

In 1817 H. Bossange established in Montreal a fairly considerable bookselling business. The City Library is said to have contained eight thousand volumes in 1822.<sup>1</sup> The inhabitants might also nourish their intellectual curiosity in the newspapers and the literary miscellanies published about the middle of the nineteenth century, such as—*La Minerve* (1827), *L'Ami du Peuple* (1832), *Le Populaire* and *La Quotidienne* (1837), *L'Aurore des Canadas* (1839), and *Le Jean-Baptiste* (1840). To these may be added the miscellanies of Michel Bibaud—*La Bibliothèque canadienne* (1825 to 1830), *L'Observateur* (1830), *Le Magasin du Bas-Canada* (1832), and *L'Encyclopédie canadienne* (1842).

At this period Quebec and Montreal, with their associations, their journals and their literary miscellanies, were not as yet, of course, powerful centres of intellectual life, nor was the energy they radiated either very active or brilliant. In tracing the real origins of a literature, however, it is not unprofitable to indicate briefly the historical environment in which that literature was to have its birth. By this means the relative value of its earlier efforts is more justly appreciated.

With the French Canadians, song appears to have been the first form of poetry. Some verses written in 1757 and 1758<sup>2</sup> are still to be found; many may be read in the journals which made their appearance later. The popular song flew quickly from mouth to mouth when, in 1775, or again in 1812, the people were fired with a fine patriotic ardour to defend the soil of their invaded country. New Year's Day also supplied the rhymesters with matter for a few verses, mainly intended for newsboys' addresses. Needless to say, these poems—interesting as they are from the point of view of literary origins—have in themselves scarcely any literary value. The same may be said of many lyrical, pastoral and satirical pieces that appeared anonymously in the early journals.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire du Canada*, by Michel Bibaud, il. 403.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Foyer canadien*, 1865: article on 'Nos chansons historiques,' by Dr Hubert Larue, pp. 17-18.

<sup>3</sup> On this subject see the author's work, *Nos Origines littéraires*, pp. 70-83 and 111-23, in which several extracts from these early poems are given.