

the author of the "*Contes Populaires des anciens Bretons*," is that Druidic basin, mentioned by the Welsh bard Taliesin, which on those who revered it conferred the boon of poetic inspiration, endowed them with the knowledge of the future, disclosing for their benefit the mysteries of nature and placing the whole treasure of human science at their disposal. As his interpreter in England, the author of "Curious Myths of the Middle Ages," won wide acceptance for Villemarqué's view of a christianized pagan tradition, undoubtedly Celtic. Mr. Halliwell (Phillips) combated that view. A hint given by Simrock, whose translation of the *Parzival* of Wolfram von Eschenbach followed that of Schultz, as to the resemblance between the hero's early career and the succession of events in the Great Fool folk-tale, might, but for the critic's ignorance of Celtic tradition, have led some way towards the solution of the problem. The passage in which that hint occurs has been selected by Mr. Nutt to serve as a companion motto to that from Campbell already quoted. "It is hard to say," wrote Simrock, "what people possessing this tale brought it into contact, either by tradition or writing, with the Grail story, but that people would have the first claim among whom it was found in an independent form." An important stage in the discussion was reached when, in 1861, Mr. Furnivall's publication of the *Grand St. Grail* "provided students with materials of first-rate importance." In the following year Mr. Campbell brought out the second volume of his "*Popular Tales of the West Highlands*," which contained the passage already reproduced and to which reference has just been made. The critics of that time were, however, in the main, opposed to the Celtic hypothesis and so his suggestion failed to receive justice. In his "*Romans de la Table Ronde*," M. Paulin Paris ascribed a considerable place to Celtic tradition. He saw in the early history a reminiscence of a religious struggle between Britain and Rome. Bergmann, in his "*Enquiry*," rejects the theory of Celtic origin but incidentally accepts the authenticity of the Mabinogi of Peredur and admits that the framework of the story is Celtic. Wolfram's, one of the latest, most highly developed and most mystical of the versions, the same author paradoxically put forward as representing the common source of them all. In his arguments he makes gratuitous assumptions, as where he would have the "fisher King" (*roi pêcheur*) to be a mistake for "sinner king" (*roi pécheur*). Equally removed from true criticism, in Mr. Nutt's judgment, are certain speculations of Prof. Skeat, in his *Joseph of Arimathea*, edited 1871, for the early English Text Society. According to M. Hucher, the Grail is Celtic and could be seen figured on pre-Christian Gaulish coins. Though he failed to discern the significance of many of the facts that he brought to light, he rendered good pioneer service. To Zarneke belongs the merit of the first attempt to construct a working hypothesis of the growth of the cycle, but for his pupil, Birch-Hirschfeld (whose theory, despite its learning and acuteness, Mr. Nutt is forced to reject) it remained to produce the most searching and exhaustive survey of it. Martin accepts Von Hirschfeld's conclusion as to the priority of the *Queste* over the *Grand St. Graal*, but disagrees with his view of the development of the legend in other respects. In his opinion there is no doubt as to its Celtic basis, and a like assurance is implied by some of Hertz's admissions.

Having summarized the literature of the Grail cycle, Mr. Nutt proceeds to inquire whether the Grail is an intrinsic feature of the *Quest*, with the result that he finds it absent from what is apparently the oldest Celtic form of the tradition. Examining the Lay of the Great Fool, he finds that it has points of similarity with the Grail legend as given by Chrestien. Comparing certain necessary features of the myth, which had hitherto puzzled the commentators, with incidents of early Celtic romance—the sword, the lance, the mystic vessel, the visit to the bespelled castle, the magic words of release—he reaches the following conclusion: "The history of the legend of the Holy Grail is thus the history of the gradual transformation of the old Celtic folk-tale into a poem charged with Christian symbolism and mysticism. The transformation, at first the inevitable outcome of its pre-Christian development, was hastened later by the perception that it was a fitting vehicle for certain moral and spiritual ideas."

Poets and thinkers from mediæval times to our own days have used it as a type of the loftiest goal of man's effort." In his closing chapter Mr. Nutt points out in what manner Celtic tradition influenced mediæval romance. He dwells upon the individualism which characterizes them both. In neither have we a record of race-struggles (except in some of the pre-Christian annals of Ireland—for the most part euhemerized mythology) but the glorification of the individual hero. He places the fairy mistresses of Celtic tradition side by side with the *dames d'amour* of the romances of chivalry. He also traces the growth of the ascetic idea of perfection, and contrasts it with Wolfram's "true and noble sexual morality." It was, indeed, necessary to utter a protest against the anti-social tendency of *minnedienst*. But that protest should have been in the right spirit. "The true man *Parzival* should," Mr. Nutt thinks, "in the fitness of things, be the English hero of the *Quest* rather than the visionary Galahad." He claims the sympathies of the Laureate (although he has imparted to the Galahad standard all the beauty of holiness of which it was capable) for the same view. "The artist's instinct rather than the scholar's respect for the oldest form of the story led him to practically restore *Perceval* to his rightful place as hero of the *Quest*."

In summing up the whole argument, the main drift of which I have, though with conscious inadequacy, tried to lay before the reader, Mr. Nutt writes as follows: "Such,

all too briefly sketched, has been the fate and story of these tales, first shaped in a period of culture well-nigh prehistoric, gifted by reason of their Celtic setting with a charm that commended them to the romantic spirit of the Middle Ages, and made them fit vehicles for the embodiment of mediæval ideas. Quickened by Christian symbolism, they came to express and typify the noblest and most mystic longings of man. The legend, as the poets and thinkers of the twelfth century fashioned it, has still a lesson and a meaning for us. It may be likened to one of the divine maidens of Irish tradition. She lives across the western sea. Ever and again heroes, filled with mysterious yearning for the truth and beauty of the infinite and undying, make sail to join her if they may. They pass away, and others succeed them, but she remains ever young and fair. So long as the thirst of man for the ideal endures, her spell will not be weakened, her charm will not be lessened. But each generation works out this *Quest* in its own spirit. This much may be predicted with some confidence: Henceforth, whosoever would do full justice to the legend, must take pattern by Wolfram von Eschenbach rather than by any of his rivals; he must deal with human needs and human longings, his ideal must be the widening of human good and human joy. Above all, he must give reverent yet full expression to all the aspirations, all the energies of man and of woman."

JOHN READE.

SOME LITERARY MEN OF FRENCH CANADA.

F. X. GARNEAU

was born at Quebec in 1809, and died in 1866. He commenced his literary career by various poetical efforts, many of which ring out with a clarion sound, inspired by that ever-vivifying spirit of patriotism whose living fire burned within the writer's heart. *La dernière Huron* has been esteemed by some critics the finest poem ever produced by a Canadian. *Le père du Soldat* is an historical poem of some merit. *Les oiseaux bleus* and *Louise* are charming in form and sentiment. *Les Exilés* burns with a flame of purest patriotism. *Pourquoi désespérer* and *Au Canada* will long live in the hearts of his country people.

M. Garneau is best known by his *History of Canada*. In acting as pioneer in penetrating into the chaos of the Canadian archives, he conferred an inestimable benefit upon his country. Before this, we had, apart from a few fragments more or less complete, only the *Père Charlevoix's History*, which terminates at 1740, nearly a quarter of a century before the conquest. Simplicity and perfection of style, correctness of detail and conscientious research all have combined to render this work both valuable and interesting. It is characterized by a fairness and impartiality which is not to be found in the pages of Ferland and Taillon. Henri Martin in his *Histoire de France* alludes to the *History of Canada* in the most flattering terms and the Count de Montalembert observes concerning it, "I have been much struck by a work entitled, *Une conclusion d'Histoire*, by M. Garneau. I can willingly join this patriotic writer in exclaiming, 'May Canadians remain true to themselves,' and I may add that they can console themselves for having been separated from the mother country by the fortune of war, by the reflection that that separation has assured them rights and liberties which France has never been able either to practise or hold."

L'ABBE FERLAND

is the only historical writer who can claim to rival Garneau. In purity of style, grace of expression and dramatic interest, he may even be said to have excelled the national historian. Garneau, however, writes as a man of the world, while Ferland judges everything from the narrow standard of the priest. It is apparent that to the abbé Canada was simply a mission field for the Roman Catholic Church, while Garneau adopts the broader, more philosophical view of regarding colonization of the country as the foundation of a nation. Descended from an ancient family of Poitou, established from an early date in the settlement of the colony, in the Isle of Orleans, Jean Baptiste Ferland was born in Montreal, 1805, and died at Quebec 1864. He was Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and Professor of the *History of Canada* at the Laval University. Possessing the spiritual power which is the result of strong convictions, M. Ferland devoted himself to the study of his race, its language, literature and history, and his influence contributed materially to the advancement of the cause of education in the Province of Quebec. The good priest's devotion during the epidemic of 1834 was heroic. He wrote *Journal d'un voyage sur les côtes de la Gaspésie*; *Louis Oliver Gamache*; *Notice Biographique sur Mgr Joseph Octave Plessis*, *Evêque de Québec*, all of which give evidence of a talent of unusual distinction. His chief work, *Cours d'Histoire du Canada*, was the result of his lectures delivered at the University. He laboured at it for years with persistent industry, and visited Europe for the purpose of continuing his researches. The Abbé Ferland was just preparing to publish his second volume when the life so richly endowed was cut off in its prime. The work he accomplished has real and significant value, and one must feel a pang of regret in realizing the loss his country sustained from the fact that he was not enabled to terminate it. *Le Cours d'Histoire du Canada* extends only to the conquest.

ABBE TANGUAY'S

name is best known in connection with *La Dictionnaire Généalogique des familles Canadiennes*. The idea of this dictionary appears to be entirely original, in no other

country has such an undertaking ever been accomplished. It is a genealogical chronicle of the Canadian race, commencing at the year 1608, in which all French-Canadian families can, without trouble, trace their direct origin and descent. The patience, perseverance and courage required for a task so arduous are fearful to contemplate.

BENJAMIN SULTE

enjoys a well merited reputation. The cause of Canadian literature owes not a little to this writer. It is easy to perceive that his tastes have inclined more to Béranger and Desangiers than to Hugo and Lamartine. The song seems to be the expression best adapted to his talent. His style charms by its grace and correctness, its easy French, gaiety and exquisite delicacy of fancy. There is little passion or enthusiasm in these bright and sparkling strains. It has been remarked that the French nation have a keen appreciation of the ludicrous but absolutely no sense of humour. Combined with his airy lightness M. Sulte has quite an English sentiment of humour, which bestows upon his work a naive and original charm. He has published a number of poems, most of which have appeared in *La Revue Canadienne*, *L'Echo du Cabinet du Lecteur*, *Le Foyer Canadien*, *Les Soirées Canadiennes* and have been collected in a volume called *Les Laurentiennes*. *La belle Mennière* is considered the best of these poems. *Le fils du St Laurent*, *La vieille chanson*, *Le tombeau du marin*, *Le chanson de l'exilé* are all worthy of notice. M. Sulte's most serious work is *L'Histoire de la ville de Trois-Rivières et ses environs*.

PHILIPPE AUBERT DE GASPE.

Born at Quebec 1786, died 1871. Seigneur of St. Jean de Port Joly, born only twenty-eight years after the conquest, belonging to the old nobility of Canada, deeply interested in all the social and political movements of the day, thoroughly knowing the working and agricultural classes, a keen observer and accurate judge of human nature, M. de Gaspé was eminently well fitted to become the chronicler of his age. His pretensions to literary fame rest upon the "Memoirs" and his romance, *Les Anciens Canadiens*. The memoirs extend over a period of seventy years and *Les Anciens Canadiens* is certainly the best description of life in the early colonial days that has ever been written. History and romance combined, it is a dramatized chronicle of the times, enlivened by keen human interests. M. de Gaspé possesses the "story-telling faculty," combined with the learning of the antiquarian and archæologist. There is a spontaneity, a vivacity, a felicity of description about his style which renders both his books excessively interesting.

M. GERIN-LAJOIE

is favourably known as the author of *Jean Rivard* a story which as a picture of Canadian domestic life, has been much appreciated. This writer excels in the art of word-painting. He has a brilliant imagination, and the spontaneity of his poetic gifts endows him with the power of expressing his thoughts with force and interest. The tragedy of *Le jeune Latour* was composed at eighteen years of age when the poet was a student at the College of Nicolet. While displaying faults of immaturity which detract from its dramatic merits, this is really a remarkable production written with a good deal of dash and vigour. *Le salut aux exilés* gives evidence of genuine talent, but M. Gerin-Lajoie's most perfect composition is certainly *Le Canadien errant*, a strain so simple and pathetic that it has become one of the most popular of Canadian songs. Wherever Canadians wander that touching ballad may be heard. It has been hummed in the streets of Paris and has awakened the echoes of the Rocky Mountains, it has been shouted by the voyageurs on the Nile, and sung in chorus by the volunteers in the North-West.

HON. C. B. DE BOUCHERVILLE

in the brief intervals of leisure, amidst an extremely busy life, has written a brilliant romance, *Une de perdue, deux de trouvées* which is certainly the best book of its kind ever published in Canada. Resembling somewhat the works of Paul Féval, the book is strong in dramatic interest. The scene glows with local and historic colouring, there are pages that move one to tears, others that thrill one with horror. The delineations of character are vigorously drawn, the tableaux arranged with dramatic skill, the striking nature of the situations portrayed, the singularly direct style, a fine sense of the pathetic and humorous, a delicate poetical sentiment, most truthful in its simplicity—these are some of the literary characteristics of *Une de perdue, deux de trouvées*. Some of the episodes founded upon the Rebellion of 1837 are most touching. This work can challenge comparison with the works of established French writers and one cannot but regret that the pressing cares of practical life should have prevented M. de Boucherville from cultivating his literary talent.

M. FAUCHER DE ST. MAURICE

has all the qualities requisite to a good writer—extensive information, a pure purpose and high ideal of art, constructive power to render his plots unusually good, a keen talent for the portrayal of character. His felicity of expression and aptitude for story-telling are of the highest order. His style is in sympathetic harmony with the character of the work; delicate, subtle touches retain the interest of the reader. Fine as is his analysis there always lies behind it a reserve of conscious power. No other Canadian writer is so thoroughly French as M. Faucher de St. Maurice. His lightness of gaiety and wit, his epigrammatic phrases are essentially Gallic in spirit, though he is quite capable of deeper accents. *De Québec à*