Elizabeth Bezanson, a Nova Scotian, of Huguenot descent, her ancestors having emigrated to America in times of persecution.

In early life he met with an accident, by which he was invalidated and partially crippled during the whole period of his boyhood. His mind was thus turned early to books and nature, and he was much given to contemplation. He conceived a love for the poets and best prose writers, and his reverence for Burns, Goldsmith, Gray and other English writers dates back almost beyond his memory. They had much to do in forming his taste, and their selection may be seen in his works. He fell in with, during his boyhood, a copy of the poems of John McPherson, a rural poet of Acadia, that touched his sympathies and drew him out in emulation to contribute too something to the poetic stores of his country. He was accustomed to taking long rambles, and many a nook about Avonport, Gaspereau, Wolfville, Grand Pre and Hantsport were made dear to him by long association.

After a time he entered the office of the *Acadian*, a Wolfville newspaper, to learn the art preservative, and was there employed at the case for three years. He was here at work under the shadow of the white dome of Acadia college, and the year succeeding found him in the vicinity of Harvard's halls, employed at the *University Press*, Cambridge, Mass.

He reached the turning point of his career on New Brunswick soil, when, in 1871, he went to St. Andrews to assist the Rev. C. B. Pitblado in his ministry. Here his literary passion was intensified and he was inspired with high aims and hopes by his association with this Scotchman, who knew all of Auld Scotia's bards and preachers. Here, too, he found his future bride, Miss Adelaide Beckerton, to whom he was married in 1873. At the conclusion of his stay in St. Andrews he entered the East Maine Methodist Episcopal conference, and was stationed at Pembroke for about a year. He was subsequently located at Lubec, East Machias, Orrington and East Corinth. Two years ago last April he was sent to Cherryfield, a pretty valley town, a few miles inland from those shores and islands which are the particular resort of the summer tourist, and here he now resides. He lives in a pretty cottage home, nestling in a setting of willows, acacias, horse chestnuts, elms, lilacs, sweet brier and hop-vines. Below trickles and twinkles a tiny stream, and behind is a little thicket, the poet's rustic retreat, which he apostrophizes as follows:

MY SYLVAN STUDY.

This is my oratory: studious, oft
I come, at morn, at eve, to this retreat:
Wild is the bower and ancient is the seat;—
My chair, a rock, with grass and mosses soft
Fringed and enamelled. In a neighbouring croft
My children sport not far from my own door,
Searching out leaves and flowers—a beauteous store;

The blackbirds chatter sociably aloft;
Round me grouped silvery birches, thorns full flushed
With milky blossoms; on my open page
Lie shadowy leaves, jewelled in golden light.
—And hark! a voice, whose music straight is hushed!
Quick pattering steps my partial ear engage,
And little Golden Hair laughs on my sight.

Mr. Lockhart has been a diligent literary worker. He has contributed from time to time to the *DOMINION ILLUSTRATED*, *Week*, *Canadian Monthly*, *Maritime Monthly*, *St. John Telegraph*, *St. John Progress*, *Methodist Magazine*, *The Land We Live In*, *Canada* and other leading Canadian journals, and to the *Magazine of Poetry*, *Portland Transcript*, *Eastern State*, *Zion's Herald* and other journals of the United States. He has written a series of prose articles under the *nom de plume* of "Pastor Felix," and the general titles of "Heart on the Sleeve" and "Red and Blue Pencil" to the *Portland Transcript* and *DOMINION ILLUSTRATED*. He has also appeared in such anthologies as Lighthall's "Songs of the Great Dominion," "The Poets of Maine," (where he had an honorary place by virtue of



REV. ARTHUR JOHN LOCKHART.

residence), and "Poets of America," published in Chicago. He has just been solicited by the Co-operative Publishing Co., of Columbus, Ohio, to contribute to their "Flowers of the Wayside," now in course of preparation. His greatest undertaking was his book "The Masque of Minstrels," published in 1887, and printed by Benjamin A. Burr, of Bangor. It is a volume of 361 pages, very carefully gotten up, with copious notes, and containing cuts of the author and his brother, Rev. Burton W. Lockhart, B.A., a Baptist minister of Suffield, Conn., and who contributes several of the poems in the book.

Mr. Lockhart is as proficient in prose as in verse. He possesses excellent critical ability, due partly, in his treatment of poetry, to his thorough knowledge of the poets. He is as well a fine descriptive writer, his style highly imaginative, and his sentiment pure and lofty. The prose introduction to his volume, representing a gathering of minstrels and their conversation, is very vividly written and ideal in its thought.

He divides the poems in his book into "Moods and Fantasies," "Songs of Memory and Home," and "Songs of Aspiration and Endeavour." The finest poem in the volume, one which has had a generous share of praise by Canadian critics, is "Gaspereau." It is the offspring as

much of the scene it describes as of the poet who wrote it. Any one who has been privileged to see the Gaspereau valley, one of the prettiest pictures of quiet, graceful, rural beauties imaginable, will see at once that the poem is full of the inspiration of the place. Imagine yourself on a point of vantage, the bend of a road, crossing a span of South mountain to Gaspereau village. You are on the summit of a hill overlooking the valley. Before you lies its whole length of about ten miles, with a mile of breadth. Through its centre flows the narrow Gaspereau stream, at times foaming over rocks and again rushing along in an unrippled rapid, while the luxuriant willows that fringe the banks cast their perfect reflection into the water. On its edge is a small mill, looking in the distance like a toy house, while it is crossed by a rustic bridge. Surrounding the bridge is a little hamlet with a pretty church, and along the side of the valley are prosperous, well kept farms, with smiling orchards and grain fields and dotted with patches of spruce and fir. The valley seems to be shut in by the hills at both ends, and at its lower extremity the stream broadens into what appears to be a lake, a fancy that renders the picture the more romantic. In reality, though, it is an estuary of the stream that empties into the Basin of Minas at Grand Pre flats, and just beyond the reach of vision is where over a century since the English vessels were moored when the memorable expulsion took place. In Lockhart's poem the whole peaceful scene is reflected. Some of the stanzas are as follows:

O sweet Acadian vale! with thee
My earlier, happier years were passed!—
The day of blest security,
The peaceful hours, too bright to last,—
When oh thy hills I sang in joy,
And traced thy brook and river's flow;
Hast thou forgot thy minstrel boy,
O much-loved vale of Gaspereau?

Cft memory on the track returns;
By which my life the earliest came;
And Fancy many a scene discerns,
And lists to many a magic name:
Then do thy woods and streams appear,
With paths my wandering feet did know,
And all thy music meets my ear,
O winding vale of Gaspereau!

How oft, from yon hill's dark'ning brow
Where twinkles first the evening star,
I've watched the village windows glow
At sundown in the vale afar:
Or, from the shadowy bridge leaned o'er
The river's glimmering darks below,—
Breathed freshness of the sylvan shore,
And heard the songs of long ago!

'Twas here, of old, a people dwelt,
Whose loves and woes the Poet sings;
The beauty of these scenes they felt,
When, 'mid the golden evenings,
They set the willows, lush and green;
Now gnarled in their fantastic age,
That, with their blacken'd, broken mien,
Still stand—the blackbird's hermitage.

Secluded in this calm retreat,
They tilled the soil and reared the home;
Nor dreamed to an abode so sweet
The lordly spoiler e'er could come:
For them the corn, green-waving, grew,
Studded with many a yellow'ing gem;
Round them the doves and swallows flew,
And coo'd and twitter'd love for them.

One of his brightest fantasias is "Aduana," which we reproduce in part. In metrical construction it is evenly balanced, in music it is melodious, in tone sincere.

Out of my ear a song has died,
And from my sight a glory fled;
There is a gulf, unknown and wide,
Between the living and the dead;
And bird and leaf
Partake my grief,
And share my constant sorrow;
The brook complains
In plaintive strains,
And from my heart the passing wind
Doth dying sweetness borrow.

Yet not forever hushed the song,
Nor silent she who used to sing;
For Fancy pours the strain along,
And memory knits the broken string;
And moon and star
Bright beacons are
Upon that isle of dreaming,
When I behold
The matchless mould—
The perfect beauty that she wore—
Her face with gladness beaming.

Mr. Lockhart's best poems have been written since his book was published, and as regards general excellence his